

Reconciliation Action Plan

June 2020 to June 2022

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This beautiful Eucalyptus tree stands proud at Wonga (Arthurs Seat State Park), which is part of an Aboriginal cultural landscape in the traditional Country of the Bunurong Peoples.

Aboriginal people scarred trees by removing bark or wood to make shelter, canoes, shields and carrying containers. Other forms of scarring include the marking of trees and accessing the centre of the tree to make bush cupboards to store kindling in the wet period and other objects that couldn't be carried around.

About the artist

Adam Magennis

Kaptify Cultural Heritage Consultancy

Adam is a proud Bunurong man and lives on the Mornington Peninsula. A professional artist for more than 20 years, in his other lives he is or has been a bricklayer, parks ranger, administrator, educator and archaeologist, Adam is currently undertaking a PhD in Archaeology at La Trobe University.

“This artwork is my understanding of how Country is made up. It’s made up of history.”

– Adam Magennis, Bunurong

South East Water’s RAP art launch

From left: Adam Magennis, Artist; Sam Beaumont, UX Designer and First Nations Intern at South East Water.

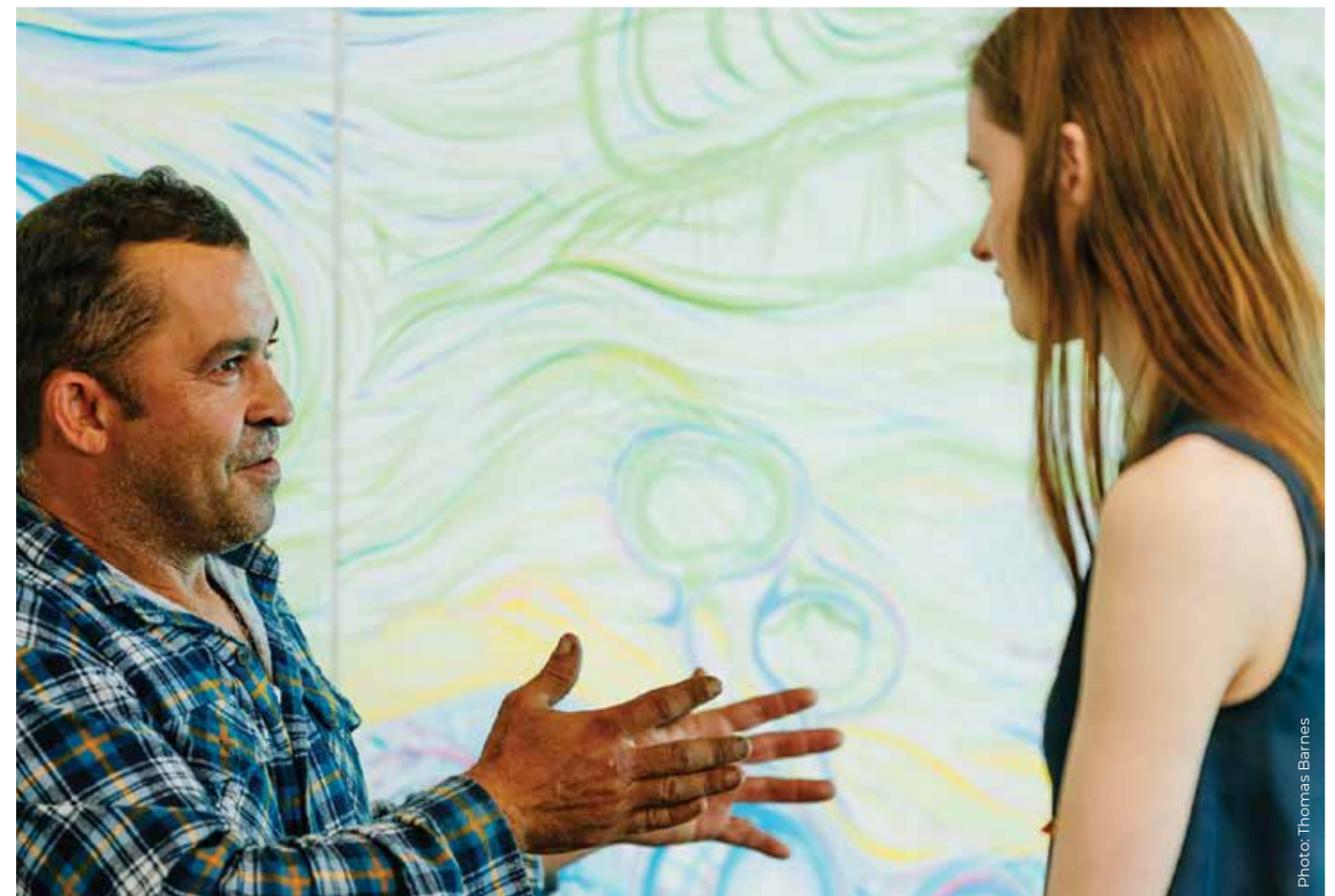


Photo: Thomas Barnes

A flying overview

The visual story of our Reconciliation Action Plan



This artwork is a story of land and water by Bunurong artist, Adam Magennis – told through his experience, and that of his ancestors, through the birds-eye view of a White-bellied Sea-Eagle.

It's an abstract insight into the cultural landscape of our service region, highlighting landmarks of historical and cultural significance for First Peoples – helping us to acknowledge, honour and seek to understand what they value most.

Our RAP is about a future where each of us respects, appreciates and acts on the spiritual and cultural values held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. And as an organisation that cares, we listen to understand.

“This artwork is my understanding of how Country is made up. It's made up of history.

“I've told the story through the lens of a White-bellied Sea-Eagle. It's revered by other birds and its territory overlooks both Port Phillip Bay and Western Port.

“I watch it today and it follows walking tracks, tracking animal corridors on the ground to hunt. My old people were looking at that bird – there's a lot of story to it.”

– Adam Magennis, Bunurong

Adam cites imagination as a key driver in creating this artwork.

In this painting, Adam tells us he took the physical landscape and started to imagine what First Peoples were doing thousands of years ago.

The artwork invites you to imagine what they were doing too, which is perfect for our RAP. Because putting ourselves in the shoes of others is one of the greatest bridges to understanding and reconciliation.

In the middle of the first and second panels (pictured above) you can see Port Phillip Bay. Around it, Adam has painted an 8,000 year old dreaming track, extending from Queenscliff on the western side of the bay and continuing all the way around to Point Nepean. It's the oldest cultural song line in our service area.

You can see many dreaming tracks throughout the artwork, they look like hashes <>>><<<>>>.

A bunyip depicts the Tooradin swamp, an ancient mythology site. In Aboriginal mythology, bunyips are said to live in waterways, swamps, creeks and waterholes.

Throughout the artwork, there's reference to ground-dwelling animals like emus and wallabies.

“People have left their footprints – sometimes in large ways, sometimes in little ways,” Adam says.

“As an organisation, I encourage you to look at your own landscape and identify your own macro and micro landscapes and the impact you have.”

A message from South East Water

In preparing this RAP we have taken advice on the preferred way to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the First Australians. Throughout our RAP, we have used the term First Nations peoples to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a whole across Australia. In places we have referenced Government of Victoria regulations and strategies and to directly reflect these we refer to Aboriginal people in these sections. We have referred to Traditional Owners when recognising the descendants of lands on which we operate, noting that Traditional Custodians can be preferred and is equally applicable and significant.

On behalf of South East Water, we are pleased to introduce our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). It sets our intention to co-create meaningful and significant relationships with the Traditional Owners in the areas we operate in, based on respect and appreciation for First Nations cultures and histories.

Water – its use and the ecosystem to which it's connected – is an integral part of the cultural heritage of First Nations peoples. We can and must learn from these rich histories, and from the value attached to water and its resources by First Nations peoples.

In some respects we're already underway with our reconciliation journey having had an engagement program in place formally since 2017.

We know we have a long journey ahead and there's a lot we want to achieve. We recognise that getting our next steps right will serve us, and the First Nations communities we work with, long into the future.

At the heart of our RAP is continuing to build strong relationships with Traditional Owners, the Custodians in our region, and with First Nations customers, community groups and people who work for and with us.

Our intention is best demonstrated by how we approached developing our RAP. We knew that for our RAP to be both meaningful and successful, we had to understand the cultural landscape of the region in which we operate. This led to the creation of a cultural map, which formed the basis of our initial RAP discussions with Traditional Owner groups and the actions you will find in this plan.

It's an exciting start and we look forward to reporting back on our progress.



Lucia Cade
Chair
South East Water



Lara Olsen
Managing Director
South East Water

Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia is delighted to welcome South East Water to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program by formally endorsing its inaugural Innovate RAP.

As a member of the RAP community, South East Water joins over 1,000 dedicated corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have formally committed to reconciliation through the RAP program since its inception in 2006. RAP organisations across Australia are turning good intentions into positive actions, helping to build higher trust, lower prejudice, and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Reconciliation is no one single issue or agenda. Based on international research and benchmarking, Reconciliation Australia defines and measures reconciliation through five critical dimensions: race relations; equality and equity, institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance. All sections of the community – governments, civil society, the private sector, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities – have a role to play to progress these dimensions.

The RAP program provides a framework for organisations to advance reconciliation within their spheres of influence. This Innovate RAP provides South East Water with the key steps to establish its own unique approach to reconciliation. Through implementing an Innovate RAP, South East Water will develop its approach to driving reconciliation through its business activities, services and programs, and develop mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

We wish South East Water well as it explores and establishes its own unique approach to reconciliation. We encourage South East Water to embrace this journey with open hearts and minds, to grow from the challenges, and to build on its successes. As the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation reminded the nation in its final report:

“Reconciliation is hard work—it's a long, winding and corrugated road, not a broad, paved highway. Determination and effort at all levels of government and in all sections of the community will be essential to make reconciliation a reality.”

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend South East Water on its first RAP, and look forward to following its ongoing reconciliation journey.



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Our vision and guiding principles

Our vision for reconciliation is a future where we can all respect, appreciate and act on the spiritual and cultural values held by First Nations peoples.

We've based our vision on four key principles that guide the development and implementation of our RAP.

Collaboration

We'll bring our cultures together in real and sustainable ways through dialogue, recognition and shared stories.

Custodianship

We'll take a future look at our custodianship of water to make sure cultural values and connection to water are visible and accounted for in our plans, and for this to happen from a bold understanding and acceptance of what's happened in the past.

Empowerment

We'll deliver employment, procurement, community participation opportunities and better customer outcomes for First Nations peoples.

Knowledge

We'll discover the knowledge, cultural and spiritual values of water, its connections with land and people, and to see this shared and used in practical ways to build community pride in the cultural value of water.

These principles closely reflect four of our stated values of our organisation.

Celebrating our values



We put safety first

The wellbeing of all our people, customers and community comes first.



We care

We listen to understand.
We do all we can to meet the needs of our people, customers and community.



We're real

We embrace diversity.
We take responsibility.
We do what we say and get things done.



We're bold

We strive to excel.
We have the courage to challenge ourselves.
We're future-focused and accept change is constant.



We discover

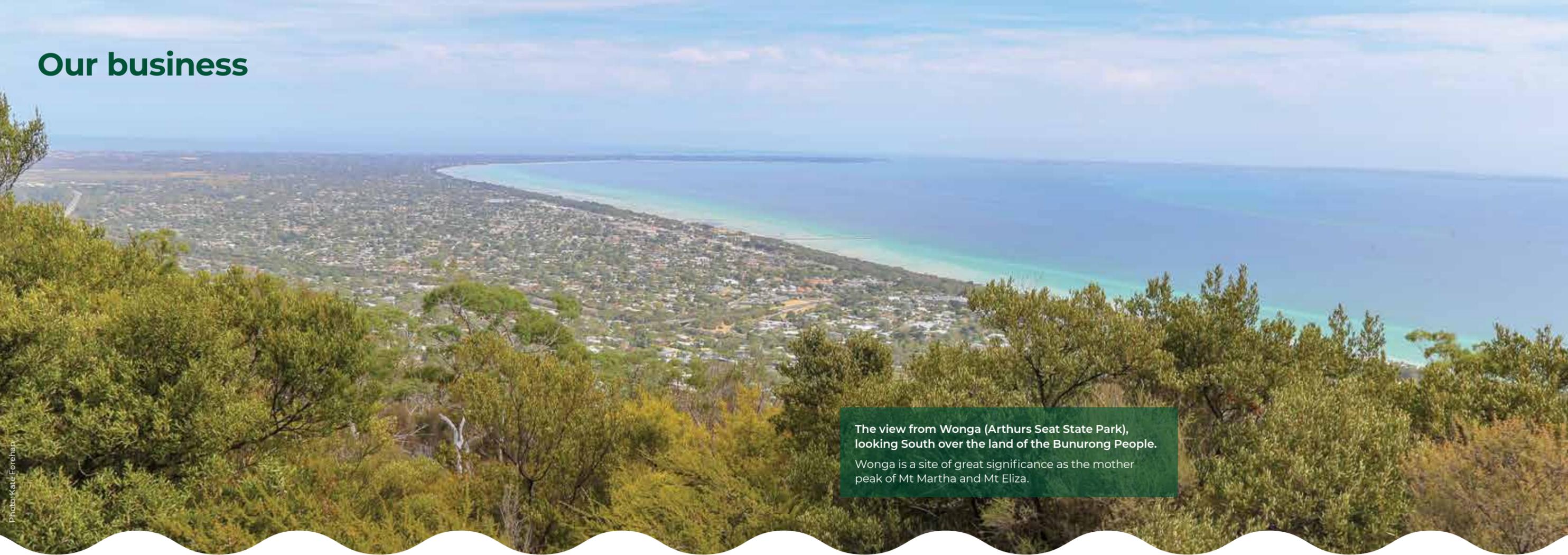
We search for new ways to deliver value.
We're curious and creative, learn from mistakes and celebrate success.



We deliver sustainably

Our decisions are made with the understanding every drop and action counts.

Our business



The view from Wonga (Arthurs Seat State Park), looking South over the land of the Bunurong People. Wonga is a site of great significance as the mother peak of Mt Martha and Mt Eliza.

We support healthy and liveable communities by delivering water, sewerage and recycled water services to 1.87 million people who rely on us every day and every night.

Our service area borders more than 270 kilometres of coastline and covers a land area of 3,640 square kilometres from Port Melbourne to Portsea and approximately 30 kilometres east of Pakenham. We operate a range of infrastructure sites across the region with our headquarters in Frankston.

To deliver for our customers, we manage more than 26,300 kilometres of pipeline. We own, operate and maintain \$4.7 billion of assets including water, recycled water and sewerage networks.

This includes:

- more than 14,127 kilometres of water mains*
- more than 11,069 kilometres of sewer mains*
- more than 1,124 kilometres of recycled water mains*
- 82 water pump stations
- 275 sewage pump stations
- 8 recycled water pump stations
- 8 water recycling plants
- 1 stormwater treatment plant.

*All figures quoted as at 31 March 2020.

Each year we deliver more than 134 billion litres of drinking water and collect more than 117 billion litres of wastewater (waste from the toilet, shower, laundry and kitchen in the home and from businesses) at our local water recycling plants and at Melbourne Water's Eastern and Western Treatment Plants.

We're a water corporation under the Water Act 1989. The activities of our organisation are governed by the Water Act 1989 and the Statement of Obligations issued by the Minister for Water under Section 41 of the Water Industry Act 1994.

About our customers

Our customers live in one of Australia's most culturally diverse regions, and speak more than 200 languages.

Our water and sewer network covers high-rise communities in Southbank through to growth suburbs in the Casey-Cardinia region, and from intensive industrial areas in Dandenong, to small agricultural holdings in Somerville.

Ninety-two per cent of our customers are residential and rely on us for their home water and wastewater services. Our business customers make up the remaining eight per cent and they rely on us for commercial and industrial purposes, as well as agricultural, recreation and community use.

We want to create a better world for our customers, whether they're connected to our services, or stakeholders, partners or simply part of our community. Over the past year we've been on a journey to better understand them and increasingly align our activities and our organisation around that ambition.

About First Nations peoples in south east Melbourne

Living within our region are approximately 8,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with just under one-fifth residing in the Casey council area followed by Frankston (16 per cent) and the Mornington Peninsula (16 per cent). The age profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across our region tends to be younger with fewer in full or part time employment. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across our region are also much more likely to be renting their home.

An inclusive workplace for all

We focus on an inclusive workplace that supports employees of all ages, all abilities, the LGBTIQ+ community and Australia's many cultures. Our RAP strives to build equality and foster a respectful relationship with First Nations peoples as part of our overall commitment to whole-of-organisation education on diversity leadership and positive workplace behaviours.

Working behind the scenes we have more than 600 employees working as engineers, scientists, analysts, emergency technicians, information technology and customer support people.

In a 2019 employee survey we had one person self-identify as being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. During summer 2019/20 we have had three Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander interns; two of these interns have continued with us with ongoing employment.

Our workforce is supported by a range of highly skilled partners. They're contractors, property developers, plumbers, builders, real estate agents, council workers as well as counsellors and mediation specialists.

While they may not all wear the South East Water 'badge', we consider them to be our own people and they're very much part of how we meet the needs of our customers.

We're committed to providing a diverse and inclusive work environment, where each and every employee feels safe and valued. We recognise the challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with 'working in two worlds' and have an action in our RAP to support our understanding of these challenges.

Recognising First Nations representative groups in our service area

We recognise the important role First Nations representative groups have in the ongoing management of water resources in Melbourne's south-east.

At present there are two Registered Aboriginal Parties covering parts of our service area:

- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

A third representative group, The Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council, is currently contesting who should be the Registered Aboriginal Party to represent these lands. There's an area of contested land within our service area, which in a formal sense remains unallocated to a Registered Aboriginal Party.

We would also like to acknowledge the important role of Gathering Places and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in our region. These are important community places with significant membership and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in our region. They are a vital connection point for South East Water.

For our part we'll continue to be open, transparent and impartial when we engage with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members living within our service region. As we engage in different ways and times on a range of projects and initiatives, we'll take the time to listen to and understand ideas and recommendations that are informed by a rich culture and valued lived experience.

Our RAP

Aboriginal Engagement Strategy 2017

In November 2017 we launched our Aboriginal Engagement Strategy in consultation with Traditional Owner groups: Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council (formerly known as Boon Wurrung Foundation), and Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (formerly known as Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council).

Within the strategy we proudly acknowledged First Nations peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we rely and operate.

We also acknowledged the continual care and protection of cultural, social and spiritual connections First Nations peoples have with land and water.

The strategy committed us to working in partnership with local Traditional Owners to ensure their ongoing contribution to the future of water management in the region and incorporate First Nations values into our operations.

Our Aboriginal Engagement Strategy saw an increase in engagement on key projects and management plans, and direct engagement by our Executive and Board.

The next step under the strategy for us was to develop this RAP.

Our engagement with First Nations peoples and communities

Our activities with First Nations peoples and communities in the region have included engagements with Nairn Marr Djambana Aboriginal Gathering Place in Frankston, Willum Warrain Aboriginal Gathering Place in Hastings, Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Limited, the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council.

We've conducted cultural awareness activities at Board, senior executive level to other employees and proactively starting land access discussions for a culturally significant wetland area in the region.

We've learnt a lot during this time, increasing our appetite to do more, but in the right way. Our learnings have found their way into how we developed this RAP.

Activities or actions already in place ahead of our first RAP

Ahead of the release of this RAP we have put in place the following actions:

- protocols for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations
- engagement plan for consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations
- anti-discrimination policies and training on these
- a review of cultural learning needs of our organisation (action outcomes reflected below), including opportunities for participation by RAP Working Group members and other key staff in our organisation
- human resources policies and procedures to allow participation in NAIDOC Week
- development of a cultural awareness module into diversity and inclusion training for our employees

- engagement with local Traditional Owners/Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups on approaches to cultural learning (see pages 16 – 17 'Our Approach')
- preparation of a procurement strategy inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups
- human resources and recruitment procedures and policies to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace
- three First Nations summer internships completed in March 2020
- cultural awareness training from December 2019 for teams hosting First Nations interns, Customer and Community Engagement, Future Water Strategy, Liveable Water Solutions, People and Safety and our RAP and EMBRACE working groups
- an assessment and confirmation of resources needed to complete this RAP
- engagement of senior leaders on delivery of the RAP
- appointment of a RAP executive sponsor from senior management (General Manager Customer and Community Engagement).

Snapshot of our engagement with First Nations peoples and communities 2018-2019 (excluding consultation on our RAP)

- Victorian NAIDOC Gala Ball with South East Water invitation to Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation to attend
- South East Water Leadership Team meeting celebrating NAIDOC week with Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation including Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony
- Discussions with and letter of support for Nairn Marr Djambana Aboriginal Gathering Place's application under the Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Program
- 8 Ways of Knowing: First Nations cultural knowledge exchange training
- Ceremony celebrating the handover of Galeena Beek to Traditional Owners
- Participation in the Frankston City Council Dhelk Dja program hosted by Nairn Marr Djambana Aboriginal Gathering Place
- Policy presentation by the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation at the South East Water Board meeting
- South East Water tour of Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association Gathering Place
- Wetland Planting Day, a South East Water initiative, with the Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association
- Table with Nairn Marr Djambana Aboriginal Gathering Place representatives at the Long Lunch hosted by Michael Long for National Reconciliation Week
- Table with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the Frankston Mornington Peninsula NAIDOC ball, and at the Victoria Gala NAIDOC ball
- Attendance at Nairn Marr Djambana Aboriginal Gathering Place's presentation of the development of its community infrastructure
- Formal Welcome to Country for team strategy day offsites, RAP artwork launch, launch of a water saving home



10th Annual CareerTrackers Gala Dinner

From Left: Peter Chamberlain, Special Projects Manager; Andrew Harman, Customer Channels Manager; Ella Linton-Smith, Senior Product Owner; Sam Beaumont, UX Designer & First Nations Intern; Lisa Watena-Tapa, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor; Evan Grosvenor, Science/Engineering Student & First Nations Intern; Japheth Langerak, Engineering Graduate & First Nations Intern.



South East Water RAP Art Launch

From left: Lucia Cade, Chair, South East Water; Lisa Watene-Tapa, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor, South East Water; Uncle Shane Clarke, Bunurong Elder; Paul Edbrooke MP, State Member for Frankston.

Regulatory considerations

There are several important regulatory requirements in Victoria guiding our engagement with Aboriginal groups and Torres Strait Islander groups.

Water for Victoria

Under the Victorian Government's current water plan, Water for Victoria, Aboriginal values are to be included in all aspects of water planning, management and water allocations including:

- Recognising Aboriginal values and objectives of water
- Including Aboriginal values and traditional ecological knowledge in water planning
- Supporting Aboriginal access to water for economic development
- Building capacity to increase Aboriginal participation in water management.

Victorian Water Industry Performance reporting

In addition, all Victorian water organisations are required to report against several measures set out in the Victorian Water Industry Performance Reporting Framework.

The Victorian Water Industry Performance Reporting Framework requires us to report on:

- a strategy that demonstrates how the water corporation will build capability and understanding of procurement processes to address barriers for Aboriginal enterprises to supply goods/services to water corporations
- number of sponsorships of Aboriginal people in relevant study and training courses, including scholarships
- staff participation in a cross-cultural training course (by relevant Traditional Owner) in the last five years
- number of engagements with Traditional Owners in water planning and management and report on outcomes

- number of pilot programs to test different ways to achieve shared benefits
- effective and genuine engagement of Traditional Owners for inclusion of First Nations values in water planning
- effective and genuine engagement of First Nations communities for involvement in business opportunities and access to water for economic development
- the preparation of an Aboriginal Inclusion Plan or Reconciliation Action Plan
- adopting a one per cent target for First Nations people in the business consistent with Victorian Government policy and work to a target of three per cent by 2020
- actions taken to improve participation by Traditional Owners in Board committees and other organisational committees.

Water Act amendments

In October 2019 a number of amendments to the Water Act 1989 and the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CALP Act) came into effect and provide for greater recognition and inclusion of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians in the management and planning of waterways and catchments.

These amendments require us to:

- Appoint or include at least one Aboriginal representative in a consultative committee when preparing various water plans
- Consider Aboriginal cultural values and uses of waterways and give notice to Aboriginal representative groups when preparing various water plans so that there is an opportunity to have input into their preparation.

Our approach

We've taken a long-term view to our approach to engaging First Nations people.

Our RAP has evolved from what we believe is an important starting point, to develop a shared understanding of the land and waterways in which we operate.

RAP Working Group

The development of our RAP, and actions already underway, are overseen by our RAP Working Group. This group has representatives from a cross section of our organisation including Customer and Community Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion, Liveable and Sustainable Futures, Wastewater Network, Environment, Strategic Procurement and IT.

Our RAP Working Group has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation (Samantha Beaumont and Japheth Langerak) and external First Nations advice was obtained in the preparation of our actions (Jason Mifsud and Terori Hareko-Samios). The project sponsor of our RAP is our General Manager Customer and Community Engagement. All activities of our RAP Working Group are reported to our diversity and inclusion working group, EMBRACE.

South East Water RAP Working Group

- **Mikala Hehir**
General Manager Customer and Community Engagement (Executive Sponsor for the RAP)
- **Lisa Watene-Tapa**
Diversity and Inclusion Advisor (Program Manager for the RAP)
- **Scott Collins**
Environment, Engagement and Approvals Manager
- **Andrew Sieber**
Group Manager Liveable and Sustainable Futures
- **Kate Forehan**
Brand and Design Lead (Creative Lead for the RAP)
- **Peter O'Donoghue**
Chief Information Officer
- **Matthew Yam**
Strategic Procurement Coordinator
- **Charles Swain**
Wastewater Network Manager
- **Samantha Beaumont**
UX Designer in Customer Experience and Engagement
- **Japheth Langerak**
Engineering Graduate in Resource Recovery.
- **Terori Hareko-Avaivilla**
Senior Project Manager, First Nation Values of Water (for the duration of the preparation of this RAP)
- **Richard Peters**
Daymark Director (for the duration of the preparation of this RAP)
- **Jason Mifsud**
Mifsud Consulting (for the duration of the preparation of this RAP).

The membership of our RAP Working Group will evolve as our RAP progresses. It is our intention to include additional external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and also from our employee base.

Coastal She-oak growing on the dunes in Mount Eliza.

Aboriginal people have utilised Australia's native flora and fauna for millennia. The land provided them with everything they needed for a healthy life and they managed it in a way that its abundant resources were renewable and sustainable. Plants were valued not only for food, but for medicines, spirituality and many other things. The long leaves of sedges, rushes and lilies were collected by women to make baskets and mats, and soaked and beaten to make string.

Understanding the cultural landscape

In preparing our RAP, we first sought to build a picture of the cultural landscape of the area in which we operate in – the story about our service area and its catchment features from a First Nations perspective.

We did this to identify cultural pathways, areas of cultural significance, and tracts or landscape features with cultural significance. Our aim was to find a common basis for all our future conversations with Traditional Owner groups. This formed our first conversations on our RAP with Traditional Owner groups, and the basis for developing our vision and action areas for our RAP.

Our conversations with Traditional Owner groups on the cultural map are continuing and form an action under our RAP.

Developing South East Water's vision for reconciliation

With the cultural landscape map underway, we then held an internal workshop to draft our vision for reconciliation and action areas.

The workshop addressed such questions as:

- From what we now know about the cultural landscape of the region, what are our responsibilities to the cultural history of the area, and what are our responsibilities with the future use and management of water resources in the area?
- What can we do as an organisation to assist reconciliation based on what we see here?
- What are our management strategies to address things like: Relationships, Opportunities, Respect?

We identified four principles: collaboration, custodianship, empowerment, and knowledge.

Traditional Owner groups then reviewed our draft vision and action areas. We also presented these to a wider group of our employees for input during National Reconciliation Week 2019.

Development of actions

With our vision and action areas in place, we held a further round of meetings with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council to get feedback on our draft actions.

These discussions had a strong focus on the procurement and employment actions, as well as ensuring we continued to work towards a comprehensive understanding of the cultural values of the region.

Draft actions from our RAP were shared with Nairm Marr Djambana Aboriginal Gathering Place in Frankston, Willum Warrain Aboriginal Gathering Place in Hastings, and the Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Limited.



This sculpture commemorates the Bunurong people, custodians of the Westernport region from time immemorial.

This and other sculptures depicting Aboriginal peoples can be found nestled into a rock wall within the gardens at the top of Wonga (Arthurs Seat State Park). Sculpted by William Ricketts, they demonstrate his appreciation of the Aboriginal way of life, culture, and their respect for Mother Nature.



Relationships

We believe that strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples builds understanding, collaboration, and ultimately real and sustainable outcomes and opportunities for us all. Continuing our activities to build strong relationships will allow us to discover the knowledge, cultural and spiritual values of water, and its connections with land and people.



Action	Deliverables	Timeframe	Responsibility	South East Water focus area
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 review and update our guiding principles for future engagement.	December 2020 December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Collaboration
2. Ensure ongoing and transparent consultation with First Nations peoples across the South East Water region above standard planning and management requirements.	Put in place a process to ensure greater coordination and more efficient consultation processes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations and Melbourne metropolitan water corporations.	December 2020	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Collaboration
	Develop and implement an annual engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and groups with an interest in advancing the cultural values of water.	December 2020 December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Collaboration
	Identify and implement actions to improve the participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations in Board committees and other organisational committees.	December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Collaboration
	Continue to ensure there's a First Nations representative on our Customer and Community Advisory Council.	June 2022	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Collaboration
3. Increase the level of Board visibility to First Nations matters.	Review our Board charter to ensure it adopts a best practice approach to the consideration of the cultural and economic values of water held by First Nations people.	July 2020	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Collaboration
	Ensure the Board reviews progress with our RAP at least annually.	December 2020 December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Collaboration
	Ensure the Board undergoes cultural awareness training through an accredited cultural awareness training provider	December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Knowledge

Action	Deliverables	Timeframe	Responsibility	South East Water focus area
4. Continue to build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to employees.	27 May – 3 June 2021 27 May – 3 June 2022	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 June 2021 27 May – 3 June 2022	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	Promote and encourage all employees to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 June 2021 27 May – 3 June 2022	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	Organise at least one internal NRW event each year.	27 May – 3 June 2021 27 May – 3 June 2022	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	Register our NRW event on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	27 May – 3 June 2021 27 May – 3 June 2022	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
5. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Implement strategies to engage our staff in reconciliation.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	Collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation.	December 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
6. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment
	Implement, review and update our anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge



Respect

We believe that our ongoing respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will ensure true custodianship of water where cultural values and connection to water are visible and accounted for in our plans and in how the community views and holds pride in this important resource.



Action	Deliverables	Timeframe	Responsibility	South East Water focus area
7. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols to consider other cultural protocols (in addition to Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country).	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	June 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge
	Work with a local First Nations artist to create a piece of culturally relevant First Nations art that visually represents the South East Water RAP story and display at our corporate headquarters, WatersEdge.	June 2020	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Collaboration
	Prepare and place Acknowledgement of Country plaques at our main office locations, above ground major infrastructure, for our website and official publications.	June 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	December 2020 December 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	December 2020 December 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge
8. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Hold an annual employee forum with First Nations representatives to expand relationships and cultural understanding.	December 2020 December 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge
	Prepare an induction pack on our RAP, opportunities for cultural learning, and protocols for engaging with First Nations people.	June 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge
	Conduct a further review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	June 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration

Action	Deliverables	Timeframe	Responsibility	South East Water focus area
	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our employees.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge
	Hold six-monthly 'story sessions' to bring First Nations culture and knowledge into our organisation.	December 2020 December 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy.	December 2020 December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Collaboration
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	December 2020 December 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Knowledge
9. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to employees participating in NAIDOC Week.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment
	Celebrate and recognise NAIDOC Week with an internally organised event.	November 2020 First week in July 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Custodianship
	Ensure RAP Working Group participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	November 2020 First week in July 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
	Promote and encourage all employees to participate in external NAIDOC events.	November 2020 First week in July 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Collaboration
10. Increase the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through the use of artwork on infrastructure.	Establish a protocol or process for commissioning First Nations artwork.	December 2020	Wastewater Network Manager	Collaboration
	Ensure that First Nations art is included on at least three facilities as part of our art renewal project.	December 2021	Wastewater Network Manager	Collaboration

Action	Deliverables	Timeframe	Responsibility	South East Water focus area
11. Ensure cultural values of water/land are progressed as part of our planning processes and in our collaborative work such as the Integrated Water Management (IWM) Forums.	Engage with First Nations peoples in scoping the projects that arise out of IWM forums.	December 2020	Group Manager Liveable and Sustainable Futures	Custodianship
	Examine IWM and Biodiversity projects to incorporate cultural values, interpretative signage and other First Nations opportunities on at least two projects.	December 2021	Group Manager Liveable and Sustainable Futures	Custodianship
	Ensure ongoing part funding for a Traditional Owner consultation service from the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation for water projects and strategies.	July 2020	Environment, Engagement and Approvals Manager	Knowledge
12. Increase our commitment to cultural heritage assessment and management.	Review and expand our procedure and policy for cultural heritage management activities to ensure it reflects best practice.	December 2020	Environment, Engagement and Approvals Manager	Knowledge
13. In consultation with Traditional Owner groups, develop a cultural map of the South East Water Region to build an understanding of the lands on which we operate.	Consult with Traditional Owner groups to complete a cultural map of our region.	December 2020	Environment, Engagement and Approvals Manager	Knowledge



Mornington Peninsula has a rich Aboriginal history and is home to many significant cultural sites including Pelican Point beach on Port Phillip Bay, Mount Eliza. The bay is framed by high bluffs and rocks which reveal a beautiful palette of ochre clays where Aboriginal people collected pigments for painting. Ochre was used for painting but mostly to cover wooden tools and to paint the body for ceremony. Red ochre gives the tool its spirit. Different colours were also used to express different feelings. White was often used to signify anger, aggression or sorrow.



Opportunities

We believe that opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are about empowerment and we can continue to accelerate this through employment, procurement, community participation and better customer outcomes for First Nations peoples.



Action	Deliverables	Timeframe	Responsibility	South East Water focus area
14. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Continue to offer annual summer (November to February) internships for at least three First Nations people each year.	October 2020 October 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	December 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment
	Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in our workforce.	December 2020 December 2021	General Manager People and Safety	Empowerment
	Continue to build an understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	June 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	June 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy to achieve a one per cent employment target for First Nations people and work towards a target of three per cent.	December 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment
	Identify opportunities to assist the funding of up to three traineeships with maintenance and construction contracts.	December 2021	Strategic Procurement Manager	Empowerment
15. Support equal and equitable education opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	Identify and support participation in a relevant study or training course or scholarship for our First Nations interns or employees.	December 2020 December 2021	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Empowerment

Action	Deliverables	Timeframe	Responsibility	South East Water focus area
16. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Implement, review and update an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy, and establish baseline targets for future years based on the results of the previous years' implementation.	June 2021	Strategic Procurement Manager	Empowerment
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	December 2021	Strategic Procurement Manager	Empowerment
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	December 2021	Strategic Procurement Manager	Empowerment
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses to increase the number of direct new contracts (and spend) targeting procurement opportunities up to \$5 million in value.	December 2021	Strategic Procurement Manager	Empowerment
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	December 2021	Strategic Procurement Manager	Collaboration



Governance

To report publicly, transparently and regularly on our progress with our actions under our 2020-22 RAP.



Action	Deliverables	Timeframe	Responsibility	South East Water focus area
17. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	June 2020	Diversity and Inclusion Advisor	Tracking and reporting
	Engage our senior leaders and other employees in the delivery of RAP commitments.	December 2020 December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Tracking and reporting
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	December 2020 December 2021	Community Manager	Tracking and reporting
	Maintain an internal RAP Champion (or RAP project sponsor) from senior management.	December 2020 December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Tracking and reporting
18. Maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	June 2020	Community Manager	Tracking and reporting
	Hold quarterly RWG meetings.	September 2020 December 2020 March 2021 June 2021 September 2021 December 2021 March 2022 June 2022	Community Manager	Tracking and reporting
	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representation on the RWG.	December 2020 December 2021	Community Manager	Collaboration

Action	Deliverables	Timeframe	Responsibility	South East Water focus area
19. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2021 30 September 2022	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Tracking and reporting
	Ensure that we report our full commitment to the cultural and economic values of water under the "obligations reporting" for the Victorian State Government.	September 2020 September 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Tracking and reporting
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	December 2020 December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Tracking and reporting
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	December 2020 December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Tracking and reporting
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	April 2022	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Tracking and reporting
20. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2021	General Manager Customer and Community Engagement	Tracking and reporting



A traditional smoking ceremony performed by Bunurong Elder Uncle Shane Clarke at Frankston beach, just outside our WatersEdge office.

Dan Turnbull, Chief Executive Officer, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation has shared the origins and significance of smoking ceremonies to the Bunurong people.

Karakgarook, a female, was the only one who could make fire initially. She would not share it with anyone and kept it in the end of her yam stick. Waa, the crow, the trickster, knew she was fond of ant eggs and so buried many snakes under an ant hill and invited Karakgarook to come and dig up their eggs. As she dug, the snakes popped out and she dropped her stick, some fire fell out. Waa was nearly as selfish and took it away. He would not share it but offered to cook the people's food for them with it instead, always keeping the best parts of the food for himself. Bunjil was angry at this, he gathered all the people who spoke harshly at Waa and he became afraid. He threw the fire on the ground to burn the people, many of whom took some of the fire. Two of Bunjil's sons took some fire and threw it near Waa, the grass around him burned fast and he was burnt black. Bunjil turned him into a crow. Bunjil's two sons were also burnt in the fire and turned to stone. They are now two large stones at the foot of the Tanjenong (Dandenong) Mountain.

The smoking ceremony was a part of daily life for Bunurong people. It was used to cleanse people, places or objects and we continue this practice today. The ceremony would typically involve collecting the correct vegetation from the nearest possible location; Eucalyptus, which represents the mob (the people) due to its many varieties, Native Cherry, which represents the children due to it needing a host plant to feed from, and wattle which represents the Elders. In some instances, Eucalyptus was used on its own but Native Cherry is a flame retardant and assists to produce thick smoke and keep the flames down. The smell from these three types of vegetation fuses together when heated, into something new and powerful. Smoke was considered a vehicle that lost spirits could use to travel to the Tharangalk-beek (Sky Country) to join their ancestors.

Get in touch

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