



Energy & Water
Ombudsman
Queensland

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan
January 2024 – January 2026



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

INNOVATE

Acknowledgement

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland acknowledge the Traditional Owners and their Custodianship of the lands, seas and waters of Queensland.

We pay our respects to First Nations Elders past and present and their future leaders, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country. We recognise and respect their valuable contributions to Australia and global society.

About the Artwork

The artwork tells the story of connected empowered communities across Queensland. This story is the idea of a positive future and how communities and lives thrive when they are connected.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland ensure the balance of power and empathy to empower communities, creating better systems. By reconnecting systems and communities, power flows, positively connecting people and powering the life of the country.

We are proud to have worked with Gilimbaa creative agency who designed our motif and this Reconciliation Action Plan.

ARTWORK SYMBOLISM

Connected communities
The different communities thriving within the connection of the pathways, connecting people and communities.

Diversity
Showing the range of diversity in communities and people across Queensland. Creating equitable solutions.



Connection

Connection is the outcome of all the pathways and thriving communities coming together.

Empower

Power and empathy, and the relationship of balance. Utilising the colour of 'power'.

People's stories

People's stories and lives coming together as the foundations to build better solutions and connections.

Unity

Working together and creating strong relationships through the five pillars.

ABOUT EWOQ

Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) is a free, fair, and independent dispute resolution service for those who have unresolved complaints with their electricity, gas, or water supplier. We have closed more than 155,000 cases since opening our doors in 2007.

We take complaints by web chat, phone, email, mail, fax, online, or in person at our offices in Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Cairns.

For electricity and gas complaints, our service is available to residents and small businesses across Queensland. For water complaints, we can help those in South East Queensland who are customers of Queensland Urban Utilities, Unity water, Gold Coast City Council, Redland City Council and Logan City Council.

Supporting our dispute resolution services, we work to identify systemic issues in the energy and water sector to help improve outcomes for people all over Queensland.

We have 44 employees and have an identified position for an Indigenous Community Outreach Officer and are in the process of establishing an identified position for an Indigenous Early Resolution Officer.

We deliver a variety of awareness-raising initiatives and community outreach activities to promote our services to people in Queensland who may need our help.

Through our outreach program, led by our Community Outreach Officer, we attend community events, engage with industry experts and build relationships with financial counsellors to spread the word about our service and get to know the communities we assist and support. We are committed to sharing our learnings with other relevant connections of our service, including government, industry and other ombudsman schemes.

CASE STUDY: PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR A BILL DISPUTE

An identified Indigenous customer received his final bill from his energy provider showing \$400 owing, which he paid. However, the customer then received a second final bill. The customer believed that the data for the second final bill was taken from a meter that was deemed to be faulty and did not believe this meter data considered his solar feed in.

The customer contacted us after trying to resolve the issue with his provider.

Here's how we helped:

As the customer had already contacted his provider and attempted to solve the problem himself, we offered to refer his case to a higher level and asked his energy provider to review the customer's meter and associated data.

The provider confirmed it had resolved the matter with the customer by advising the meter read data was based on actual reads taken from the removed meter. The provider advised the meter was removed and replaced due to a broken seal, which does not affect the meter read data. The provider reduced the final bill to \$400 and provided the customer with a \$50 per week payment arrangement for the final bill, which the customer was happy with.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN



Reconciliation starts with a foundation of respect, with truth-telling and stories about our culture and history to move toward a future of shared understanding and equal opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and others in our nation.

I am proud of the work we have done to further our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and First Nations peoples, working to raise awareness of our services through community outreach and engagement. We have learnt and grown as an organisation, looking at the way in which we deliver dispute resolution services and how we operate to create opportunities for employment, collaboration and connection.

With the release of our second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) I welcome the next stage of our journey towards reconciliation at EWOQ.

It has never been more important to ensure all Queenslanders are aware of, and have access to, a service where their voice will be heard, and their complaints about those essential services are taken seriously. We have travelled a challenging path over the past few years. We have come together in the face of a global pandemic, natural disaster, and now the rising costs of living affecting many of us.

We saw a 15% increase in cases closed for customers identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in the 2022-23 financial year with a higher likelihood for these customers to be experiencing credit related issues when it comes to their energy and water. This highlights the opportunities that exist to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to become confident and informed consumers, be aware of the energy needs in their communities, and ensure they are aware of their right to assistance.

The next two years will bring exciting opportunities for EWOQ to further our reconciliation work, embedding values, policies and practices that will keep us moving in the right direction – to walk as one. I look forward to sharing our progress as we deliver on this RAP.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Pires', written in a cursive style.

Jane Pires
Energy and Water Ombudsman

A MESSAGE FROM RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Reconciliation Australia commends Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland on the formal endorsement of its second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland continues to be part of a strong network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways.

An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders.

The RAP program's emphasis on relationships, respect, and opportunities gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

At the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ), we help Queenslanders resolve issues with their electricity, gas and – in South East Queensland – water providers. Our vision for reconciliation is an Australia where there is equal opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, founded on a culture of respect and shared understanding of our history that helps to close the gap between First Nations peoples and others in our nation.

Our second Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) – our Innovate RAP – showcased our ongoing commitment to engage, strengthen and maintain our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and First Nations peoples. We made improvements to the way we work, putting important policies in place to create opportunities for employment, collaboration and connection. We are now embarking on our second Innovate RAP to build new and stronger relationships with our key stakeholders to work towards truth and reconciliation.

Our vision for our second Innovate RAP is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to become confident and informed consumers, be aware of the energy needs in their communities, and ensure they are aware of their right to assistance. We strive to strengthen and advance this conversation by continuing to promote a culture of respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples both within our organisation and the communities we help across Queensland. We seek to have a positive influence across our sector, and for industry to join us in collaboration and connection so that we can all contribute to a better Australia and walk as one.

Our commitment towards reconciliation over the next two years is detailed in the actions of this plan and we hold ourselves accountable for every commitment.

OUR VALUES

Our team is focused and committed to the importance for us all to learn from each other, understand and acknowledge the history that has been experienced and work towards mutual respect, inclusion and a different positive future. Our values help guide us on this journey and underpin our vision.

Respect: We act and interact with honest and integrity—manners, respect and courtesy are a given.

Integrity: Our actions are consistent with our words and we demonstrate our values through our actions.

Competency: We encourage each other and seek opportunities to learn, and share our knowledge and ideas, to continuously improve ourselves and our service.

Accountability: Each of us is accountable and responsible for our work, attitude and behaviours.

Excellence: We strive to be the best we can be and deliver excellent service and quality results.

OUR RAP

Why are we developing a RAP?

At EWOQ, we feel a great responsibility to support the national reconciliation movement. We're passionate about creating equal opportunities for all and building a culture of respect and understanding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. By working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, we can help create positive change.

We are committed in our responsibility. Together our team will listen, learn, hear the stories, celebrate, significant events within our communities, and engage with community Elders, leaders and First Nations organisations and the wider communities across the state. We aim to create new pathways to work in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, to enable us to walk alongside them on our reconciliation journey, and to make genuine and practical contributions towards positive change for Australia's First Peoples.

Through our second Innovate RAP we will continue our reconciliation journey, assisting our team to remain focused on creating meaningful opportunities to promote mutually respectful and genuinely reciprocal relationships of shared significance.

Our RAP champions

Our second Innovate RAP is championed by the Energy and Water Ombudsman, Jane Pires, and the RAP working group (RWG), which is led by our Community Outreach Officer.

Our RAP working group

We believe it is important that our RWG consists of team members from across the organisation and each office location, including senior leadership and team members who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Our RWG includes:

- Energy and Water Ombudsman, our RAP Champion
- Community Outreach Officer, our RWG Chair
- At least one representative from the following teams:
- Dispute Resolution
- People, Capability and Culture
- Communications & Engagement
- Strategy, Operation and Governance
- At least one representative from each office location
- First Nations team members (internal and external).

Membership is a minimum of 5 team members and is to be reviewed every 12 months.

The working group meets monthly to review the progress of the deliverables of our RAP and encourages the EWOQ team to undertake initiatives that enhance our reconciliation journey, enables a learning and experience journey for the team that focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and continue to build awareness of our service.

'Reconciliation is a journey that many of us engage in everyday in one form or another. For me it is about all of us walking alongside together to face the challenges and adversities, but to also collectively find ways to resolve community worries, to support each other the best way possible and to strive for a brighter future for everyone across our great nation. Since starting work with EWOQ and chairing the RAP Working Group, this space is shifting for me, and I feel excited to be a part of continuing our EWOQ reconciliation journey which started in 2014.'

Karina, Community Outreach Officer

OUR RECONCILIATION JOURNEY

Our reconciliation journey to date

We began our journey towards reconciliation in January 2014 with the appointment of a dedicated Indigenous Conciliation and Outreach Officer, now called Community Outreach Officer. The development of our Reflect RAP (October 2018 – September 2019) laid the foundations for our internal reconciliation initiatives.

- Our first reconciliation action plan—our Reflect RAP—outlined our plan for engaging, strengthening and maintaining our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Launched in October 2018, this RAP gave us amazing opportunities to turn our good intentions into real actions.
- We launched our first Innovate RAP in January 2020, enabling the team to progress our deliverables and deliver tangible outcomes as part of our reconciliation journey. Our team members celebrated the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions, as well as fostered a shared sense of unity and identity.
- In July 2021, we launched an online cultural training program, Starting the Journey, to complement our new cultural learning strategy and develop cultural competency and capacity across our team. By 30 June 2022, 88% of team members had completed the program.
- We finalised our first Innovate RAP in December 2021, our achievements centred on strengthening and growing our First Nations networks and partnerships while providing a service with manners, respect and courtesy to First Nations customers.
- Throughout 2022 we continued to develop professional and community partnerships, using our influence in the wider community to engage, encourage and promote partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

Continuing the journey

On the recommendation of Reconciliation Australia, we started a reflection period in January 2022. During the reflection period, the RAP working group continued to meet monthly to discuss ways to continue to embed our reconciliation practices across the organisation. This included marking key days of significance and encouraging team members to join NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week celebrations.

We also considered our learnings from the previous period, celebrating the actions we had completed and reflecting on those that we can continue to build on to achieve the connections we had previously. We have considered different ways to interact with communities through partnerships and providing support to ensure that we establish and maintain connection and provide awareness of our service, particularly for hard-to-reach communities. We completed our First Nations engagement toolkit in 2023 to guide our people in their interactions and outreach activities.

With our second Innovate RAP we outline our commitment towards reconciliation over the next two years and we hold ourselves accountable for every single commitment.



EWOQ stall at Cairns NAIDOC Week event 2022.
Kimberley Hunter, Tammy Ali and Cameron Tait.

How many customers identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

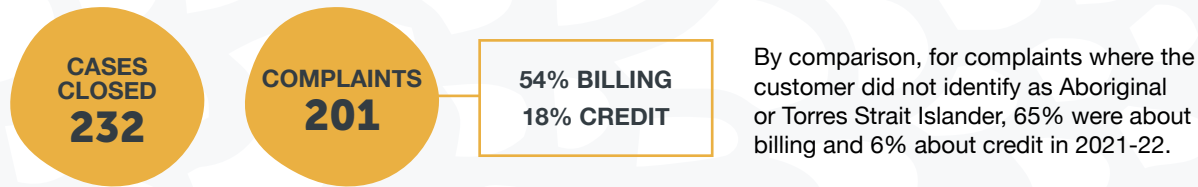
As an independent dispute resolution service, we're passionate about creating equal opportunities for all, and a culture of respect and understanding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We have asked our customers whether they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander since July 2019, which has given us more accurate insight into the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who use our service. We use this information to monitor trends affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customers and engage with industry regarding the challenges they face.

From July 2021 to June 2023, we closed 500 cases for customers who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

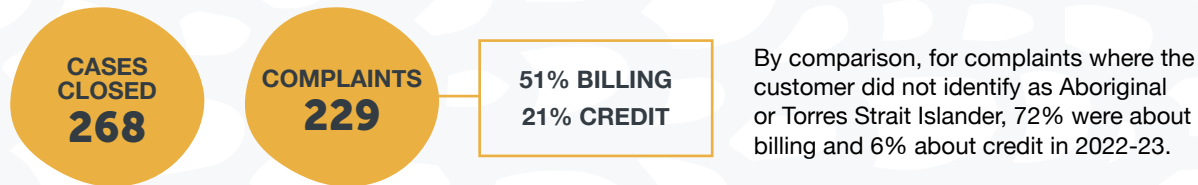
2021-22

232 cases closed for customers identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in 2021-22. This represents 4.7% of cases where the customer responded to the First Nations question.



2022-23

268 cases closed for customers identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This represents 4.9% of cases where the customer responded to the First Nations question.



Credit issues are more common for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander customers compared to those who do not identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Payment difficulties, hardship and disconnections were commonly raised credit-related matters. Billing complaints include high or disputed bills, account openings or closures, metering faults, billing errors, rebates and concessions, and meters.

CASE STUDY: UNEXPECTEDLY HIGH BILL LEAVES CUSTOMER IN SHOCK

An identified indigenous customer received an unexpectedly high bill for \$934.95. The customer contacted his energy provider who told him this bill was a back bill as they seem to have been reading the meter incorrectly. When his provider corrected the meter read data, the customers payments were reversed, and the billing amended leaving an amount owing of \$934.95.

Here's how we helped

We investigated the issue to find out:

- whether the billing that had occurred was correct
- what financial assistance was available to the customer.

We confirmed that the provider had given the correct information to the customer and the bill in dispute was due to adjusted meter read data. No billing errors were identified. The provider made a commercial offer to waive \$934.95 which left a zero-account balance for billing up to the date the issue was raised, which the customer was happy with.

EWOQ team members Tammy Ali and Cindy Nguyen manning EWOQ stall at Cairns NAIDOC Week 2023 event.

Helping
Queenslanders
every day.



CASE STUDY:

EWOQ visited Thursday Island in May 2023 where we met with a range of government agencies and community organisations and visited the power station. We were able to share information about our services at the Winds of Zenadth Cultural Festival and hear about the unique issues the community faces. By taking part in this trip, we were able to deepen our understanding of the energy environment in our more remote communities to help inform how we can best provide support services.

'I met some amazing people in my time on Thursday Island and found the trip to be insightful and valuable.'

Jane Pires, Energy and Water Ombudsman.

Community outreach

Each year we take part in a variety of community outreach activities to raise awareness of the services we offer as part of our community outreach program. Since our first Innovate RAP was put into action, we have continued to grow our connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support networks.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on our community outreach activities and face-to-face interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities during 2020. While movement was restricted, our team members focused on developing tools and resources for community members and workers. The lock down periods also provided our team members with opportunities to build their own cultural capability and embed cultural considerations when developing policies and procedures. We maintained our reconciliation commitments by staying connected, virtually, with other RAP organisations, sharing information, resources and attending webinars and conferences.

When the state opened up in 2021, we increased our outreach activity to ensure issues and concerns about electricity within First Nations communities were heard. We also provided training opportunities for First Nations community workforce during the first half of 2021.

Over the next two years we would connect with a range of community organisations throughout Queensland with a focus on information sessions for community workers, visits to community and neighbourhood centres, and attendance at interagency meetings.

- We have taken part in NAIDOC Week celebrations in Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Cairns for the past nine years.
- We visited community leaders in Cherbourg, Kuranda, Atherton, Thursday Island, Mount Isa, and Bundaberg to discuss energy issues unique to their communities throughout 2021 and 2022.
- We attended the Financial Wellbeing Information Exchange Forum hosted by The Logan Financial Literacy Advisory Group (FLAG) to share information about our services. FLAG aims to increase financial capability and knowledge for Logan people, reduce the prevalence of problem gambling, and improve credit choices community members make.
- Our team members participated in the Yarrabah Yarnin' Energy Day in 2021 and engaged with the Moreton Bay Murri Network attending the Murri Expo at Morayfield in 2022.
- We delivered an information session to team members at Ngoonbi Community Services Indigenous Corporation in Kuranda in 2022, discussing ways that we can partner to further share information about our services.

- We arranged to meet with Central Queensland Indigenous Development in early 2023 to provide overview of what EWOQ does and how we can support First Nations customers across Queensland. A key conversation topic was about developing a version of our Easy English brochure in First Nations Murri language that can be used across the state.
- Engaged with Deadly Indigenous Youth Doing Good (DIYDG) in Cairns ahead of NRW 2023 to talk about opportunities to collaborate. DIYDG are a youth led organisation founded in 2016 by a group of empowered young people who aim to inspire, equip and empower the next generation to take action that changes their world, and provide a platform for young people to co-design and lead their own projects.
- The EWOQ team in Rockhampton attended the Darumbal Community Youth Service (DCYS) Youth Forum to celebrate National Reconciliation Week 2023. We sponsored DCYS to support the organisation to make multiple buses available to transport students from school to the event and back. It also provided traditional Aboriginal dancing for the Welcome to Country performance by sponsoring the event.
- Apunipima Cape York Health Council, an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation providing comprehensive primary health care to 17 Cape York communities. We reached out to Apunipima Cape York Health Council to deliver an educational Truth Telling session during National Close the Gap Day by engaging with Elders and staff who work across Cape York, Mossman, and the Torres Strait. However, this session did not go ahead due to unforeseen circumstances. We continue to grow this relationship with a view to have the organisation partner with us on delivering an event for National Reconciliation Week 2024.
- We attended the Winds of Zenadth cultural festival on Thursday Island during National Reconciliation Week 2023 with an information booth that allowed our team to engage with families, community organisations and government agencies from across the Northern Peninsula Area region.

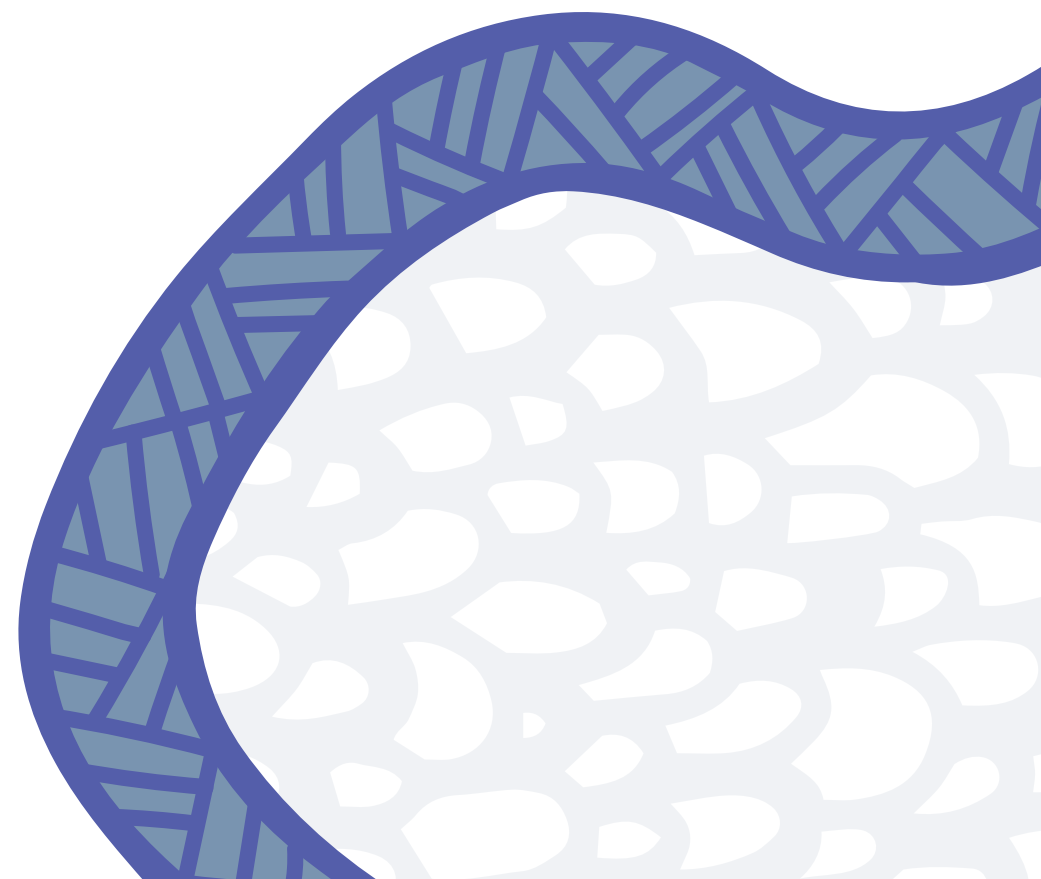
We have developed new partnerships and strengthened existing partnerships to extend the reach of our community outreach, working with our partners to create a space to have discussions about how we can help communities across Queensland and share our reconciliation journey.

Our partnerships and current activities

As part of our commitment to reconciliation we are fostering professional and community partnerships and undertaking initiatives that progress our reconciliation journey. With our Community Outreach Officer based in Cairns, we have built strong connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in North Queensland. We strive to strengthen and nurture our connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and stakeholders across Queensland as part of this Innovate RAP.

We have built and maintained informal partnerships with Cherbourg Aboriginal Regional Council, Minjerribah Moorgumpin Traditional Elders-in-Council, Moreton Bay Murri Network Yarning Circle, and the Darumbal Community Youth Service Inc.

Our Community Outreach Officer continues to engage with the Murri Network Yarning Circle to leverage awareness raising activities through sharing information with the network about EWOQ services and other community initiatives.



Community

We have maintained strong productive working relationships with peak and representative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations throughout Queensland.

Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network (ICAN)

ICAN provides consumer education, advocacy, and financial counselling services to Indigenous consumers across the nation. We have a formal partnership with ICAN and attend quarterly meetings of the ICAN North Qld Indigenous Consumer Taskforce. The Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network Ltd (ICAN). Stakeholders involved in the taskforce deals with specific portions of legislation, allowing consumer cases to be examined collaboratively to determine holistic strategies that will assist with systemic issues. By meeting to discuss common issues and working collaboratively, we gain a greater understanding of energy and water issues experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, and how we can help.

Thriving Communities Partnership (TCP)

We are also actively involved in cross-sector collaboration through the TCP, a cross-sector collaboration with the goal of everybody having fair access to the modern essential services they need to thrive in contemporary Australia, including utilities, financial services, telecommunications, and transport.

The TCP recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are far more likely to experience financial hardship and a lower general standard of living than non-Indigenous Australians and are working towards providing Australia's first centralised platform for collaboration, learning, research, and projects that advance organisational contributions to combatting customer vulnerability and hardship. Through this association, we are aiming to better respond to issues of vulnerability and inclusion and enhance customer trust. We share accountability for issues through transparent conversation with business, government, regulators, and the community.

Australian Training Works

We have a formal partnership with Australian Training Works and aim to engage them further in recruiting a trainee in our Dispute Resolution team in the identified role of Early Resolution Officer.

Inter-agency

Local Thriving Communities (LTC)

LTC is a significant, long-term reform that will result in a visibly unique way of government working with communities led by the Queensland Government's Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities, and the Arts (DTATSIPCA). LTC requires government and community to work together to move decision-making closer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, embrace self-determination, and engage in high expectations relationships so that service design and delivery better meet the needs of each community.

We have engaged with DTATSIPCA to contribute to the interim Local Decision-Making Body for Southern Tablelands (Atherton) and Northern Tablelands (Mareeba) through information-sharing and ongoing consultation. Interim Local Decision-Making Bodies are also being developed in the Jumbun Community, Innisfail and Cairns and the Cape York region.

North Queensland Indigenous Consumer Taskforce

Developed as a coordinated approach to tackling Indigenous consumer disadvantage in the region caused by traders and telemarketers, the taskforce has a regional action plan to coordinate joint consumer outreach and investigation activities, share educational resources and information about current consumer issues in Indigenous communities throughout North Queensland. We have been part of the North Queensland Indigenous Consumer Taskforce since 2013 in partnership with ICAN, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Queensland Office of Fair Trading. Other taskforce members include Shelter Housing Action Cairns, the Cairns Community Legal Centre, and 54 Reasons.

Tablelands Interagency Group (TIG)

TIG is a collection of local community service organisations and government agencies working in partnership to strengthen communities and to address key social issues in the Tableland Regional Council Local Government Area. The group aims to identify current and emerging issues, conduct regional strategic planning to identify community gaps and issues, sharing information, develop partnerships and collaboratively work on projects to address key community issues.

Our Community Outreach Officer participates in TIG meetings to ensure we are informed about activities in the Atherton Tablelands and surrounding areas, including what programs and services are being delivered by community service organisations, local government and government departments and how they can assist community members. This group has enabled informal partnerships to be fostered and provided engagement opportunities at events and expos where EWOQ can participate and collaborate with agencies on the ground to best support community and raise awareness.

Industry

We maintain strong links with the Australian dispute resolution community as a member of the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (ANZOA) and the Australian and New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network (ANZEWON).

ANZOA

ANZOA is the peak body for Ombudsman schemes across Australia and New Zealand. Through our association with ANZOA, we are a part of their Indigenous Engagement Interest Group, which meets quarterly and focuses on improving complaint handling practices and procedures for Indigenous consumers in Australia and New Zealand.

ANZEWON

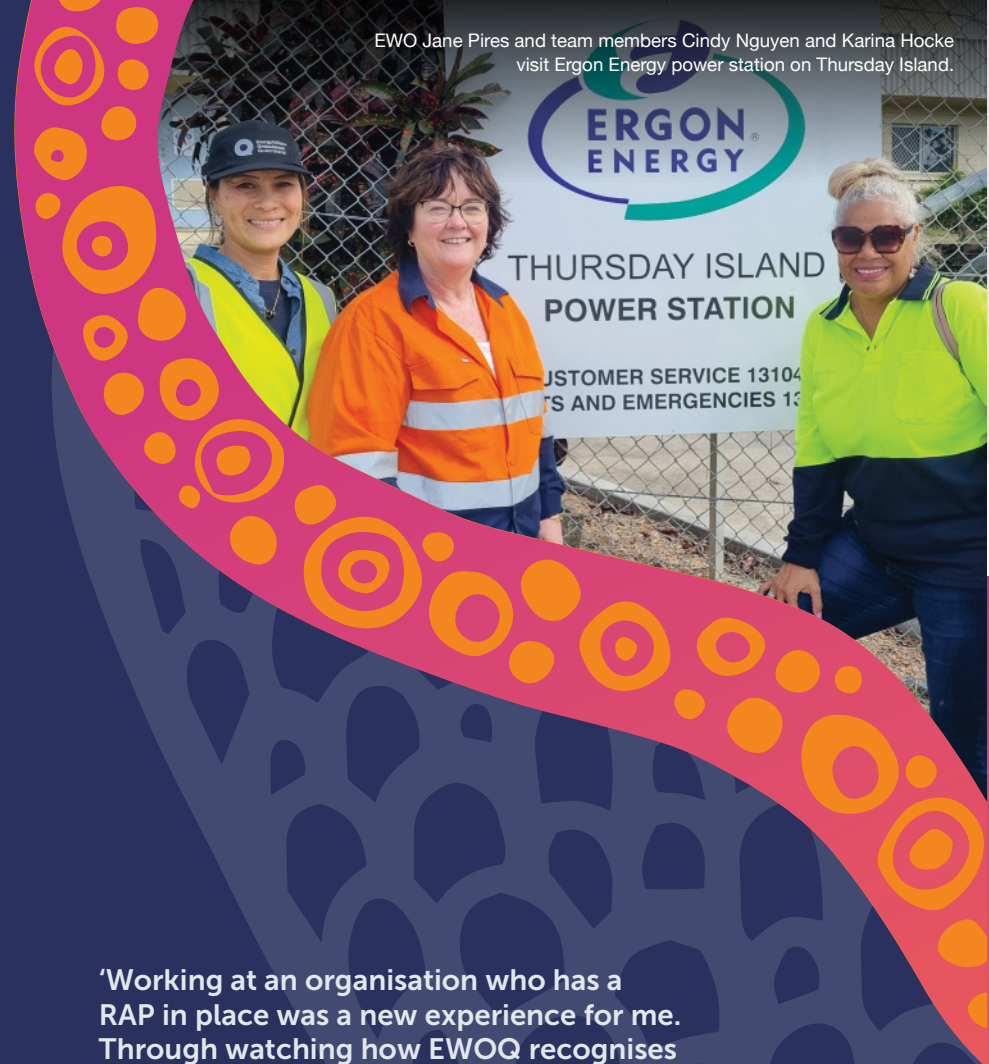
ANZEWON is a network of energy and water ombudsmen and utilities complaints commissioners from across Australia and New Zealand. They work together to explore and address industry and policy developments that affect Australian and New Zealand consumers. The network supports collaboration and learning to avoid duplication of effort which ensures members can progress projects with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Financial Counselling Australia (FCA)

We have a strong alliance with FCA, with our Ombudsman attending their annual conference each May and taking part in the conference's Yarnin' Circle. We attended in Hobart (2018), Melbourne (2019), Darwin (2021), and Cairns (2022).

Financial Counsellors' Association of Queensland (FCAQ)

We support the FCAQ and attend the state conference each year. In July 2022, our Ombudsman, Jane Pires, was a guest speaker and facilitator of a session that focused on energy in the future and the needs of the various communities over the coming years. Specific community information was shared with relevant government and regulators to assist with their understanding of the future needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland. Jane returned in July 2023 to facilitate a panel discussion with major energy providers in Queensland focused on how financial counsellors can best support customers access support programs.



'Working at an organisation who has a RAP in place was a new experience for me. Through watching how EWOQ recognises First Nations peoples and shows respect for cultural practices in all the work it does, it has inspired me to think of how I can help to make a difference in my own life outside of work. I'm proud to work for EWOQ and be a part of its reconciliation journey.'

Megan, Manager Marketing and Communications

RELATIONSHIPS



Our reconciliation journey has included promoting our scheme throughout Queensland. By completing community outreach visits to rural, remote, and regional communities we seek to support families and individuals who may need our assistance with issues relating to their energy services, and water services for customers in southeast Queensland. We have strengthened our relationships and reconnected with people, organisations, and agencies who we have collaborated with to ensure our mutual stakeholders are aware of their right to a free, fair, and independent dispute resolution service.

Focus area: We encourage each other and seek opportunities to learn as well as share our knowledge and ideas to continuously improve ourselves and our service to our communities and families across Queensland.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Continue to build relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations through our community outreach and engagement plan.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Community Outreach Officer
	Develop toolkit of guiding principles to support team members with community outreach and engagement and ensure observance of cultural protocols.	Dec 2023	Community Outreach Officer
	Review the effectiveness of our community outreach and engagement plan, working to strengthen our partnership and information sharing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Community Outreach Officer Manager Marketing and Communications
	Investigate options for a First Nations sponsorship framework targeting events and community organisations working to improve outcomes for First Nations peoples, with a focus on financial education and awareness.	Oct 2024	Manager Customer and Community Manager Marketing and Communications
	Continue to develop relationship with 54 Reasons (previously known as Save the Children Fund) to further opportunities for First Nations peoples by raising awareness of our service among financial counsellors and communities particularly in remote communities.	Jul 2024	Community Outreach Officer

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our team members.	May 2024 May 2025	Community Outreach Officer
	Ensure RAP Working Group members participate in up to three external NRW events each year, such as the Darumbal Community Youth Services Youth Forum, the Winds of Zenadth Cultural Festival on Thursday Island, and Bribie Island Elders Basket Weaving activity.	27 May – 3 Jun 2024 27 May – 3 Jun 2025	Community Outreach Officer
	Continue to encourage and support team members and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 Jun 2024 27 May – 3 Jun 2025	RAP Champion
	Organise at least one NRW event each year where our people are in Cairns, Rockhampton, and Brisbane.	Mar 2024 Mar 2025	Community Outreach Officer
	Continue to register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	Apr 2024 Apr 2025	Manager Marketing and Communications
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Team members provide opportunities to educate our team members on the Voice, Path to Treaty, The Uluru Statement of the Heart, and other historical timelines to enable us to reinforce our commitment to the reconciliation journey.	Mar 2024 Mar 2025	Manager People, Capability and Culture
	Continue to communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly through our website, social media platforms and community outreach and engagement opportunities outlined in our annual plan.	Mar 2024 Mar 2025	Manager Marketing and Communications
	Attend networking meetings continuing our engagement and strengthening our relationships to help us embrace shared learnings, and provide insights on how to best consider the needs of First Nations peoples:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in a minimum of four meetings with the ANZOA Indigenous Group 	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Community Outreach Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in a minimum of four meetings with the Culture and Reconciliation Working Group (CARWG) 	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Community Outreach Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in a minimum of four meetings with the ICAN Far North Queensland Taskforce. 	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Manager Customer and Community Energy and Water Ombudsman	

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence. (Continued)	Pursue leadership role of Community Outreach Officer in the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association Indigenous Interest Group to help educate and advise group members in understanding reconciliation and how to work with communities.	June 2024 June 2025	Energy and Water Ombudsman
	Continue to explore opportunities to take a leadership role and positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes, such as participating in local decision-making bodies.	June 2024 June 2025	RAP Champion
	Continue to collaborate with organisations in the RAP network and/or other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation. Our focus will be on collaborating with agencies such as other Ombudsman schemes, Origin Energy, Gold Coast Water, Torres Strait Regional Authority and Central Queensland Indigenous Development to advance reconciliation in the wider community.	June 2024 June 2025	Executive Management Group
4. 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, and develop Team members feedback survey/have your say consultation.	Jan 2024 Jan 2025	Manager People, Capability and Culture
	Continue to communicate our anti-discrimination policy for our organisation via annual refresher training sessions to whole of organisation.	Jan 2024 Jan 2025	People, Capability and Culture
	Continue to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Team members and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	Jan 2024 Jan 2025	People, Capability and Culture
	Continue to educate senior leaders on the effects of racism and unconscious bias.	June 2024 June 2025	RAP Champion

RESPECT



We continue to acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Custodians of this nation we work, play, and live on. We place foremost importance on understanding how challenging and distressing the process involved in making a complaint can be for First Nations Peoples. We continue to deliver a service built on respect, manners, and courtesy. Team members at EWOQ have taken this respect to a higher level by embracing the traditional practice of Acknowledgement of Country through cultural learnings delivered by a recognised First Nations organisation and have composed their own authentic Acknowledgment of Country statement.

Focus area: We operate with integrity. Our actions are consistent with our words, and we demonstrate our values through those actions.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a six-monthly review of our cultural learning strategy to ensure alignment with Reconciliation Australia and consider alternative learning opportunities such as:	Mar 2024 Sep 2024 Mar 2025 Sep 2025	Manager People, Culture and Capability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> raising cultural awareness through learning about history and languages including educational sessions and resources on topics such as The Path to Treaty, The Uluru Statement, The Voice to Parliament, Truth Telling and Healing, and Elders yarning circles exploring partnership opportunities with local First Nations people who may deliver digital language programs in their local area. 		
	Develop and implement internal communications to support the cultural learning strategy.	Jun 2024	Manager Marketing and Communications
	Design and implement structured learning about shared histories and cultures, including guidelines on how we can contribute to strengthening these learnings.	Mar 2024	Manager People, Culture and Capability
	Ensure each RAP Working Group meeting includes a discussion on cultural learning.	Monthly	RAP Working Group Chair
Document our reconciliation journey by creating a visual design of a tree with leaves that have messages written by team members across the state about what reconciliation means to them.	Mar 2024	RAP Working Group	

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning. (Continued)	Encourage all team members to engage with community outreach and engagement opportunities through attendance and supporting activities.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Executive Management Group
	Encourage team members to participate in volunteering opportunities with First Nations organisations.	June 2024 June 2025	Executive Management Group
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Embed our cultural protocols document, which includes protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country, Sorry Business, and engagement on country, ensuring team members understand the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, and adherence to our cultural protocols.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	RAP Champion
	Continue to invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to significant events to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol.	Oct 2024	Executive Management Group
	Continue to develop community education opportunities with First Nations organisations in each region to promote reconciliation journey. This could include invitations to community Elders to be part of a Talking Library initiative at a local community centre or local library or as guests to an internal EWOQ event to discuss truth-telling and healing.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Ensure all staff actively participate in NAIDOC Week through attendance at internal and/or external NAIDOC Week events.	Jul 2024 Jul 2025	All EWOQ Team members
	Seek out opportunities to partner with organisations within our sphere of influence to deliver and promote external NAIDOC Week events with a focus on ensuring coverage across Queensland, including regional areas.	Jul 2024 Jul 2025	Manager Customer and Community Community Outreach Officer
	Review internal policies and procedures to enable participation by all team members in NAIDOC Week events.	Feb 2024 Feb 2025	Manager People, Capability and Culture

OPPORTUNITIES



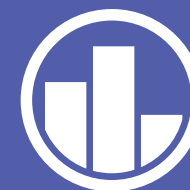
We are committed to embracing new opportunities by seeking out new connections to communities through initiatives that will support First Nations communities to have better access to our complaints service, and to be best supported with resources such as bi-lingual communication tools. We continue to build our procurement base by sourcing merchandise via Supply Nation businesses to assist us in delivering on our RAP commitments.

Focus area: We strive to be the best we can and work hard to deliver excellent service and quality results.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members employed in our workforce.	Jun 2024	Manager People, Capability and Culture
	Retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members employed in our workforce through ongoing engagement and professional development opportunities.	Mar 2024 Mar 2025	Manager People, Capability and Culture
	Continue to engage and consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members to inform our recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	Mar 2024 Mar 2025	Manager People, Capability and Culture
	Review the effectiveness of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy and update as required in consultation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members.	Jun 2024 Jun 2025	Manager People, Capability and Culture
	Continue to develop methods to advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, such as through local contacts in community pools and leveraging our networks.	Monitor and review monthly, starting Mar 2024	Manager People, Capability and Culture
	Investigate opportunities to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace by learning and understanding industry best practice in recruitment.	Mar 2024	Manager People, Capability and Culture

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy to encourage engagement and inclusion of indigenous business owners to ensure appropriate targets are set.	Oct 2024	Manager Finance
	Continue to develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to Team members.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Manager Finance
	Continue to review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Mar 2024 Mar 2025	Manager Finance
	Continue to maintain and develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses for services such as printing, catering, and merchandise, in line with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Manager Finance
10. Support better access to assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by raising awareness of EWOQ services in our sphere of influence.	Continue to create opportunities for Assessment, Investigation and Resolution team members to attend events and participate in activities in remote and/or regional communities across Queensland as part of the community outreach and engagement strategy. Examples include the First Nations Dorrie Day in Bundaberg and the The Warba Wangarunya Rugby League Carnival (WWRLC), which is hosted by Darumbal Community Youth Service Inc. in Rockhampton.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	General Manager Assessment, Investigation and Resolution Manager Dispute Resolution
	Assessment, Investigation and Resolution team members to attend a minimum of one event and/or activity in remote communities across Queensland as part of the community outreach strategy.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	General Manager Assessment, Investigation and Resolution Manager Dispute Resolution
	Strengthen our connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks in Central and South Queensland. We will use the list of contacts established as part of the Innovate RAP to grow and nurture new relationships and report who we have met with and when.	Mar 2024 Jun 2024 Mar 2024 Jun 2025	Community Outreach Officer
	Develop tailored resources for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Initiatives may include printed brochures and Digital Language resources being developed with community elders.	Jul 2024	Community Outreach Officer Manager Marketing and Communications

GOVERNANCE



Our RAP governance structure is led by a strong leadership team and a committed Advisory Council who will ensure our reporting achievements are tracked and reported in accordance with the Reconciliation Australia framework.

We are committed to strengthening and building our reconciliation journey through overcoming our challenges and through our ongoing learnings.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain and provide opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP Working Group.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Energy and Water Ombudsman
	Ensure members of the RAP Working Group are upholding the Terms of Reference by undertaking an annual review of its purpose and member roles and responsibilities.	Feb 2024 Feb 2025	RAP Working Group Chair
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation, ensuring items on the Action and Decision Register are recorded, completed and/or noted.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Continue to define resource needs for RAP implementation, including training requirements, human resources, and funding.	Mar 2024 Mar 2025	Executive Management Team
	Embed key RAP actions in Performance Development Action Plans of the leadership team and all team members.	Jul 2024	Energy and Water Ombudsman
	Maintain and improve appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	Information Communication Technology Manager
	Maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	Jan 2024	Energy and Water Ombudsman

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings both internally and externally.	Continue contact with Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, with the establishment of a shared email address to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	Jun 2024 Jun 2025	Community Outreach Officer
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request the unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	Aug 2024 Aug 2025	Community Outreach Officer
	Submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	Sep 2024 Sep 2025	Community Outreach Officer
	Report RAP progress to the leadership team and Executive Management Group.	Monthly, starting Jan 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
	Report RAP progress to the Advisory Council, the Energy and Water Ombudsman, and all team members	Quarterly, starting Mar 2024	RAP Working Group Chair
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings, in the EWOQ annual report and provide updates on our external website.	Oct 2024 Oct 2025	Manager Marketing and Communications
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	Mar 2024	Community Outreach Officer
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	Jun 2025	Community Outreach Officer
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	Dec 2025	Community Outreach Officer

For public enquiries about our RAP please contact

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