



# Western Australian Electoral Commission

## Reconciliation Action Plan 2011–2014



## **Message from the Commissioner**

The Western Australian Electoral Commission (the Commission) aims to deliver quality, innovative and accountable electoral services every time for all Western Australians. The Commission must also remain impartial at all times and treat all customers and stakeholders equitably.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens in Western Australia face practical challenges in engaging in electoral processes. Realities such as remoteness, awareness, mobility and health add to the struggle to participate. These are particular challenges the Commission recognises and will progressively work to overcome or accommodate.

The Commission's inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was endorsed in 2008 and focused our existing efforts in engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into a clear plan. Our first RAP contained many diverse strategies with ambitious action outcomes. Many milestones have been achieved. We now are building on our previous experience and lessons learned, with revised and new actions included in our RAP for the period 2011–2014. The RAP has a three-year timeframe to encompass the next State general election, anticipated to be held in early 2013. Many of our action items within this plan will be progressed during electoral events.

The Commission recognises that valuing diversity within our organisation helps us to be proactive in successfully adapting to a diverse, and ever changing electoral environment. I am pleased to submit the Commission's second Reconciliation Action Plan to Reconciliation Australia. The Commission will monitor the implementation of the RAP and report on progress annually.

**Warwick Gately AM, Electoral Commissioner**

**August 2011**

## **Our vision for reconciliation**

The Commission acknowledges it is essential to develop a respectful relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and stakeholders to ensure our services are accessible and people are engaged with the electoral process. The Commission is committed to achieving its strategies and focusing on electoral services that are likely to be relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors including remote mobile polling, education and enrolment field trips.

## **Our business**

The Commission is an independent State Government authority with one head office in the Perth CBD and a nearby Electoral Education Centre. The Commission has a relatively small permanent workforce with approximately 42 full time employees. At the time of writing, the Commission does not have any permanent Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employees, although it works closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees of the Australian Electoral Commission who share our core business.

The Commission operates on electoral cycles with staff numbers and opportunities for public interaction increasing during major electoral events, through the employment of casual employees whose numbers are dependent on population changes. 82 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were employed during the 2008 State General election. The Commission employs Returning Officer's to conduct elections on the Commission's behalf and they will be informed of the existence of the Commission's RAP and will work to progress the initiatives which relate to their work. The Commission's primary role is to conduct impartial and independent elections and referendums for the State and Local Governments, trade unions and fee-paying clients; to maintain the State electoral roll; and to raise public awareness of electoral matters through education and information programs; and to foster public confidence and trust in the electoral process.

Our client base is diverse, encompassing all eligible electors in Western Australia as well as future electors. The Commission recognises the importance of ensuring that our services are accessible to all members of the community and it is our vision that we be recognized for excellence in the delivery of efficient and innovative electoral services.

## **Our RAP**

The Commission's first RAP was registered with Reconciliation Australia in September 2008. This RAP, which covered the period 2008-2010, was progressively monitored and reported on, with key achievements included in the Commission's Annual Report and RAP Report for 2008 and 2009. Important achievements and findings derived from our RAP journey in 2010 are summarized below. A RAP Working Group was established internally to review our first RAP and develop this updated version, with past reference materials utilised and various staff asked about their experience with the RAP. Our resulting endorsed RAP contains 22 actions to be progressed over a three year period, which will be challenging for a small workplace. This RAP seeks to consolidate on the successes of our initial RAP and enhance and develop further strategies for the successful interaction and engagement with potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in Western Australia. This RAP has a three year timeframe to allow adequate time for planning and implementation and includes the upcoming Local Government elections and the next State general election.

The Commission works closely with the Australian Electoral Commission's WA office and the Department of Local Government through the establishment of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group (IEPWG) to help progress the federally funded Indigenous Electoral Participation Program (IEPP) as well as more localized Commission and Department of Local Government initiatives. The Indigenous Electoral Participation Program began in April 2010 and operates Australia wide in remote, rural and urban areas. The AEC currently have a Coordinator and 4 Field Officers in Western Australia who are progressing the work of this program, which aims to increase levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment, knowledge of democratic and electoral processes, participation in electoral processes and formal voting. Some actions outlined in our RAP will be progressed through this collaborative arrangement.

This RAP has been developed through the WAEC RAP Working Group with input from staff across the Commission, including the Electoral Education Centre and is endorsed and championed by Commission management and the Electoral Commissioner. Input has been provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Field Officers. It is recognised that this Working Group and Field Officers are an important asset in progressing the actions and achieving the targets within our RAP.

## **Our RAP in 2010**

The Commission completed its first RAP in 2010 and continues to show leadership in reconciliation efforts with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. In learning the lessons from the last RAP the Commission hopes to progress this RAP's high aims and will continue to report on its progress.

Some highlights from the past year included:

- Participation in NAIDOC week and representation at the NAIDOC Opening Ceremony promoting the message of enrolment and voting and engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the electoral process, whilst providing an avenue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide direct feedback to the Commission on its services.
- Established a revamped Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group to better coordinate activities and efforts aimed at increasing
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment and electoral participation.
- Maintaining the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander display at the Electoral Education Centre, this depicts the 1967 Referendum on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voting rights and a timeline of Electoral milestones for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Continuing to display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artwork from local artists in the reception area of the Commission's head office.
- Presenting electoral education information at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University.
- Working with the Australian Electoral Commission in conducting its federal election, including sending a Commission representative to assist with the remote polling project in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

One of the most significant changes in 2010 was the introduction of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program, which is managed by the Australian Electoral Commission as part of the "Closing the Gap" initiative. This program identified and trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electoral field staff. Their role is to make contacts within local communities and provide the opportunity for these communities to interact and offer input into the services currently offered by the Commission. The Field Officers develop and present tailored education programs on the electoral process and encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enroll to vote so they can fully participate in the democratic process. The Commission will continue to work closely with these Officers to identify new opportunities for engagement and interaction and ensure our key goals are aligned in terms of servicing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors. The established Working Group will continue to meet regularly in the future.

<b>Relationships</b>	<b>It is essential to develop a respectful relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and stakeholders to ensure our services are accessible to all members of the community and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are engaged with the electoral process. The Commission recognises the diversity of electors and is committed to delivering quality electoral services to all electors, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and strengthening this relationship. A strong relationship ensures the Commission is achieving its goal of active community participation with the electoral process.</b>
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<b>Focus area: Collaborative Action</b>
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Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
RAP Working Group to meet regularly.	Deputy Electoral Commissioner	September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RAP Working Group meets minimum four times a year.</li> <li>• Regular updates provided to the Corporate Executive.</li> <li>• Input sought from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and employees.</li> </ul>
Meetings of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group. This group is comprised of staff from the Commission, Australian Electoral Commission and Department of Local Government. Its purpose is to help implement the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program and improve Indigenous enrolment, education and voter participation. Indigenous Field Officers from the Australian Electoral Commission are involved in this group.	Deputy Electoral Commissioner	September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Working Group continues to meet every 4–6 weeks.</li> <li>• Update reports provided to the RAP Working Group.</li> </ul>
The Commission to conduct elections for Western Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies when requested.	Manager Non Parliamentary elections	September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Election support services communicated to those communities that would benefit from Commission enrolment and electoral services.</li> <li>• Post election satisfaction feedback is sought in respect of any elections run for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander body (eg. Derbal Yerrigan).</li> </ul>

<p>Work with the Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community contacts and electoral champions within individual communities.</p>	<p>Manager Local Government Elections  and Manager State Elections</p>	<p>Local Government Elections October 2011  and State General Election by March 2013</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contacts identified, in conjunction with Department of Local Government.</li> <li>• Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Local Government councillors identified and where possible involved in awareness raising activities.</li> <li>• Joint enrolment and electoral education field trips to regional communities conducted to encourage enrolment and higher election participation.</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure electoral event advertising is placed in appropriate Western Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio, Koori Mail and other media.</p>	<p>Project Leader Communications and Advertising</p>	<p>State General Election by March 2013</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event specific advertising campaign developed and endorsed by the Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group.</li> <li>• Feedback on effectiveness of event advertising to be sought from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community contacts and electoral champions.</li> </ul>
<p>Support and attend Australian Electoral Commission and Department of Local Government's events targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors eg. The annual expo "Indigenous Local Government Councillors in network building".</p>	<p>Manager Local Government elections branch</p>	<p>May 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one Commission staff member attends such events and reports back to the Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group.</li> <li>• New connections with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities formed and listed in the RAP report</li> </ul>

<b>Respect</b>	<b>The Commission identifies respect and integrity as core principles of its operations. Partnerships based upon mutual respect support the Commission's work and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander along with other Western Australian electors to participate in impartial, effective and democratic elections and referendums.</b>		
<b>Focus area: Cultural Awareness</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Measurable Target</b>
Promote endorsed RAP to Commission staff and the Western Australian community.	Deputy Electoral Commissioner	September 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The RAP to be easily accessible to Commission staff and the public via Commission's website.</li> <li>• All staff informed of the RAP via email.</li> </ul>
Provide relevant election staff with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training and/or information.	Deputy Electoral Commissioner and Training Officer	Local Government Elections October 2011 State General Election by March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electoral related training programs to include a cultural awareness component.</li> <li>• For permanent Commission staff the induction process to include a cultural awareness component.</li> <li>• Guidelines for staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors to be developed and promulgated.</li> </ul>
Remote mobile polling teams and Returning Officers practice respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people where possible.	Manager State Elections, Relevant Project Officer (Voters with Special Needs) and Returning Officers	State general election by March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remote Aboriginal communities visited by mobile polling teams. 63 communities were visited during the 2009 Daylight Saving Referendum. These sites will be re-examined and possible new sites identified prior to the next State general election.</li> <li>• Aboriginal language interpreters to be made available to polling places that are identified by Returning Officers as requiring them.</li> </ul>
Target election specific "talking boards" to be trialled in selected remote communities; which utilise messages recorded in local dialects.	Manager State Elections	State general election by March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking boards are trialled in at least 5 communities at the next State General Election.</li> </ul>

<p>Use “Welcome to Country” and “Acknowledgement of Country” at significant Commission events and meetings.</p>	<p>Electoral Commissioner, Deputy Electoral Commissioner or Manager State General Elections</p>	<p>December 2011  State General Election by March 2013</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocols developed, implemented and practiced by December 2011.</li> <li>• “Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners” posters to be displayed at all polling places across the State on polling day.</li> </ul>
<p>Actively support National Reconciliation Week.</p>	<p>Manager Policy, Compliance &amp; Community Information</p>	<p>May 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor two Reconciliation Week banners, which will be displayed in the Perth CBD, incorporating the Commission’s message for reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Western Australians.</li> </ul>
<p>The Commission celebrates NAIDOC week.</p>	<p>Manager Policy, Compliance &amp; Community Information</p>	<p>July 2012 and each year thereafter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posters displayed and intranet updated with details about NAIDOC week and associated events.</li> <li>• Commission staff participate in NAIDOC week by attending the NAIDOC Opening Ceremony and operating a stall promoting enrolment and electoral education issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</li> </ul>

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>The Commission is committed to promoting opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in Western Australia's democratic processes. By creating an environment which allows for greater participation in electoral processes, a key goal of the Commission, we are promoting opportunities for a deeper level of engagement and reconciliation.</b>
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<b>Focus area: Staffing</b>
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Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Promote to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people casual employment at Commission electoral events.	Manager Business Services and Voters with Special Needs Project Officer	State General Election by March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment opportunities to be advertised in appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused media and networks.</li> <li>• Increase the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment at the next State general election. 82 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were employed during the 2008 State General election.</li> </ul>
Provide suitable mentoring for any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff.	Manager Business Services	September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed on a permanent basis, to be mentored by an appropriately qualified person in accordance with the Commission's Mentoring Policy.</li> </ul>

<b>Focus area: Accountability</b>
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Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Develop and use promotional materials to specifically support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors.	Manager Policy, Compliance & Community Information and Community Education Officer	December 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development informed by consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (including community champions and members of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group).</li> <li>• Materials available for handing out at relevant events and presentations.</li> <li>• Use the storyboard developed by the Australian Electoral Commission at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholder events across WA.</li> </ul>

<p>Civics and electoral education opportunities targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, youth and community groups.</p>	<p>Community Education Officer</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All presentation requests at the Commission’s Electoral Education Centre met and outreach off-site visit requests met where resources are available. Number of requests and visits recorded in RAP Progress reports.</li> <li>• Ensure learning boxes are publicized and available for rural, regional and remote schools as part of Joint Civics Education Program.</li> <li>• Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups and schools with the publication “Schoolies for Poolies” a storybook style publication aimed at schoolchildren that educates on voting and electoral matters</li> </ul>
<p>Assess the Voters with special needs project completed for the last State general election and develop and progress new initiatives to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in electoral events.</p>	<p>Manager State Elections</p>	<p>State General Election by March 2013</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RAP Working Group / Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group are consulted on all initiatives.</li> <li>• Initiatives assessed and included in the Voters with Special Needs Project Plan with allocated responsibilities, milestones and resources.</li> </ul>
<p>Feedback on the overall experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities visited during electoral events, including the level of electoral knowledge and education on the electoral process.</p>	<p>Manager Policy, Compliance &amp; Community Information</p>	<p>Survey created by December 2012 and issued within 2 months of State General election by March 2013</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey form developed and disseminated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander electors.</li> <li>• Survey results collated and analysed.</li> <li>• Survey results submitted to the Indigenous Electoral Participation Working Group for determination of future directions or actions.</li> </ul>

<b>Tracking progress and reporting</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Measurable Target</b>
New RAP completed.	Manager Policy, Compliance & Community Information	September 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAP published on Reconciliation Australia and the Commission's website.</li> </ul>
RAP to be reported on annually to Reconciliation Australia.	Manager Policy, Compliance & Community Information	September 2012 and each year thereafter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAP Report submitted to Reconciliation Australia</li> </ul>
Include initiatives and achievements in annual and major election reports.	Manager Policy, Compliance & Community Information	September 2012 and each year thereafter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual and Election reports, report on action taken.</li> </ul>

For further information regarding this RAP or to offer any feedback contact the Commission on 9214 0400 or [waec@waec.wa.gov.au](mailto:waec@waec.wa.gov.au)