



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

 **2023 NATIONAL
FOLK FEST**
MUSIC. CULTURE. GOOD TIMES.



**Reflect Reconciliation
Action Plan 2023**



PREFACE

Message from the President of the NFF Board



The National Folk Festival Board is delighted to be lodging our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This is a Reflect RAP and will lay the foundations for our Reconciliation journey and prepare the National Folk Festival for future initiatives. While the Festival has long placed importance on including First Peoples artists as part of our programming, it is important that we expand the partnership we have with First Peoples Communities and hold ourselves accountable to a clearly articulated commitment through this RAP. This is our first such plan and we will continue to develop this plan in consultation with the Traditional Owners on whose Lands our annual Festival is held. We will also continue to liaise with communities from across Australia who are participating in the Festival and working with us. As you will see in this document there are some very practical steps the

National Folk Festival can take in boosting our commitment to reconciliation, including working to ensure our Board has the right membership diversity, looking at our corporate policies and ensuring our reporting very transparently reflects progress against our RAP. We sincerely welcome this opportunity to be part of Australia's broader reconciliation journey.

David Gilks, March 2023

Our cover photo is of Alinta Barlow, a First Australian and proud Ngunnawal woman. Alinta performed My Island Home in Ngunnawal language at the Opening Concert of the 2022 National Folk Festival and was a featured artist in our 2023 line-up.

Acknowledgement of Country

The National Folk Festival acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters, and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to Elders past, present, and emerging.

We especially acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Lands upon which our annual festival takes place, the Ngunnawal/Ngambri Peoples, their Elders past, present and emerging, and their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of our region.

Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes The National Folk Festival to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

The festival joins a network of more than 2,200 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.

— 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 the National Folk Festival 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 to the National Folk Festival, 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

Contents:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Our Business**
- 3. Our Vision for Reconciliation**
- 4. Our RAP**
- 5. Our Actions**
- 6. Relationships**
- 7. Respect**

1. Introduction

The National Folk Festival (the Festival) is proud to be launching its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), as the Festival marks 56 years overall as Australia's most important national folk performance event.

The Festival operates in a continually changing and competitive event landscape. Its partnership with the broader community is vital to its long-term sustainability. The Festival plays a crucial role in Australia's folklife, providing a national meeting place for celebrating past, current and emerging folk traditions. The Festival is committed to investing in partnerships with communities across Canberra and beyond. The ongoing integrity and ethos of the event will increasingly be measured by the Festival's enduring commitment to diversity and inclusion, in particular its respect for, and partnership with, our First Peoples, in particular the Ngunnawal/Ngambri Peoples.

In 2022, the Festival returned to its annual Easter event after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our program in 2022 was developed, in part, around the important milestone of 30 years of the Festival on Ngunnawal/Ngambri Lands. Uncle Archie Roach performed his final concert on this Country at the Festival, including performing at the Opening Concert, singing alongside (then) 13-year-old emerging Gubbi Gubbi artist Layla Barnett. Yothu Yindi also performed their iconic song *Treaty* at the 2022 Festival. The celebration of both emerging and established First Peoples' talent will continue to be a focus for growth in the Festival's programming. The Festival acknowledges this is an important focus for future planning.

Much has changed in Australia's reconciliation journey since the 1990s, and the Festival has changed along with it. In 2023, the Festival recognises that it needs to contribute to this journey more formally through proactively supporting reconciliation. As a festival based permanently in Canberra, our relationship with the Traditional Owners of the Lands upon which the annual Easter festival is held, the Ngunnawal/Ngambri Peoples, will become an increasing focus of our festival planning and consultation. We will work with First Peoples performers from across the nation, being respectful of their culture and language.

The Festival is excited by the opportunities for new and deeper partnerships and connections with First Peoples in how it plans, develops and delivers our Festival and any associated events.

2. Our Business

National Folk Festival Limited (NFF Ltd) is a limited liability non-profit company formed for the purpose of presenting the annual National Folk Festival (the Festival). The Managing Director reports directly to the Board of Directors of NFF Ltd and is responsible for the delivery of the Festival in accordance with the strategic plan, budget and policies approved by the Board.

The National Folk Festival started life as the Port Phillip District Folk Music Festival on the weekend of the 11th and 12th of February in 1967 at the Teachers College, Melbourne University. A second Festival was held in Melbourne in 1968 and then, in 1969 it was relocated to Brisbane. From then on, it crisscrossed the country, being held annually in a different state/territory under the auspices of the Australian Folk Trust.

The last travelling National Folk Festival was held in 1992 when NFF Ltd was formed for the primary purpose of annually conducting the event. From 1993 the National Folk Festival was permanently located in Canberra where it established its current home at Exhibition Park in Canberra (EPIC). The 2023 Easter event is a testament to the Festival's ability to remain culturally relevant and enduring. The Festival attracts more than 4,000 volunteers, stallholders, instrument makers, both national and international performers and community folk groups.

Having been confronted by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to host the Festival in Canberra in 2020 and 2021. However, during Easter 2021 the Festival launched, in consultation with Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, 'Good Folk', a smaller folk event in Queanbeyan.

The Festival is governed by a Board and has a small number of paid staff: a Managing Director, an Artistic Director, and three permanent office staff. This team is augmented by several contractors and an extensive volunteer cohort in the months leading up to the Easter event. Most Board members and staff are in Canberra, with a handful based in other cities. The volunteer team is integral to the production of the festival and comprises up to 50 Volunteer Coordinators who manage services that can involve up to 1000 volunteers. Currently there are no First Peoples employed in either the Festival office or sitting on the Board. This is something we will be working to change.

3. Our Vision for Reconciliation

Folk traditions are not static, but constantly adapting, looking to the past and to the future. At the heart of folk tradition is storytelling. The National Folk Festival cannot truly represent Australian folk tradition if it does not fully reflect the stories and experiences of our First Peoples. While the Festival has always included First Peoples' performers, storytellers and artists, our vision is to be more proactive, innovative, transparent, and accountable in the way we partner and collaborate with First Peoples artists. This goes not only to the people who perform on our many stages but also our volunteers, our artistic collaborators, employees, and our mentors.

Our ultimate vision is that by working to ensure an enduring and diverse First Peoples' element into our Festival's program each year, we help to develop a better understanding by the folk community, and the broader community, of the importance of First Peoples' music, dance, art and spoken word in Australia's deep folk tradition. This will further boost recognition that First Peoples' performance and art is our oldest continuing folk tradition. It is important there is recognition that Australia's First Peoples are not a homogenous group and that there is great diversity in their own performative traditions.

Our vision is that through better targeted programming and through new partnerships we can support the careers of emerging First Peoples' artists and provide them with the opportunity to network with established folk performers from across Australia and the world.

Our vision is that the participation of First Peoples in our Festival's programming, operations and planning is measurably greater in the coming decade and continues to grow in the future. It is vital that the links with the Ngunnawal/Ngambri Elders and Communities are consistent and regular.

Our vision is that the Festival Board improves its representation by including at least one First Peoples Board member who contributes to all aspects of Festival governance, planning and stewardship.

Our vision is that through shared participation, learning, creating, and listening, we build a deeper partnership with the Ngunnawal/Ngambri Peoples and First People performers and cultural leaders across Australia.

The Festival also recognises the importance of providing more opportunities, in particular, to emerging First Peoples performers.

4. National Folk Festival Reconciliation Action Plan

This is the National Folk Festival's first RAP. As a Reflect RAP it is our opportunity to state our intent. We acknowledge this is just the beginning of our journey and we aim to meet, and hope to exceed, community expectations in wanting to see an even more diverse and inclusive festival. We have always had a strong commitment to First Peoples' cultural experience and performance in our festival and now, for the first time, we have articulated our aspirations to deepen our relationships with First Peoples within and beyond the festival program.

The aspirations in this RAP have been referenced in our strategic vision for the National Folk Festival and will be hardwired into our governance. Over the next 12 months we will seek to appoint a First Peoples Board member. We will seek to better engage with Ngunnawal/Ngambri Elders and their Communities to ensure we understand how best to deliver on our commitments. We will also consult with Ngunnawal/Ngambri Elders and their Communities around the concept of establishing an informal First Peoples advisory group for the National Folk Festival. Before we draft our next plan, we will evaluate what has worked and ask for feedback. Where necessary we will work with specialist advisers to ensure training or guidance is provided as required.

We are committed to delivering the outcomes outlined in our Reflect RAP and the Festival Board will be accountable to track delivery against our actions. We will strive to align these commitments into the festival's business planning and strategic vision and hardwire them into our programming and our mentoring. The Festival Board will ensure the organisation is accountable for these commitments and will report against them in our Annual General Meeting each year.

The Festival will look to strengthen its ambition to support First Peoples performance as central to Australia's evolving folk tradition as it transitions to bring in new, younger audiences who have strong expectations about reflecting all Australian experience in our performative ambitions.

The Festival recognises the importance of maintaining and updating our RAP outcomes each year from here on. We will establish a RAP Working Group and will follow in the wake of a growing number of Australian cultural organisations that have registered RAPs since 2006. Through our RAP we believe we are providing a blueprint for future National Folk Festival Boards, Artistic Directors, and Managing Directors to maximise their community and other network bases to actively support the national reconciliation movement.

5. Our Actions

Relationships




Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. 	May 2023 to September 2023	Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	By March 2024	Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strive to build strong relationships with Ngunnawal/Ngambri Elders, community, and key cultural leaders. 	By March 2024	Managing Director, Artistic Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find innovative ways to engage with the Traditional Owners of the land on which this festival is held annually 	By March 2024	Managing Director, Artistic Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore new ways to engage with Elders, including an 'Elders Yarning Circle' at our 	By March 2024	Managing Director

	Festival going forward.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure we have appropriate policies in place for engagement with First Peoples performers and, if required, develop and adopt guidelines for engagement with First Peoples artists and other First Peoples stakeholders. 	By March 2024	Board members
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. 	27 May 2023 to 3 June 2023	Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. 	27 May 2023 to 3 June 2023	RAP Working Group members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. 	May - June 2023	Board members and RAP Working Group members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote deeper engagement between the Festival team and the Ngunnawal/Ngambri Peoples during NRW by inviting a guest speaker to address the Board and staff. 	May - June 2023	Board members

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a RAP Working Group 	By June 2023	Board Members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through social media and other external outreach communicate the Festival's commitment to National Reconciliation Week 	27 May-3 June 2023	Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek guidance on the value of establishing an informal external First Peoples' Advisory Group which, if set up, would provide guidance and advice on cultural and community matters 	By May 2024	Managing Director and Board members
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. 	April 2023	Board President
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. 	March 2023 to September 2023	Managing Director and Board Members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify other like-minded organisations with RAPs that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 	May 2023 to September 2023	Managing Director, Board members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following registration of our RAP, we will publish our RAP on our Festival website, 	From time of RAP registration	Managing Director

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all company members, volunteers and vendors. 	May 2023 to March 2024	Managing Director and Board President
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. 	May 2023 to March 2024	Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	May 2023 to March 2024	Managing Director and Board members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay engaged with potential broader opportunities to advance Reconciliation that may be put in place by the ACT Government 	May 2023 to March 2024	Managing Director and Board members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively engage with other folk festival organisations for more ideas to deepen our commitment to Reconciliation. Seek feedback on what has worked for them 	From May 2023 to March 2024	Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the National Folk Festival strongly promotes its commitment to inclusion and diversity in its own hiring practices for Board members, 	From May 2023 to March 2024	Board members

	staff, and the engagement of volunteer team leaders.		
--	--	--	--


			
Respect			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights within our organisation. 	August 2023 to March 2024	Managing Director

histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. 	August 2023 to March 2024	Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Festival program that builds understanding of the place of First Peoples performance and arts as a core part of Australia's folklife. 	May 2023 to March 2024	Artistic Director, Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission a Community Mural/ backdrop at the Festival site by First People's artists who will contribute to the project prior to and during the Festival. 	July 2023 to March 2024	Artistic Director, Managing Director, First Nations Artists, and community members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure we have appropriate policies in place for engagement with First Peoples performers and, if required, develop and adopt guidelines for engagement with First Peoples artists and other First Peoples stakeholders. 	From May 2023 to March 2024	Artistic Director, Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the local Traditional Owners and/or First Peoples consultants to develop cultural 	May 2023 to March 2024	Managing Director

	awareness for volunteers and Festival employees.		
--	--	--	--

Action	Deliverable	Time Frame	Responsible
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the Lands and Waters within our organisation's operational area. 	By March 2024	Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	By March 2024	Managing Director and board members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2024, implement improved recognition of Country as it relates to the venue where the Festival is held and the relevant Country all performers at the Festival. 	April 2024	Managing Director
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. 	June to July 2023	Managing Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. 	2 - 9 July 2023	Managing Director,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	2-9 July 2023	RAP Working Group, Board members
--	--	---------------	----------------------------------

Opportunities 			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. 	By March 2024	Managing Director, Board members
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. 	May 2023 to July 2023	Managing Director, Board members
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. 	May 2023 to August 2023	Managing Director

Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Investigate Supply Nation membership.	May 2023 to May 2023	Managing Director
---	---	----------------------	-------------------

CONTACT

The Managing Director
National Folk Festival
PO Box 179 Mitchell ACT 2911 Australia
E: info@folkfestival.org.au
T: 02 6262 4792