

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan Reflecting on learnings, achievements and challenges so far

Having successfully implemented our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), we are now well into our Innovate RAP journey.

By definition, an 'Innovate RAP' focuses on developing and strengthening relationships with First Nations peoples; engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and developing and implementing strategies to empower First Nations peoples.

At this stage of our reconciliation journey, we are proud of the steps we have taken to date and recognise that we have a long way to go.

We have learned that the more our people connect with First Nations people, issues, cultures and histories through education, stories and experiences, the more driven they are to become First Nations allies, personally take action towards reconciliation and promote reconciliation in their own spheres.

Indeed, one of the most powerful way in which we have been able to achieve this is by providing opportunities for everyone at Baker McKenzie to hear directly from First Nations people about their experiences and perspectives.

Through the course of this RAP, we have had the privilege of hearing from diverse groups of First Nations people traversing the arts, business and education sectors; equally we have been inspired by yarns from Elders and community leaders, along with people directly involved in working to 'close the gaps'.

In delivering this RAP, we have learnt that without clear accountability there can be ambiguity and the assumption that someone else is taking responsibility. Accountability is clear and, in a big or small way, encompasses everyone at our Firm. Our governance structure has been critical to ensure key groups and roles are accountable for delivering the Plan, involving the highest levels of management.

A success highlight must surely be the hiring of a dedicated First Nations Lead, who is spearheading our efforts to achieve success with our RAP.

In other areas, we continue to increase our spending with First Nations vendors and improve their representation in our supply chain. Whilst there are many areas still to explore, we have made significant progress to date. Only recently we were able to utilise the services of a First Nations removal company in order to relocate our offices in Brisbane.

One key achievement in First Nations recruitment is a career program for pre-professional Indigenous university students which links them with employers to participate in paid, multi-year internships, known as CareerTrackers. This program has been in place at Baker McKenzie since 2018. Pleasingly, some of our interns have gone on to become Summer Clerks and this year is the first time we have one of our former CareerTrackers join us on a permanent basis as a Graduate.

However, recruiting First Nations people becomes our biggest challenge. We are continuing to focus on new ways to connect with First Nations job seekers.

We are grateful for our relationships with First Nations clients, community partners and networks that have provided us with guidance and enabled us to connect more broadly with First Nations peoples. By listening and including these voices and perspectives, we have been able to move the dial on reconciliation efforts within our Firm. This is being magnified through the roll out of cultural awareness training across the firm, which will continue over the second half of this RAP.

As a law firm which upholds the principle of equal access to justice, we have steadily grown the number of First Nations pro bono clients over the past few years and we are always looking for opportunities to do more.

Our Firm remains deeply committed to supporting First Nations peoples, to achieve the goals set out in the Uluru Statement, and provide pro bono legal services that protect and improve legal rights and promote First Nations businesses and organisations.

We are increasingly engaging in informal cultural learning; volunteering programs; listening to, and learning from, First Nations peoples; raising awareness of our RAP & Cultural Protocols; reporting and governance; and collaboration with other organisations to advance reconciliation.

For instance, we are proud of our engagement in The Gawura Reading Program which is a volunteering program we have been part of for many years, where our people volunteer to read with Indigenous primary school students that attend Gawura, a First Nations primary school within St Andrews Cathedral School in Sydney.

We continue to mark important times of the year such as NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week (NRW). This year we proudly hosted the Reconciliation NSW annual NRW Breakfast for the legal sector.

The Firm has seized important opportunities for informal awareness and learning through Acknowledgment of Country plaques which are currently being installed in the reception areas of all of our Australian offices.

Indeed, we have taken a number of highly visible steps in our workplaces featuring - First Nations artwork in our office spaces; new meeting room names in our Brisbane office being drawn from First Nations cultures; the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' is on display in the Sydney office café area; we regularly mark First Nations days of significance through internal emails and events; encouraging each other to deliver a meaningful Acknowledgment of Country and inviting Elders to deliver a Welcome to Country and educate us about Country and culture.

The RAP framework has, without doubt, provided our Firm with a comprehensive framework to address reconciliation, foster cultural understanding, promote diversity and inclusion, and create positive change within our sphere of influence.

Our RAP underpins our continuing support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which we have publicly supported since 2019. Baker McKenzie also publicly and proudly supported the 'Yes vote' in the October 2023 referendum calling for the establishment of a First Nations Voice in the Constitution. Although unsuccessful, we remain steadfast in our commitment to reconciliation and supporting First Nations peoples and communities. We recognise that now, more than ever, there is a lot of work to do.



John Walker

Chair, Baker McKenzie RAP Working Group

Baker McKenzie acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and operate across Australia, and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. At Baker McKenzie we value and celebrate First Nations cultures and pay respect to Elders, past, present and emerging.