

Adoption - Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2028

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Summary

This report presents the City of Sydney's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for the period of 2025 to 2028, which has been conditionally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia. This plan builds on the City's previous Reconciliation Action Plans, aiming to foster stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and further the City's reconciliation journey. The plan outlines key initiatives under the pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities. It promotes social justice, equality and cultural recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The plan has been developed through extensive engagement and consultation with stakeholders, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel and the broader community. There is strong support from the broader community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to do this work. The plan is aligned with key areas required by Reconciliation Australia and strengthened by our engagement with the community.

This plan focuses on strategic action to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inclusion across programs and services, supporting self-determined First Nations community initiatives and nurturing economic opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We have committed to key targets including 4.6% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment by 2028, \$3.5 million annual spend with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses by 2028 and implementing the cultural learning strategy with 100% of employees undertaking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training.

The plan's governance will ensure ongoing accountability, with oversight from the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan working group. The working group will meet and report quarterly, with an annual report created each year for Council and the broader community. Regular community engagement will guide continuous improvement and ensure that feedback on cultural safety, anti-racism efforts, and First Nations self-determination is consistently part of the plan's implementation.

The 2024 Stretch Reconciliation Action Report highlights the successful completion of key initiatives from the previous Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2020-2023, including progress in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment, increased engagement with First Nations businesses and delivery of significant projects.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note the finalisation of the City of Sydney Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for 2020–2024, outlined in the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan Annual Report 2024 as shown at Attachment C to the subject report;
- (B) Council adopt the City of Sydney Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for 2025–2028, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report;
- (C) Council note the submissions received from the community on the draft Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2028, as shown at Attachment B to the subject report; and
- (D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make minor amendments to the City of Sydney Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan May 2025 - April 2028 in order to correct any minor drafting errors and finalise design, artwork and accessible formats for publication.

Attachments

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| Attachment A. | City of Sydney Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan May 2025 – April 2028 |
| Attachment B. | Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan Engagement Report March 2025 |
| Attachment C. | Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan Annual Report 2024 |

Background

1. The Council of the City of Sydney acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of Australia. The City acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of this place.
2. The City's flagship program that celebrates and strengthens our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Sydney is the Eora Journey. Eora means 'people' in the Aboriginal language of Sydney, so the Eora Journey is 'the people's journey'. The Eora Journey projects are supported and strengthened by the Reconciliation Action Plan.
3. Reconciliation Australia was established in 2001 as the national body for reconciliation. It followed on from recommendations handed down in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991 calling for a process of national reconciliation. A key function they serve is overseeing and endorsing reconciliation action plans which enable organisations to take meaningful action to advance reconciliation. There are 4 levels of Reconciliation Action Plans: reflect, innovate, stretch and elevate.
4. The City's inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan was an Innovate level plan, adopted by Council in 2015. Our most recent plan was a Stretch level Reconciliation Action Plan adopted by Council in 2020 with an extension to continue its implementation through 2024. Implementing these plans has seen us deepen our commitments and strive to achieve meaningful outcomes with the community and employees.
5. The City of Sydney Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (the Plan) May 2025 – April 2028 builds on the success of the previous plans and the ongoing commitment to improving relationships, building respect and supporting opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
6. In developing the Plan, all relevant teams across various City divisions were consulted to determine relevant actions, deliverables and targets. These were reviewed numerous times following feedback from Reconciliation Australia to ensure they were clear, ambitious and achievable.
7. The Plan has been developed in close consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee network. Through workshops, we heard valuable insights and guidance to develop the plan.
8. Community consultation on the draft Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025 - 2028 was open from 23 January to 24 February 2025. A total of 81 submissions were received which included 52 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents. There was strong overall support and we heard what is most important to the community and what we should be focusing on.
9. In creating a Reconciliation Action Plan, Reconciliation Australia review and provide feedback to further develop and finalise the plan. The City's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan has been reviewed by Reconciliation Australia 3 times this year and endorsement was provided in March 2025.
10. The Plan will include annual public reporting to Reconciliation Australia, Council and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

11. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives, which in turn align with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap:
 - (a) Direction 1 - Responsible governance and stewardship - The Plan strengthens governance by embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in decision-making and ensuring accountability through regular reporting and transparent processes.
 - (b) Direction 2 - A leading environmental performer - The Plan engages with Aboriginal knowledge and stewardship of the land, promoting sustainable practices and cultural respect for the environment.
 - (c) Direction 3 - Public places for all - The Plan promotes respect through cultural recognition and acknowledgement including art, history and learning activities.
 - (d) Direction 6 - An equitable and inclusive city - The Plan promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the workforce, cultural events and access to services and facilities.
 - (e) Direction 7 - Resilient and diverse communities - The Plan builds resilience by increasing and developing our connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through engagement, grants and collaborative community initiatives.
 - (f) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life - The Plan enhances Sydney's cultural life by engagement with and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artistic expression and cultural practise within public events, and cultural programs.
 - (g) Direction 9 - A transformed and innovative economy - The Plan supports economic development with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses through procurement and our programs, and promotes inclusive economic growth through strategic employment initiatives.

Organisational Impact

12. The implementation of the Plan will continue the involvement of key staff across the City of Sydney. There is direct involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, an Executive sponsor and champions throughout the organisation. With the Reconciliation Action Plan working group overseeing the implementation and providing strategic oversight, the City is well-positioned to continue driving progress with the necessary resources, governance and reporting structures in place.

Risks

13. Risks have been managed in development of the Plan by consulting with staff and the community to ensure support, relevance and alignment. Strong governance is part of implementing the Plan and supports successful risk mitigation. This plan builds on the implementation of our continued commitment to reconciliation and lessons learned from previous plans. The adoption of the Plan is within the City's risk appetite, which recognises that we are open to taking risks that are consistent with our strategic objective and are within our capacity to manage effectively. We recognise the benefits from the plan outweigh any potential risks, therefore we have an open and accepting appetite for the risks. The necessary resources, governance and accountability systems are operational, and the Reconciliation Action Plan working group provides ongoing strategic oversight to ensure continued progress.

Social / Cultural / Community

14. The Plan develops positive social and cultural outcomes through deepened engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. By prioritising community-driven initiatives and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices shape decision-making, the plan contributes to a city of equity, inclusion and respect.
15. The Plan promotes cultural safety through implementing the internal cultural learning strategy, progressing the anti-racism framework and the recognition and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures in our cultural programs and major events. Additionally, the plan develops how our services, facilities and offerings can better meet the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Environmental

16. The Plan supports increased engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultural knowledge with the City's environmental and sustainability initiatives. The City Farm and Urban Ecology teams are specifically engaged in preserving and revitalising native landscapes, aligning with actions that promote cultural knowledge and connection to Country.

Economic

17. The Plan has a substantial focus on economic development, as the plan supports economic empowerment through the promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and employment. Key targets include increasing our annual spend with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and increasing our employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Financial Implications

18. The Plan continues the City's commitment to achieving its core objectives. The majority of the financial implications associated with implementing the plan are already incorporated within the City's Long-Term Financial Plan and forward budget estimates. Where elements of the plan require additional resources, these projects and initiatives will be balanced against existing commitments to ensure the City prioritises its efforts to deliver the plan while maintaining financial sustainability.

Relevant Legislation

19. Local Government Act 1993.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

20. The Plan is undertaken for a three-year period from 2025 – 2028. Timing of all actions and deliverables are detailed within the plan.
21. Reporting will be achieved on an annual basis.

Public Consultation

22. Public community consultation on the draft Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2028 was open from 23 January to 24 February 2025 and the details of this consultation are as set out in Attachment B. We received submissions from 82 people, 63% of those were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Overall, there is strong support for us to do this work to progress our reconciliation commitments.
23. Key findings included a strong support for focus areas including anti-discrimination (89%), respect for cultural protocols (85%), and strengthening community relations (83%). These insights support the plan's strategic priorities, ensuring alignment with community feedback.
24. Furthermore, we conducted workshops with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel and internally with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee network. The feedback received has informed the development of the plan, ensuring that it reflects the needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the local community.

KATE DEACON

Executive Director Strategic Development and Engagement

Edie Coe, Executive Manager, First Nations Leadership

Preston Peachey, Program Manager - First Nations Strategy

Tye Vocale, Project Manager

Julianne Latham, Service Optimisation Manager