

Public Interest Advocacy Centre

Reconciliation Action Plan

April 2023 – March 2026



Reconciliation Action Plan

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre office is located on the land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. PIAC provides services across New South Wales and Australia, and we acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we work as the first people of this country.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) is leading social justice law and policy centre. Established in 1982, we are an independent, non-profit organisation that works with people and communities who are marginalised and facing disadvantage.

Public Interest Advocacy Centre
Level 5, 175 Liverpool St
Sydney NSW 2000

T: 02 8898 6500
E: piac@piac.asn.au
Web: www.piac.asn.au

Please contact PIAC's Media and Communications Manager,
Danielle Buhagiar, for all enquiries regarding the PIAC RAP.

T: (02) 8898 6532
M: 0478 739 280
E: media@piac.asn.au

Reconciliation Action Plan

Our vision for reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is a society that is fair, equal and just for all Australians, and that recognises the central place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in our nation's history and future. This vision includes a legal system that delivers true justice – free of systemic racism and bias.

As a law and policy centre dedicated to achieving social justice, PIAC has a particular responsibility to work proactively towards reconciliation and to advance the rights of First Nations people. Since our establishment in 1982, this has been reflected in the priorities for our substantive work (*what we do*). Since 2017, our Reconciliation Action Plan has played a central role in guiding the culture and values we bring to our work (*how we do it*).

Our RAP therefore commits us to working in ways that promote reconciliation and the rights of First Nations people through all our work.

Our business

PIAC is a leading social justice law and policy centre. We work with people and communities who are marginalised and facing disadvantage.

We build a fairer, stronger society by helping to change laws, policies and practices that cause injustice and inequality. We make change by exposing and challenging injustice and unfairness; identifying solutions; engaging with the public and decision-makers; and empowering people to initiate, inform and influence positive change.

Our work combines legal advice and representation with research, policy development, and advocacy for systems change and public interest outcomes. We actively seek to collaborate and partner in our work.

Justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a longstanding priority. PIAC has worked over many years to tackle systemic injustice and unfairness faced by First Nations communities.

PIAC works closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations, including the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), AbSec, First People's Disability Network, the Indigenous Law Centre at UNSW, and the Shed. Our work reflects the priorities identified by these organisations and we are committed to delivering our services in a culturally sensitive way.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Our work has included:

- tackling discrimination and the over-policing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and pushing for changes to laws, policies and practices that disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- helping to secure the return of wages, allowances and pensions held in trust by the NSW Government for Aboriginal people, who were denied access to these funds;
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through our Homeless Persons' Legal Service;
- the Indigenous Child Protection Project, a collaboration with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) and AbSec, to make change in the child protection system and get better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families;
- responding to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system, supporting justice reinvestment and raising the age of criminal responsibility;
- active support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including through public events, social media and our ground-breaking 'Towards Truth' partnership with the Indigenous Law Centre at UNSW, which is mapping laws, policies and practices since 1788 that have impacted upon the lives of First Nations people.

Since our establishment in 1982, PIAC has grown from a staff of four to a staff of approximately 50 as well as secondees, professional placements, and interns. Our office is in Sydney but we work across NSW and sometimes nationally. At the time of finalising our RAP, we have 9 Aboriginal people working at PIAC: 8 employed by PIAC and one under an identified secondment arrangement from a partner organisation.

PIAC has well-established policies and practices to combat discrimination and racism, including through induction, an engaged work health and safety committee, regular review of our policies and regular training for staff.

Our RAP and our reconciliation journey

Consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, PIAC is committed to consulting, working with and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve access to justice.

PIAC's first RAP was launched in July 2017 following consultation with key Aboriginal stakeholders and with full support from PIAC's Board and staff. Our RAP was updated in 2020 to deepen our commitment to reconciliation across the organisation. This RAP continues our 'reconciliation journey'.

Our RAPs have focused on our culture and systems, with the aim of ensuring that we are working in a way that supports reconciliation across all of our projects and priority areas: for example, in tackling homelessness; in advancing the rights of people with disability; and in addressing the impacts of climate change.

Achievements under our previous RAPs include:

- Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Strategy, through which we have built and maintained a cohort of First Nations staff of 9 out of a total of about 50 (approximately 18%).
- Developing and implementing Principles of Engagement for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations to underpin our work on First Nations justice issues and with First Nations people and organisations.
- Embedding creative ways of exploring and celebrating local Aboriginal culture and history through walking and cultural tours including in Redfern, the Australian Museum the Museum of Sydney and Tallawoladah (the Rocks).
- Our quarterly Reconciliation Book Club which has encouraged staff to explore and support First Nations writers and artist and exposed staff to diverse First Nations voices, experiences and perspectives.
- Making the RAP part of PIAC's core business: embedded in duty statements, featured in our inductions, reviewed as part of staff performance and reported on at staff and Board meetings as a matter of governance.
- Affirming our commitment to respecting cultural protocols, through meaningful acknowledgement of country at meetings and events, in our office, on our website and letterhead.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Challenges have included prioritising RAP commitments – including for monitoring and reporting – over substantive work that is client-focused and often time-critical. We have sought to meet this challenge by embedding the RAP in PIAC’s policies and practices. As a not-for-profit with limited procurement, we also have fewer opportunities for building commercial relationships with First Nations suppliers and are focusing our efforts on other areas where we can have an impact.

PIAC’s RAP working group comprises members from across the organisation, including representatives from each of our program areas. This includes:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Principal Solicitor, Strategic Litigation
- Principal Solicitor, Homeless Persons’ Legal Service
- Director, Policy and Advocacy
- Project Director, Towards Truth
- Senior Solicitors and Solicitors
- Legal Secretary
- Executive Assistant
- Office Coordinator
- Legal Research Officer, Towards Truth
- Project Officer, StreetCare
- Media and Communications Manager
- Communications Coordinator
- Relationships Coordinator
- Campaign Manager, Raise the Age

At the time of finalising this RAP, four members of the working group are First Nations people, including the Chair.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Relationships



Strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities are fundamental to PIAC's RAP and our organisation. We know that building these relationships will enhance the quality and value of PIAC's work. We are committed to improving the way we work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and to supporting reconciliation activities in our workplace.

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
1. Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and organisations	1.1 Review and update our Principles of Engagement for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.	Lead: CEO Support: Section heads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2023 • August 2024 • August 2025
	1.2 In consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, develop and implement a partnership strategy to guide our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and partner organisations across PIAC's program areas, including guidance on when to establish partnership agreements or MOU's with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.	Lead: CEO Support: Section heads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2023 • August 2024 • August 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

2. Celebrate National Reconciliation Week Create and promote opportunities for PIAC employees to build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities during NRW	2.1 Organise at least one National Reconciliation Week event each year, with a focus on reconciliation: for example, by supporting and promoting awareness of the work of an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation.	Media and Communications Manager; Director, Policy and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 May – 3 June 2023 • 27 May – 3 June 2024 • 27 May – 3 June 2025
	2.2 Register NRW events on the Reconciliation Australia NRW website where appropriate.	Media and Communications Manager; Director, Policy and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023 • May 2024 • May 2025
	2.3 Provide opportunities for attendees at NRW events to donate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.	Media and Communications Manager; Director, Policy and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 May – 3 June 2023 • 27 May – 3 June 2024 • 27 May – 3 June 2025
	2.4 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff in the lead-up to NRW.	Media and Communications Manager; Director, Policy and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023 • May 2024 • May 2025
	2.5 Encourage and support PIAC staff to attend other NRW key stakeholder events (e.g. Community Legal Centre breakfast or Aboriginal Legal Service picnic).	Media and Communications Manager; Director, Policy and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 May – 3 June 2023 • 27 May – 3 June 2024 • 27 May – 3 June 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

	2.6 Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	Media and Communications Manager; Director, Policy and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 May – 3 June 2023 • 27 May – 3 June 2024 • 27 May – 3 June 2025
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	3.1 Participate in the Legal Profession Reconciliation Network and collaborate with other RAP organisations to influence stakeholders and drive reconciliation outcomes in the legal sector.	RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2023 • August 2024 • August 2025
	3.2 Encourage PIAC staff to take part in relevant networks and forums such as the NSW Law Society Indigenous Issues Committee.	RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2023 • August 2024 • August 2025
	3.3 Demonstrate public support for, and increase public awareness and understanding of, our commitment to reconciliation and the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including through PIAC's website, events, in publications such as the annual report and on social media.	Media and Communications Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2023 • August 2024 • August 2025
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies	4.1 Review existing anti-discrimination protections in PIAC policies to ensure these continue to reflect best practice,	Principal Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2023 • August 2024 • August 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

	including seeking input from First Nations staff.		
	4.2 Undertake one anti-racism activity (e.g. training, presentation, workshop) with all staff each year to increase staff understanding of the effects of racism.	Director, Policy and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2023 • August 2024 • August 2025
5. Ensure First Nations perspectives are part of PIAC's decision-making and governance	5.1 Maintain at least one Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Director.	CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2023 • August 2024 • August 2025
	5.2 Maintain at least one Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander member of our homelessness lived-experience advocacy group StreetCare.	Principal Solicitor, Homeless Persons Legal Service, Project Officer, StreetCare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2023 • August 2024 • August 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

Respect



PIAC is committed to working in a manner that respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, lands, and histories. We want our work to acknowledge the role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have had in shaping our country's history, and contribute towards establishing a future for Australia based on mutual respect and understanding.

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols	6.1 Review our cultural protocol document, including protocols for Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country to achieve and maintain best practice and to ensure ongoing compliance.	Relationships Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2023 October 2024 October 2025
	6.2 Circulate and promote cultural protocol document to ensure staff understanding of, and compliance with, protocols around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inviting local <u>Traditional</u> Owners to provide a Welcome to Country at appropriate events including an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all external meetings. 	Relationships Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> November 2023 November 2024 November 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

<p>7. Ensure policies and procedures are culturally appropriate and inclusive.</p>	<p>7.1 RWG to review all new policies and procedures to ensure they are culturally appropriate, inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and sensitive to the values, traditions, and customs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<p>Lead: CEO Support: RWG</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2023 • November 2024 • November 2025
<p>8. Increase understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, and achievements amongst the PIAC Board and employees</p>	<p>8.1 Develop a cultural learning plan for 2023-26, with input from Aboriginal advisors and/or partners and staff. The plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide opportunities for staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning; • respond to the different needs of staff, volunteers and secondees to PIAC; and • require all staff to participate in at least one cultural awareness activity event each year. 	<p>Principal Solicitor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2023
	<p>8.2 Review and update PIAC’s Cultural Learning Plan.</p>	<p>Principal Solicitor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 November 2024 • 30 November 2025
	<p>8.3 Invite Board Members to participate in cultural awareness training events provided by PIAC.</p>	<p>Principal Solicitor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 November 2023 • 30 November 2024 • 30 November 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

	<p>8.4 Ensure cultural awareness training is provided for all staff and volunteers involved in Homeless Persons' Legal Service clinics, including lawyers from participating law firms.</p>	Principal Solicitor, HPLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 November 2023 • 30 November 2024 • 30 November 2025
	<p>8.5 Continue to host a Reconciliation Book Club or film event every quarter, bringing staff together to deepen understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, ignite conversation and spark change.</p>	RWG Chair	<p>Quarters ending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February • May • August • November
<p>9. Provide opportunities for PIAC staff to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities through NAIDOC Week.</p>	<p>9.1 Organise a staff activity for NAIDOC week with a focus on celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.</p>	Media and Communications Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2023 • July 2024 • July 2025
	<p>9.2 Encourage and provide opportunities for all staff to attend at least one NAIDOC Week event in their local community.</p>	Media and Communications Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2023 • July 2024 • July 2025
	<p>9.3 Regularly update staff to increase awareness PIAC's HR policies and measures that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate in cultural and community activities during NAIDOC Week and other significant dates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>	Executive Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023 • May 2024 • May 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

	<p>9.4 Encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate in cultural and community activities during NAIDOC Week and other significant dates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>	<p>Executive Assistant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2023 • July 2024 • July 2025
	<p>9.5 RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.</p>	<p>RWG Chair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2023 • July 2024 • July 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

Opportunities



PIAC is committed to improving employment and professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We believe a more inclusive and equitable workplace will improve our organisation for all staff and will enable us to be more effective in addressing systemic problems alongside our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Deliverable</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Timeline</u>
10. Improve employment outcomes at PIAC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	10.1 Review and update our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention strategy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and stakeholders to build understanding of staffing needs and inform future employment and professional development opportunities. Adopting best practice from CLC Australia's 'Recruiting and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees: A Guide for community legal centres' and 'Gari Yala: speak the Truth' from Jumbunna and Diversity Council. Increasing opportunities for professional advancement into senior and leadership roles. 	CEO, Executive Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2023 May 2024 May 2025


Reconciliation Action Plan

	<p>10.2 Ensure job vacancies for all staff and Practical Legal Training roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are advertised in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media • state Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strongly encouraged to apply. 	Executive Assistant, Legal Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023 • May 2024 • May 2025
<p>11. Partner with tertiary education providers to promote professional learning opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.</p>	<p>11.1 Maintain a list of key contact people within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education units; in particular at University of Western Sydney, University of Wollongong, Southern Cross University, and other institutions in regional areas which may have a high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student population.</p>	Principal Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023 • May 2024 • May 2025
	<p>11.2 Maintain opportunities to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to undertake practical legal training or other placement programs at PIAC.</p>	PLT Coordinator; Principal Solicitor; Principal Solicitor, HPLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023 • May 2024 • May 2025
	<p>11.3 Develop work experience pathways for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander high school students through a work experience partnership with a school in Western Sydney with a diverse student body,</p>	Principal Solicitor, HPLS; Office Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023 <p>To be reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2024 • May 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

	including a high proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.		
12. Provide secondment opportunities to facilitate professional development for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers	12.1 Work with secondment partners to ensure identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondment programs remain successful and sustainable, providing opportunities for a range of quality and varied work and ensuring the roles remain highly desirable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers and law graduates.	Principal Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023 • May 2024 • May 2025
	12.2 Promote opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers from partner law firms to be seconded to PIAC.	Principal Solicitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023 • May 2024 • May 2025
13. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	13.1 Review our procurement practices to ensure that First Nations procurement is prioritised and enabled where appropriate, and that these opportunities are openly communicated to staff.	Deputy CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2024 • May 2025
	13.2 Conduct an annual review of commercial relationships to consider increased opportunities for engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Deputy CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2024 • May 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

Governance 			
<u>Action</u>	<u>Deliverable</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Timeline</u>
14. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	14.1 Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	CEO, RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2024 February 2025 February 2026
	14.2 Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2024 February 2025 February 2026
	14.3 Maintain systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	CEO, RWG Chair, Executive Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2024 February 2025 February 2026
	14.4 Maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2024 February 2025 February 2026
15. Maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP	15.1 Maintain and review the Terms of Reference for the RWG, including ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> membership from across PIAC's program areas; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. 	CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2024 February 2025 February 2026

Reconciliation Action Plan

	<p>15.2 RWG to meet quarterly to monitor and report on RAP implementation, including thematic review of deliverables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships – August meeting • Respect – November meeting • Opportunities – May meeting • Governance – February meeting 	RWG Chair	<p>Annually</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February • May • August • November
16. Report on achievements, challenges, and learnings to measure impact of PIAC's RAP	<p>16.1 RWG to report on delivery of our RAP commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly to staff; and • Quarterly to PIAC Board General Business meetings. 	RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2024 • February 2025 • February 2026
	<p>16.2 Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.</p>	Media and Communications Manager, RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2023 • June 2024 • June 2025
	<p>16.3 Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.</p>	Media and Communications Manager, RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 August 2023 • 1 August 2024 • 1 August 2025
	<p>16.4 Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually.</p>	Media and Communications Manager, RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 2023 • September 2024 • September 2025

Reconciliation Action Plan

	16.5 Publicly report highlights of the delivery of our RAP commitments in PIAC's annual report.	Media and Communications Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2023 October 2024 October 2025
	16.6 Conduct annual staff RAP survey to identify impact of PIAC's RAP and areas for improvement.	RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2023 December 2024 December 2025
	16.7 Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2024
	16.8 Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	Media and Communications Manager, RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2026
17. Produce PIAC's next RAP	17.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2025
	17.2 Conduct consultations for PIAC's next RAP so that it can commence immediately after the expiration of the current RAP.	RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2025
	17.3 Work with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings and challenges of this Innovate RAP.	RWG Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> November 2025