



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN Electoral Commission

Rconciliation

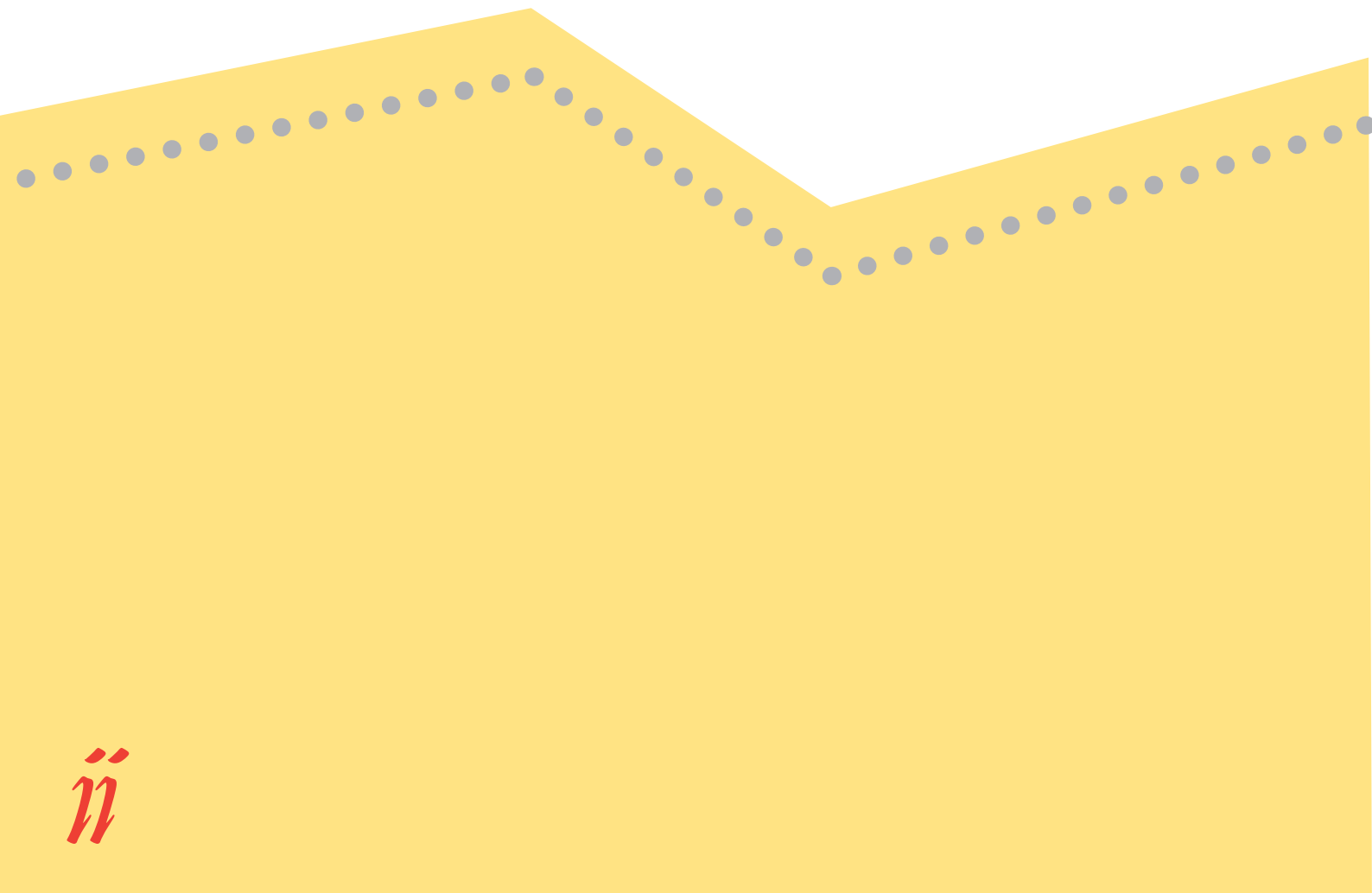
ACTION PLAN 2008-2010



Reconciliation Australia
RECONCILIATION ACTION PLANS



ENRICH



Electoral Commissioner's message

The Western Australian Electoral Commission exists to deliver quality, innovative and accountable electoral services every time for all Western Australians.

Many Indigenous citizens face practical challenges in engaging in electoral processes.

Realities such as remoteness, awareness, mobility and health add to the struggle to participate. Differences in Indigenous and mainstream cultural and governance practices must also be recognised. These are particular challenges the Electoral Commission recognises and will work to overcome.

As a related element in embracing the diversity of services required by Indigenous peoples in our communities is valuing diversity within our organisation. Diversity helps us to be proactive in successfully adapting in an ever-changing electoral environment. Ideas from Indigenous peoples and others to further develop this plan are welcomed.

Warwick Gately AM
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER
July 2008



Our business

The Western Australian Electoral Commission's (WAEC) prime functions are to conduct impartial and independent elections and referendums, maintain the electoral roll, promote public awareness of electoral matters through education and information programs and to foster public confidence and independence in the electoral process. WAEC recognises the importance of ensuring that our services reach all members of the community.

Since 1996, our Indigenous population has grown at twice the rate of the overall population.ⁱ It is significantly younger than the general population, relatively more dispersed, more mobile, and faces considerably higher education and employment challenges. Although a higher proportion of Indigenous electors live in rural, regional and remote areas, the majority of Indigenous electors, as with other electors, live in the metropolitan area or south west of the state.ⁱⁱ

Essential principles of the relationship between the state government and Indigenous Australians include: the importance of inclusive regional and local approaches; commitments to democratic processes and structures, and to improved governance; and addressing issues that impact on Indigenous communities, families and individuals.ⁱⁱⁱ

Consistent with the functions of the Electoral Commissioner and the Western Australian Electoral Commission's Strategic Plan 2005 – 2009, this plan attempts to embrace these principles.



The Electoral Act 1907 places obligations on all electors to be involved in the process to choose their Parliamentary representative. There are provisions to simplify processes and allow access to electoral services irrespective of location or mobility.

However, because of demographic and geographic factors prevailing across Indigenous communities, certain electoral services are more likely to be relevant to Indigenous electors. These include:

- **General Early Voting applications** — for electors who can't easily attend a polling place on election Saturday because they live more than 20 kilometres away, or are permanently disabled or seriously ill or infirm (or care for someone who is), or are a silent elector, or for religious beliefs;
- **Remote mobile polling** — for remote communities;
- **Special assistance arrangements** — for electors who are sight impaired, physically incapacitated or illiterate; and
- **Public education** — information and awareness-raising on Parliamentary and electoral matters.

The Electoral Commission's action plans will focus on these areas in preparation for the 2009 state and local government elections and referendum.



Our RAP

A Working Group was established to create our RAP. The Commission's Working Group consists of the Deputy Electoral Commissioner, Manager Communications and Corporate Strategy, Project Manager Local Government Elections, Community Education Officer, Policy Officer and Indigenous staff.

The RAP has a two year timeframe from July 2008 – July 2010. The Working Group will meet quarterly to track the RAP's progress. The Working Group will report on the RAP Plan in the Annual Report and to Reconciliation Australia.

Continuing development of this RAP will involve consultation with Indigenous peoples and their representatives, and electoral partners including the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and Department of Local Government and Regional Development (DLGRD). Other agencies (such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics-ABS) with similar functions, operations or interest in Indigenous engagement and recruitment may also be involved. Initially this plan will focus on actions and results to be delivered in the near future, but with experience, as consultative arrangements are developed, it is expected that it may become more ambitious in the longer-term.

The WAEC measures the success of its electoral services by elector participation in enrolment and voting. Because Indigenous status is not a prescribed attribute of electoral roll data, it is not possible to accurately and directly measure Indigenous participation. Surrogate measures will therefore need to be developed as part of this plan (possibly based on census data and polling places identified in areas with significant Indigenous populations).



In the creation of this Reconciliation Action Plan organisations were consulted and past reference materials utilised. These include various Indigenous NGO's such as Reconciliation Australia, the Education Department-Indigenous Unit, the AEC state office and DLGRD through the Indigenous Reference Group and the Education Department with the Joint Civics Education Programs for remote areas.

The Western Australian Electoral Commission will:

- collaborate with peer electoral commissions on Indigenous issues; and
- identify, engage and develop partnerships with peak Indigenous bodies and other key organizations, especially those involved in regional agreements, to enhance the delivery of electoral services; and
- improve completeness and accuracy of the state roll through our Indigenous events initiatives; and
- deliver consistent electoral information to all citizens.

The AEC Roll Integrity Unit and ABS state office will be key partners in identifying target areas for attention and measuring success on these targets.



R Relationships

The Western Australian Electoral Commission identifies respect and integrity as core principals of its operations. The Commission is committed to delivering quality electoral services to all voters and to conducting effective education and engagement programs recognising the diversity and geographical habitation of electors.

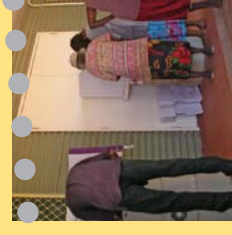
It is essential to develop a respectful relationship with Indigenous communities and stakeholders to ensure our services reach all members of the community and that Indigenous people are engaged with the electoral process.

Partnerships enable all Indigenous electors to participate in impartial, effective and democratic State and Local Government elections and referenda.^{iv}



FOCUS AREA — COLLABORATIVE ACTION

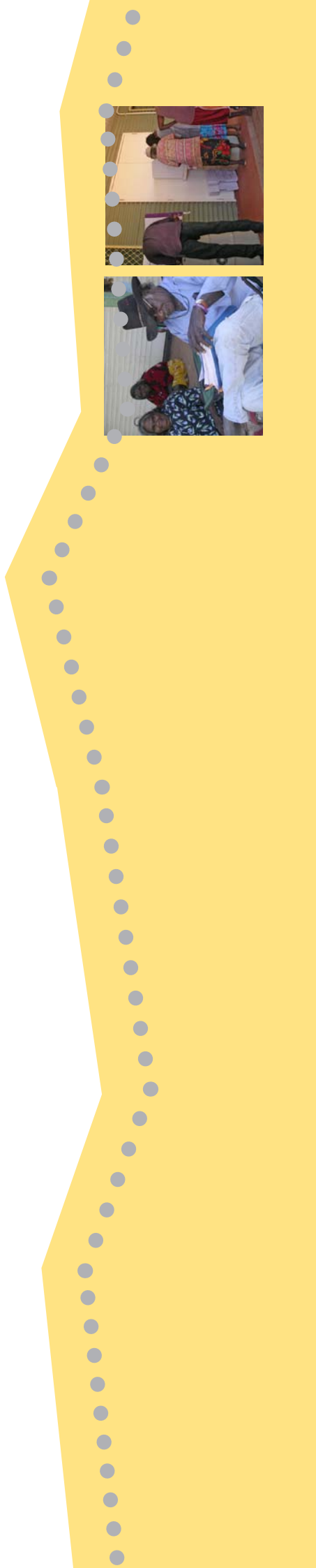
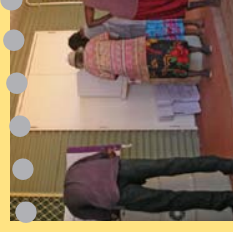
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
RAP Working Group established made up of Indigenous and non Indigenous staff and stakeholders and management from across the organisation	RAP Working Group	June 08 Quarterly meetings	Working Group established Reports back to Corporate Executive
Meetings of the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG), a group comprised of senior staff and Indigenous staff where available from the WAEC, AEC and DLGRD. This group was established to improve Indigenous enrolment activities in remote and regional communities	Deputy Electoral Commissioner	Quarterly meetings	Direct contact with at least 4 Indigenous groups annually
Identification of Indigenous communities and/or organisations	IRG (with assistance from Department of Indigenous Affairs)	By December 2008	All Indigenous communities across the state identified and assess for electoral services. Such records will be retained and updated with feedback material by the IRG
Identification of and contact with electoral champions in Indigenous communities and/or organisations (as identified above)	Returning Officers, IRG and Project Manager State Elections and Project Manager Local Government Elections	December 2008 December 2009	50% of communities to have a contact 75% of communities to have a contact





FOCUS AREA — COLLABORATIVE ACTION

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
The Commission to conduct Elections for Indigenous bodies when requested	Non Parliamentary Elections branch	As requested	100% of requests for Elections for Indigenous organisations to be fulfilled. Feedback to be obtained and directed to the IRG
Enrolment field trips under AEC direction and remote polling to northern goldfields, central desert, Pilbara, Kimberley, Gascoyne and Murchinson	JRA – CRU and Remote Mobile Polling team	Remote Polling – by February 2009	All remote communities visited with new electors identified and existing electors confirmed based on the electoral roll. All Indigenous electors are encouraged to vote. The number of remote voters will be confirmed for future elections



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The Electoral Commission is committed to principles of:

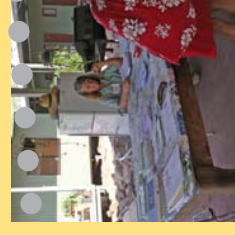
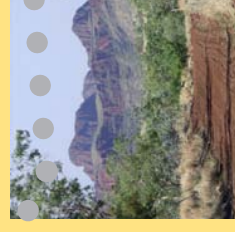
- Respect - so all electors can have their say in the electoral decision process; and
- Integrity - so that the Western Australian community will have confidence in the way we conduct elections.

The Commission will provide Indigenous Australians with information, educational materials and learning opportunities, and all electoral staff with opportunity for greater Indigenous awareness as part of general cultural sensitivity and diversity training.



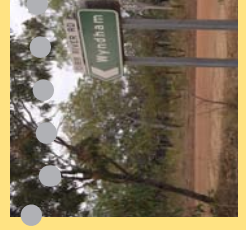
FOCUS AREA — CULTURAL AWARENESS

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
The RAP will be launched at a special morning tea	Deputy Electoral Commissioner	By September 2008	All staff present to attend
Electoral Commission staff to receive Indigenous awareness training from an experienced Indigenous speaker	Communications and Corporate Strategy	By September 2008	100% of staff to be trained. All new staff to receive the RAP at induction and cultural awareness training when there are sufficient numbers
Remote mobile polling teams and Returning Officers are aware of and practice respect for Indigenous culture	Deputy Electoral Commissioner	By February 2009	Cultural awareness training for electoral staff prior to the election
Remote mobile polling teams and Returning Officers to consider the need for Indigenous interpreters at polling places	Returning Officers	During election period	Indigenous interpreters to be made available to Polling Places that are identified as requiring them
'Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners' posters to be displayed at polling places at all elections	Communications and Corporate Strategy and Returning Officers	During election periods	100% of Polling Places to display the posters at State and Local Government Elections
Indigenous art from WA with information on the artists to be displayed in WAEC head office	Communications and Corporate Strategy	By September 2008	Two Indigenous paintings and one Indigenous artefact to be on display in reception
The RAP to be displayed prominently on the Commission's intranet and internet site	Information and Technology Branch	By September 2008	The RAP to be easily accessible for Commission staff and the public



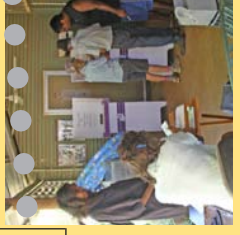
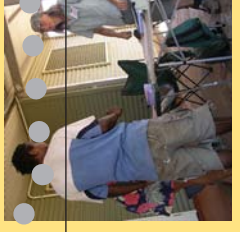
FOCUS AREA — CULTURAL AWARENESS

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Develop and implement protocols for Welcome to Country and/or Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners during significant WAEC events	Communications and Corporate Strategy/ Commission Representative	Ongoing	Protocols developed, implemented and practiced by December 2008
WAEC stall at the NAIDOC opening ceremony that will focus on Indigenous enrolment and education	Communications and Corporate Strategy	July annually	New Indigenous electors identified and enrolled and existing electors given the opportunity to change their details. An opportunity also to educate Indigenous electors about the electoral process
NAIDOC week will be promoted to WAEC staff. They will be encouraged to attend the opening ceremony	Communications and Corporate Strategy	July annually	Posters displayed, internal website detailing events about NAIDOC week updated annually



FOCUS AREA — ELECTORAL EDUCATION

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Civic and electoral education opportunities targeted to Indigenous children, youth and community groups	Electoral Education Centre (EEC) with Constitution Centre and Parliamentary Education Office	Ongoing	100% of presentation requests at the EEC and 75% of outreach requests for off-site visits met within 90 days of request
Development of learning boxes for rural, regional and remote schools as part of Joint Civics Education (JCE) and Outreach		By December 2008	Positive feedback from teachers
Publication of "Schoolies for Poolies" targeted at Indigenous upper primary students	With IRG & Indigenous media	By December 2008	Positive feedback from teachers and students, and numbers distributed/ordered
Review Indigenous Election Storyboard with Indigenous staff/groups		By September 2008	Storyboard promoted widely on Indigenous media, and utilized widely in the lead up to and during election periods
Communication strategy to be developed which will include focus on Indigenous enrolment and voting, particularly through an advertising campaign that includes Indigenous media such as the Koori Mail	Communications & Corporate Strategy	During election periods	Improved Indigenous enrolment (based on AEC Roll Integrity Unit analysis) and election 'turnout' at remote and identified 'Indigenous' polling places
Interaction with universities on Indigenous electoral issues	Electoral Education Centre	Annually: May 2009	Presentations to the Centre for Aboriginal Studies Group from Curtin University on Indigenous electoral issues. New opportunities for engagement identified
Indigenous display to be presented at the EEC that focuses on the 1967 Referendum and a timeline of Electoral milestones for Indigenous people. The display was created by using government resources	Electoral Education Centre	By August 2008 display to be presented at the EEC	100% of visitors to the EEC to be shown the displays



Opportunities

The Western Australian Electoral Commission's engagement strategies need to be partnership-oriented to be effective. It is recognised that effective Indigenous engagement requires specialised skills and dedicated staff to develop contacts and provide services across the state, particularly for enrolment and voting in remote areas. This work is conducted as part of the Rural and Remote Area Strategy under the Joint Roll Arrangement. One aim is to provide services to Indigenous peoples in partnership with Indigenous organisations, communities and regions. Through our contact with Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Indigenous Reference Group we seek to continue and develop these relationships.

Through our RAP plan the Commission is committed to promoting opportunities for Indigenous people in contributing to the provision of quality electoral services and in employment at the Commission and during election periods. The Commission seeks to create a positive working environment with a focus on the mentoring and retention of Indigenous staff.

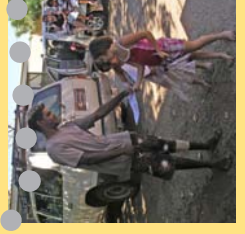


FOCUS AREA — STAFFING

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Recruitment/secondment of Indigenous liaison expertise for 2009 election events, especially for remote polling	Deputy Electoral Commissioner	Recruitment by 30 September 2008	One or more Indigenous liaison officers in each remote location at state and local government elections
Explore possibilities for recruitment with the AEC and ABS for Indigenous casual staff for election (and census) events ^{vi}	Deputy Electoral Commissioner	December 2008	Increased proportion of Indigenous polling staff for the state and local government elections and referendum (compared to the 2005 – 2007 elections)
Review Indigenous recruitment and retention strategy with a view to setting future employment/trainee target	Business Services/ Deputy Electoral Commissioner	January 2010	Indigenous employee target set and Indigenous recruitment and professional development strategy implemented. At least one Indigenous staff member to be employed by 2010

FOCUS AREA — INDIGENOUS EVENTS & ENGAGEMENT

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Assistance to DLGRD on its initiative of an annual expo for assisting Indigenous Local Government Councillors in network building. This parallels the work of WAEC in Local Government Elections	Project Manager Local Government Elections	Annually; May 2009	WAEC to support this initiative by sending at least one staff member (Indigenous if possible) to attend. Feedback on this event to be directed to the IRG



Tracking & reporting progress

An overview of key initiatives will be included in the Commission's Annual Report each year. Specific initiatives and achievements will be reported in greater details as part of election event reporting following state elections (every four years), by-elections, and local government postal elections (ordinarily every two years).

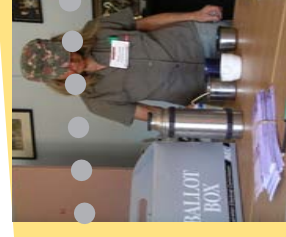
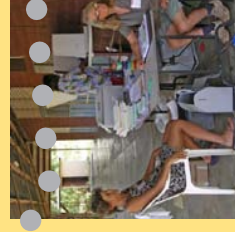
Progress will be monitored internally through regular project planning and 'lessons learned' reported as part of business improvement plan reports following major election events. Nation-wide census, enrolment and election turnout benchmarks will also be examined.



FOCUS AREA — QUALITY, INNOVATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Commission is committed to continuous improvement in the quality and delivery of our services, innovation in our strategies and processes, and public accountability through evaluation of performance and reporting of electoral matters generally.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Feedback from Indigenous peoples, communities and organisations is sought and included in post election evaluations	Project Managers State and Local Government Elections, and Returning Officers	Within 90 days of major election events	Post-election surveys, focus groups or workshops are held within 90 days of major election events
Business improvement initiatives identified are integrated where appropriate, into branch plans, and state and local government future election project planning and reporting	Manager Enrolment and Project Managers State and Local Government Elections	By September 2008	All initiatives have allocated responsibilities, milestones and resources
Include initiatives and achievements in annual and major election event reports	Electoral Commissioner	Annually and after each state and local government ordinary elections	Reports published within 90 days of the end of the financial year or return of the writs (or declaration of local government polls)
The RAP to be refreshed and reported on annually in the Annual Report and to Reconciliation Australia and made available to the public	Communications and Corporate Strategy	July/August annually	RAP reported on in Annual report and to Reconciliation Australia. Changes to our RAP to be updated on Commission website and intranet and reported to Reconciliation Australia.



For further information please contact:
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PHOTOS

Most photos are from the Kimberley region and were taken during an Australian Electoral Commission remote pre-polling project prior to the 2007 Australian Federal Election. Locations include:

Imintji Community, Gibb River Road
Junjuwa Community Office, Fitzroy Crossing
Bayulu Community, near Fitzroy Crossing
Dodnun Community, Gibb River Road
Yangkana Laurel and Kangyi (Ross) McLarty, Kadjina Community
Glen Hill Station
Home Valley Station
Kalumburu
Gibb River road turn-off Kalumburu
Kupartiya Community
Ngallagunda (Gibb River Station)
Djurerari Community, near Fitzroy Crossing
Woolah Community, between Kununurra and Warmun

ENDNOTES

- (i) *'Indigenous'* is now the officially agreed upon term for the country's first inhabitants and refers to anyone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ancestry who identifies as such. The word *'aboriginal'* means from the original, and is a generic word for any group of people who have descended from the first people of a continent or region.
- (ii) *A New and Just Relationship between the State Government and Aboriginal People: Needs* — "Circumstances of Aboriginal people can differ significantly between regions and localities. Regional and local approaches are required to address issues that impact on Aboriginal communities, families and individuals".
- (iii) *A New and Just Relationship between the State Government and Aboriginal People: Principles*.
- (iv) Major EEO initiatives proposed include partnering with peak Indigenous and other bodies that will assist in consistently and cost effectively delivering electoral information and services, and electoral participation in events coordinated by such bodies.
- (v) Major EEO initiatives proposed include greater exchange of practical initiatives with peer electoral commissions (and other bodies with similar challenges or experience) to progress employment of and services to Indigenous peoples.
- (vi) Major EEO initiatives proposed include exploring possibilities for collaborative approaches to 'pool' recruitment and development with other agencies with similar 'peak event' employment demands (eg: AEC, ABS in WA), and related public engagement strategies (eg: youth, disabled, Indigenous and CALD groups etc).

