



**ENSEMBLE THEATRE
REFLECT RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN**

JUNE 2022 – JUNE 2023

Brittanie Shipway in A LETTER FOR MOLLY by Brittanie Shipway, Ensemble Theatre 2022. Photo Prudence Upton.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Ensemble Theatre proudly acknowledges the Cammeraigal people of the Eora nation as customary custodians of the land on which we stand and share our stories. In harmony with the land and water, its seasons and cycles, the Cammeraigal people practised their culture for thousands of years and the connection continues to this day. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.



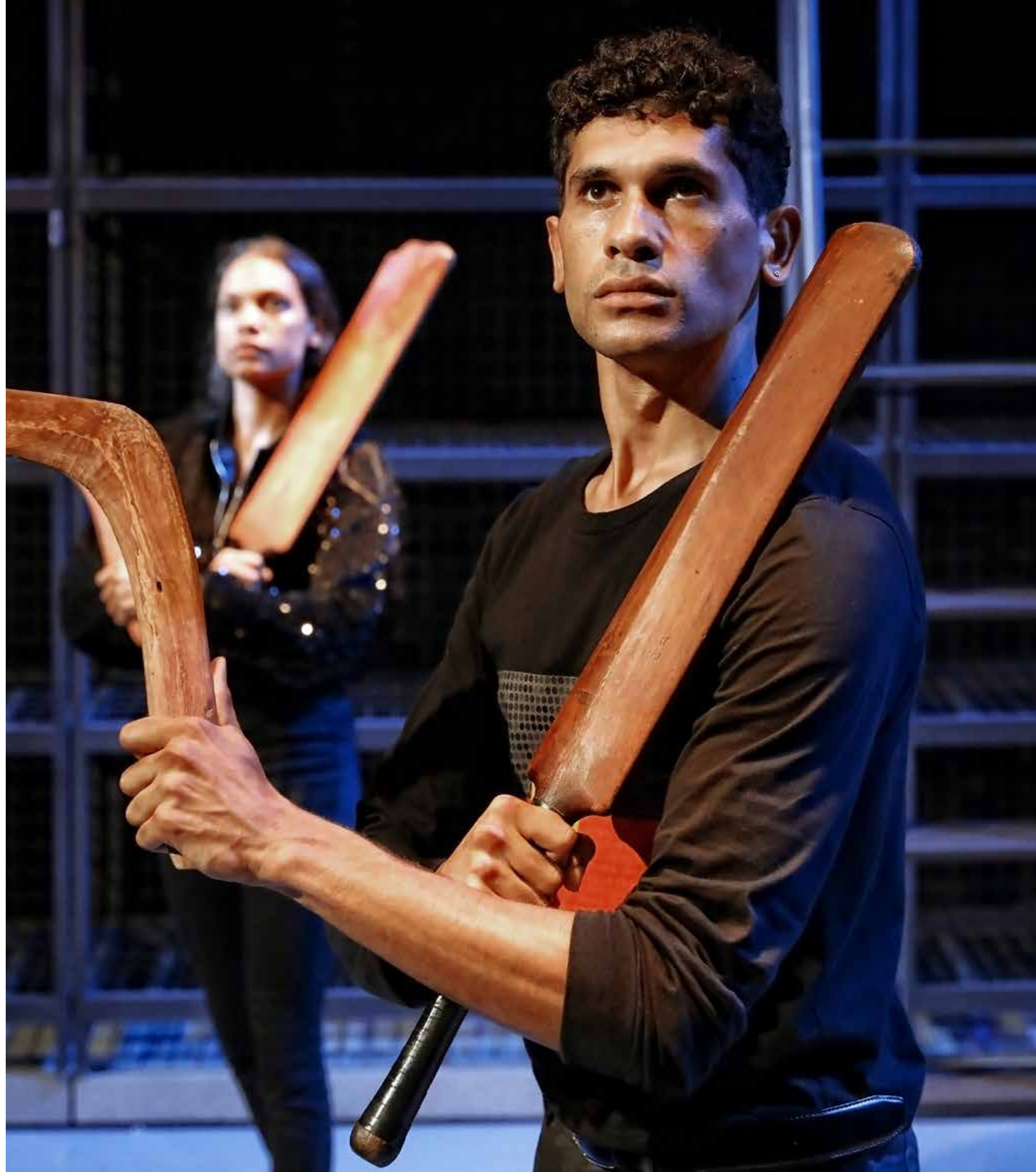
OUR BUSINESS

Ensemble Theatre is situated on the lands of the Cammeraigal people in Kirribilli, Sydney, and is Australia's longest continuously running professional theatre company. We are a welcoming and inclusive theatre for everyone and give voice to diverse stories by creating and presenting an annual season of exceptional new Australian plays, modern classics and international works. Complementing the annual season are creative mentorships and education programs which offer opportunities to emerging artists and young people. The company also operates Bayly's Bistro, a 65-seat restaurant offering modern Australian cuisine, pre- and post-theatre.

Annually, approximately 90,000 people visit Ensemble to partake in community and cultural experiences, and the company regularly undertakes national tours to metropolitan, regional and rural Australia. Central to annual program planning is the aim to reach gender parity for directors and playwrights, create opportunities for First Nations theatre makers, establish safe work and creative spaces, and train staff in cultural awareness and mental health and wellbeing strategies. In recent years, the company has embarked on a period of reflection and significant change to ensure continued artistic development, audience growth and financial sustainability. Ensemble Theatre is supported by a healthy subscriber base, experienced staff and an enthusiastic and engaged board.

The company is a registered charity with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status and is reliant on income derived from box office, philanthropic support and more recently, government funding to develop and tour new Australian work. Ensemble is committed to being an influential and trusted arts leader, contributing to national conversations and social change in our local community, across NSW and beyond. We aim to achieve this through our shared values, in the spirit of the ensemble, to be Theatre for Everyone:

- **Passion** – We are passionate about delivering artistic excellence through storytelling, creativity and engaging effectively with Australian theatre makers and audiences.
- **Relevance** – We give voice to shared experiences and untold stories to contribute to national conversations and social change.
- **Collaboration** – We believe strong partnerships generate new experiences and opportunities.
- **Inclusivity** – We embrace a culture that values diversity and social inclusion.
- **Integrity** – We value transparency and equitable opportunity, honesty and fairness.
- **Independence** – We value artistic and financial independence and commercial sustainability.



OUR TEAM

Ensemble's Artistic Director leads the executive management team of Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer, and together they manage and lead a small team of skilled creative, administrative, production and hospitality staff to develop, rehearse and deliver an annual subscription season and resource the venue's operational requirements. The company manages day-to-day operations with a lean workforce of 17 full-time and 8 permanent part-time employees, with a total staff of 70 including our teams of Box Office, Front of House, Bar and Wait Staff casuals and volunteers. Additionally, 200 contractors are employed annually to deliver our 10-play season, including writers, directors, actors, design creatives, and technical crew. Currently there are no First Nations-identifying staff employed on a full-time basis, however we regularly contract First Nations artists and creatives across our annual season.



Sharni McDermott, Ursula Yovich, Frederick Copperwaite and Aunty Marlene Cummins in *THE FEVER AND THE FRET* by Jub Clerc, Ensemble Theatre 2018. Photo Prudence Upton.

OUR RAP

With the changes to our Artistic and Executive management 5 years ago, Ensemble embarked on a new artistic strategy to provide opportunities for First Nations artists and organisations, whilst developing meaningful and respectful relationships. For our artistic goals to be successful, it was important to formalise our commitment to reconciliation from the executive levels of the organisation through to our most junior staff, as well as our audiences. In order to support our aspirations, and to measure and track our progress, Ensemble identified the RAP as a robust framework to guide our business and artistic operations.

Ensemble regularly collaborates with First Nations artists to present our annual season of plays, and in recent years we have produced a number of works which strongly featured First Nations stories and voices. As we work to promote reconciliation within our organisation and broader sphere of influence, we will foster culturally safe spaces for our artists, staff, and communities, creating pathways for open dialogue and cross-cultural respect.

Our RAP implementation will be led by the Ensemble Board and Executive Team, including the Executive Director and Artistic Director as our RAP Champions. The RAP Working Group includes Ensemble's Executive Director, Artistic Director, Artistic Coordinator, Philanthropy and Partnerships Manager, Ticketing and IT Manager, and Deputy Marketing Manager. As part of our RAP, we will also invite an additional member to ensure that we have First Nations representation within the RAP Working Group.

Integral to our RAP implementation is deep cultural consultation with First Nations artists and the communities with whom we engage. We intend to build upon our existing relationships with First Nations artists and community leaders by identifying and approaching First Nations advisors within our industry and sphere of influence to guide us in the development of our RAP. In particular, we hope to strengthen our relationship with the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC) and Cammeragal Elders.

Within Ensemble, the RAP Champions and RAP Working Group will work to embed the principles of reconciliation at all levels of the organisation. We encourage all of our staff and artists to make practical contributions towards reconciliation throughout our day-to-day operations, whilst developing relationships with First Nations communities within and beyond Ensemble. We will provide all staff with First Nations cultural awareness training to ensure our company is equipped with the most up-to-date resources and ready to foster a culturally safe work/creative environment.



OUR PARTNERSHIPS/CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Recognition of First Nations peoples

Ensemble is committed to recognising and paying respects to First Nations peoples in our activities, conducting an Acknowledgement of Country at the first rehearsal of each production, at all major staff and board meetings, and playing a recorded Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of all public performances. We consulted with the MLALC prior to implementing our acknowledgements across all Ensemble collateral, including our annual season brochure, website, email signatures, and event programs, to ensure proper acknowledgement of Cammeragal country. Additionally, we invite an Elder from the MLALC to conduct a Welcome to Country at significant events and our annual season launch, which also features a Smoking Ceremony held at the entrance to our venue.

We are proud to fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags alongside the Australian and Ensemble flags at our venue, particularly on significant days for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as days of broader national significance. We have also mounted a plaque at the entrance to the building, which includes an Acknowledgement to Country and recognition that Ensemble sits on the unceded lands of the Cammeragal people.

BLACK COCKATOO Tour

Beginning work in 2017, several periods of research and development led to the successful premiere season of BLACK COCKATOO by Geoffrey Atherden, directed by Wesley Enoch, at the 2020 Sydney Festival. This new Australian play explores race relations and national identity through a significant and little known moment in Australia's cricketing history, when Australia's First XI - made up of 13 Aboriginal men from Western Victoria - toured to England in 1868. In 2022, Ensemble embarked on a 26-venue national tour of BLACK COCKATOO, employing 8 highly skilled First Nations artists, creatives, and a cultural consultant. Ensemble arranged opportunities to Acknowledge Country and to engage with Elders, land councils and communities at each venue to ensure that appropriate cultural protocols were in place.

A LETTER FOR MOLLY

As part of our 2022 season at Ensemble Theatre, we presented the premiere of A LETTER FOR MOLLY, a new work by emerging Gumbaynggirr playwright Brittanie Shipway, directed by Ursula Yovich. The story reflects on themes of choice and motherhood in a modern context, and Shipway says "the purpose of this play is to empower a community of young First Nations women to have autonomy over their lives and bodies, a story I wish I had access to growing up." The company for this production included 9 First Nations artists and creatives, including the continuing engagement of Gumbaynggirr artist Alison Williams as Visual Arts and Cultural Consultant, and three emerging Technical Creatives as part of our mentorship program for First Nations artists.

Jess Stassi & Bobette Joran from Tiwi College visit Ensemble Theatre 2017. Photo Clare Hawley.



Pathways for First Nations Artists

To support emerging First Nations artists in their professional development, Ensemble has created new opportunities for quality professional experiences within our safe creative/work spaces. For emerging directors, the annual Sandra Bates Directors Award provides two recipients with paid Assistant Director positions on two plays in Ensemble's annual season. For emerging First Nations technical creatives, Ensemble has developed and implemented an internship program on our 2022 productions of BLACK COCKATOO and A LETTER FOR MOLLY. This program is currently focused on designers, stage managers and touring managers, providing paid First Nations-identified positions on projects led by highly experienced First Nations artists and creative teams. In addition, as part of our new work commissions and developments, we have recently collaborated with First Nations writers, creating pathways for playwrights to explore and refine their work from development to production.

First Nations Leadership

In all of Ensemble's development and rehearsal processes, a supportive and collaborative ethos is established and fostered, allowing each production's company to engage in an open dialogue about the work. To help provide these safe creative/work spaces, we ensure that appropriate First Nations leaders and consultants are involved in the development of First Nations works from concept through to performance. Wherever possible, we create opportunities for autonomous First Nations leadership and decision-making control, whilst consulting with relevant communities and key organisations to ensure we adhere to best practice First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocols.

For our 2022 season, this includes the ongoing engagement of Wotjobaluk Elder Uncle Richard Kennedy as Cultural Consultant on our national tour of BLACK COCKATOO, as well as Gumbaynggirr artist Alison Williams as Visual Arts and Cultural Consultant on our premiere production of A LETTER FOR MOLLY. In addition, these productions are led by highly respected, multi-award winning First Nations arts leaders: Noonuccal Nuugi director Wesley Enoch for BLACK COCKATOO, and Burarra/Serbian director Ursula Yovich for A LETTER FOR MOLLY. These strong working relationships have been fostered over the research and development process, and are an extremely valuable and necessary addition to these creative spaces.

Commissioning and Developing New First Nations Works

Over the past 5 years, Ensemble has undertaken a period of reflection and renewal, working to create a strategic plan with a goal to produce First Nations work on a regular basis and increase employment for First Nations artists. To date, this has resulted in the development of 3 new works with First Nations stories at the heart. As a company that presents both contemporary and classic plays, Ensemble recognises the value that new voices bring to the theatre, adding to the rich and ongoing history of Australian theatre and culture. We wish to centralise these new perspectives on our stages, and in particular those that reflect the diversity and complexity of contemporary Australia.

Cultural Competency Training

Since 2018, Ensemble has engaged experts to conduct First Nations cultural awareness training courses for our staff prior to all major projects and developments of First Nations works. This training provides valuable resources for our staff as we continue to build strong relationships with First Nations artists, ensuring we are prepared to provide culturally safe and respectful work/creative spaces.

Strategic Planning

Ensemble's 2021-2024 Strategic Plan artistic excellence goals includes a Key Performance Index to employ at least two First Nations artists per year, and to commission and/or develop one new play which is centred around the experiences of First Nations peoples every two years. This measurable outcome strengthens our commitment to building relationships with First Nations artists, and provides greater transparency within our community and a benchmark for us to track our achievements against.

Marketing and Promotional Strategy

With a view towards diversifying our audiences, our marketing and promotional strategy includes promotions to First Nations communities, particularly for works involving First Nations stories. We hope to connect and build relationships with First Nations communities, promoting Ensemble as a welcoming and culturally safe space for First Nations audiences. We promote through a range of media outlets, including those with First Nations journalists, for example Koori Mail, Gadigal Information Service (Koori Radio), NITV, ABC Radio, The Guardian, and invite First Nations editors and critics to our opening night events.

Supporting First Nations Charities

During Sydney's Covid-19 lockdown periods, Ensemble staff supported Western Sydney artists and First Nations Elders in need through a voluntary giving program, which was set up to provide meals and supplies in response to urgent need caused by the lockdowns. Financial donations were made through the company's payroll system or via direct payment. Organisations supported through this initiative included Kallico Catering and Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation.

RELATIONSHIPS



| Action | Deliverable | Timeline | Responsibility |
|--|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. | • Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. | July 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| | • Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. | September 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| 2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW). | • Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. | 27 May – 3 June 2023 | Artistic Coordinator |
| | • RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. | 27 May – 3 June 2023 | Executive Director |
| | • Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. | 27 May – 3 June 2023 | Executive Director |
| 3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence. | • Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. | July 2022 | Executive Director |
| | • Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. | July 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| | • Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. | July 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| 4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies. | • Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. | October 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| | • Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. | November 2022 | Executive Director |



| Action | Deliverable | Timeline | Responsibility |
|--|---|----------------|----------------------|
| 5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning. | • Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. | August 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| | • Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. | October 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| 6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols. | • Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area. | August 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| | • Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. | August 2022 | Executive Director |
| 7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week. | • Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. | 3-10 July 2022 | Executive Director |
| | • Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. | 3-10 July 2022 | Executive Director |
| | • RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. | 3-10 July 2022 | Executive Director |

OPPORTUNITIES



| Action | Deliverable | Timeline | Responsibility |
|---|---|---------------|----------------------|
| 8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development. | • Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. | April 2023 | Executive Director |
| | • Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. | March 2023 | Executive Director |
| 9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes. | • Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. | February 2023 | Executive Director |
| | • Investigate Supply Nation membership. | August 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |

GOVERNANCE



| Action | Deliverable | Timeline | Responsibility |
|--|---|-------------------|----------------------|
| 10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP. | • Form a RAP Working Group to govern RAP implementation. | July 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| | • Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG. | October 2022 | Executive Director |
| | • Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG. | April 2023 | Executive Director |
| 11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments. | • Define resource needs for RAP implementation. | September 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| | • Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments. | July 2022 | Executive Director |
| | • Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally. | July 2022 | Executive Director |
| | • Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. | August 2022 | Executive Director |
| 12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally. | • Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. | 30 September 2022 | Artistic Coordinator |
| 13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP. | • Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. | April 2023 | Executive Director |



Joseph Althouse, Mema Munro, Mark Nannup, Kyle Shilling, Phoebe Grainer & Colin Smith in BLACK COCKATOO, National Tour 2022. Photo Jillian Mundy.



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