



RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2013



It is with great pleasure that I present ACER's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

ACER is committed to improving learning across the life span and has identified the improvement of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners as an organisational priority.

We believe that education can contribute to closing the unacceptable 17-year life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. As an educational research organisation working with students and communities nationally and internationally, we recognise that we are in a unique position to contribute to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities.

Our RAP is a practical commitment to build on past initiatives and is focused on three key areas: respect, relationships and opportunities. In implementing this plan, we will promote an organisational understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their culture and their history. Specific initiatives, such as providing employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, will not only enhance this understanding but contribute to the diversity of our workforce.

We are excited about the development and implementation of this Reconciliation Action Plan. The Plan makes explicit our commitment to the reconciliation process and identifies how we intend to work to build more effective relationships and to create improved employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Geoff N Masters".

Professor Geoff N Masters
Chief Executive Officer, ACER

There is no doubt that there are still major gaps in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and that these exist from early childhood right through to higher education.

In seeking to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, it is important that those with the capacity to do so determine how their skills could provide vital support to effect change.

Research is one of these skills. It is the key to identifying the factors that contribute to the complexity of issues for Aboriginal education.

For many years ACER has been applying its research skills to uncover new knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning. The development and implementation of this Reconciliation Action Plan serves to ensure that this work occurs within an organisational culture that is respectful and inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

In carrying out the following plan for Reconciliation, ACER will further align its commitment with action and will increase its capacity to bring about positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lynette Riley".

Lynette Riley
Chair, ACER Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education



Our commitment to reconciliation

As an educational research organisation working with students and communities nationally and internationally, ACER is in a unique position to contribute to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities.

ACER is committed to improving learning across the life span and has identified the improvement of outcomes for Indigenous learners as an organisational priority. We recognise the importance of respecting Indigenous peoples and their cultures in our work in Indigenous education and understand that this is an important part of developing a culturally conscious workplace for our employees.

Our mission

ACER's mission is to create and promote research-based knowledge, products and services that can be used to improve learning across the life span. A major aspect of our work is to assist educational decision makers at all levels in their collection, analysis, interpretation and use of reliable and valid data. Our purpose is to assist in the development of clearer pictures and understandings of educational challenges, opportunities and progress over time. A second major aspect of our work is to assist educational decision makers at all levels in their identification and implementation of evidence-based policies and practices. Our purpose is to promote better outcomes for all learners through the use of approaches that have been demonstrated through research to be effective in practice. ACER currently employs 350 staff.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

ACER's Board of Directors endorsed the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan in December 2011. A working group was formed led by ACER Management and comprising ACER's Director of Human Resources, Executive Manager, Indigenous Liaison Officer, Aboriginal Research Fellow, a Research Fellow and the Chair of ACER's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education (ACIE) as a critical friend. The development of the RAP was launched with all ACER staff at a Quarterly Staff Meeting. Staff meetings were then held with staff across the organisation to gain their input into the plan, find out what reconciliation meant to them and how it would be reflected in their work. A workshop was held at where all staff were invited to provide their ideas and input into the plan.

A document identifying ACER's research priorities in Indigenous Education is being developed. This document will focus on what ACER is doing, or intends to do, in the area of Indigenous education research and development, consistent with ACER's four goals:

1. Identifying, understanding and addressing the needs of Indigenous learners;
2. Enhancing the capacity of teachers and leaders to improve outcomes for Indigenous learners;
3. Creating more supportive and effective places and modes of learning for Indigenous learners;
4. Supporting systemic and government efforts to close gaps in educational achievement for Indigenous learners in order to improve life outcomes.

Australian Council for Educational Research Reconciliation Action Plan

I. Relationships

ACER will maintain and continue to develop meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities, organisations and individuals based on mutual respect and equality.

We will promote an organisational understanding of ATSI peoples, cultural knowledge and historical knowledge for our staff. At the same time, we will promote our purpose and seek advice into ways in which we might more effectively engage with ATSI peoples in order to demonstrate an equality of regard for ATSI peoples. Before commencing research we will engage with key stakeholders in the community to share the research issue from ACER's viewpoint, determine its validity from the ATSI community viewpoint and negotiate how to proceed. We recognise that it is crucial that the community be involved in every phase of the research to ensure that Indigenous knowledge is respected throughout the process.

Focus area: Ensure ACER's work is underpinned by Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1.1 Establish RAP Working Group comprising Director of Human Resources, Executive Manager, Indigenous Liaison Officer, Aboriginal Research Fellow, Research Fellow and the Chair of ACER's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education (ACIE) as critical friend, to develop ACER's RAP	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/RAP Working Group	31 March 2013	1.1.1 RAP developed and submitted to Reconciliation Australia for approval
1.2 Initiate opportunities to continue to educate ourselves and our staff to increase our knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultures, histories, perspectives and contributions	Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO)	31 March 2014	1.2.1 <i>Learning over Lunch</i> has been conducted for staff; 1.2.2 Regular Cultural Awareness programs have been provided for all staff; 1.2.3 Local community members have been invited to talk with staff about significant sites in the area; 1.2.4 Indigenous speakers, including Elders and members of ACIE, have been invited to present to staff 1.2.5 Celebrate National Reconciliation Week
1.3 Support organisations that have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees	Organisation	April 2014	1.3.1 Where possible we have used caterers and contractors with Aboriginal employees
1.4 Continue with current partnerships with Indigenous organisations and establish new partnerships	CEO & ILO	April 2014	1.4.1 Relevant organisations across Australia have been mapped and an up-to-date data base is maintained
1.5 Continue to have Advisory Committee on Indigenous Education (ACIE) as a Committee of the ACER Board of Directors meeting once or twice a year and reporting to ACER's Board of Directors	CEO	May and November 2014	1.5.1 Committee has met at least once a year

2. Respect

As an educational research organisation working with Indigenous students and communities nationally and internationally, it is important that respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are maintained at all times.

ACER has a corporate policy complemented by a Code of Ethics for Human Research which outlines the values and principles of ethical conduct that underpin ACER's research in general and in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in particular.

ACER has established principles to ensure that Indigenous Australians are respected and engaged in the research conducted about them and their community. These principles are based on our values of reflection and improvement, responsiveness, integrity and positive relationships between the researcher and Indigenous participants.

We recognise the importance of learning from Indigenous peoples to help inform our processes and outcomes and of consultation with Indigenous peoples to meet their needs. We also recognise the importance of honest exchange to achieve mutual and respectful interactions with Indigenous peoples and of creating an environment of respect and safety when working with Indigenous peoples.

Focus area: Build and promote a respectful culture within the ACER community.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
2.1 Establish protocols – a style guide to help staff in their interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples – a shared language	Professional Resources Division (PRD)/ ILO	31 March 2014	2.1.1 Resources have been developed – eg. document/booklet/dvd; 2.1.2 Training has been provided for staff
2.2 Create a physical environment within ACER that is respectful, welcoming and inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples	ILO	31 March 2014	2.2.1 Aboriginal artworks are displayed in ACER's offices; 2.2.2 A plaque with Acknowledgement of Country has been installed in the foyers of ACER's offices
2.3 Create an Acknowledgement of Country in language in consultation with local Elders group	ILO	31 March 2014	2.3.1 An Acknowledgement of Country in language has been produced in consultation with local Elders group.
2.4 Acknowledgement of Country protocol to be observed at internal and external ACER meetings	Organisation/ILO	April 2014	2.4.1 A card with appropriate wording has been produced and provided to staff for their use; 2.4.2 An Acknowledgement of Country has been added to all ACER staff email signature blocks; 2.4.3 Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country wording for each state and territory has been placed on ACER's website
2.5 Welcome to Country protocol to be observed at major ACER external, public events	Organisation	April 2014	2.5.1 Welcome to Country protocol is observed at major ACER external events
2.6 Celebrate and observe national days of significance for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples	ILO	27 May-3 June, 7-14 July, 4 August, 9 August	2.6.1 Morning teas and staff functions have been arranged to celebrate and create awareness of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander days of significance including NAIDOC, National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day, and International Day of the Worlds Indigenous People
2.7 Develop an improved communication strategy specific to ACER's work in Indigenous education	Corporate Marketing & Communications (CMC)/ ILO	April 2014	2.7.1 ACER's Indigenous page on the website has been enhanced; 2.7.2 A periodic newsletter profiling ACER's work in Indigenous education has been produced; 2.7.3 Articles have been sent to Indigenous media outlets about work ACER is doing in Indigenous education and outcomes and impact of that work

3. Opportunities		ACER is in a position to promote evidence based research to improve Indigenous learning. By providing employment opportunities to Indigenous Australians ACER can develop a greater understanding of Indigenous peoples and cultures whilst building the diversity of our organisation.		
Focus area 1: Attract and support Indigenous employees.				
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target	
3.1 We will ensure that our Indigenous workforce is supported, engaged and provided with opportunities for career and skills development	Human Resources (HR)	April 2014	3.1.1 ACER has created a safe and welcoming environment for Indigenous staff; 3.1.2 ACER has celebrated national days; 3.1.3 Mentoring has been provided for Indigenous staff; 3.1.4 Training and professional development and opportunities for career planning have been provided for Indigenous staff; 3.1.5 Cultural awareness training has been provided for all staff	
3.2 Indigenous Employment Strategy	HR	April 2014	3.2.1 ACER's Indigenous Employment Strategy is up to date and relevant; 3.2.2 All vacancies have been advertised through Indigenous media and networks; 3.2.3 Opportunities for ACER's Indigenous staff to work on all projects, not only those with Indigenous component have been provided; 3.2.4 Opportunities for ACER staff to work within Indigenous organisations and communities have been provided; 3.2.5 Employment opportunities for Indigenous people including programs such as work experience, secondments and internships have been provided	
Focus area 2: Promote ACER's Indigenous products and services in the community.				
3.3 Publish the outcomes of ACER's research and summarise the influence on policy and/ or learning outcomes for Indigenous students as well as possibilities for making a difference through the work that we do	Directors of Research Divisions/PRD	April 2014	3.3.1 ACER's annual conference has periodically included an Indigenous theme; 3.3.2 ACER's research in Indigenous education has been reflected at ACER conferences; 3.3.3 Documents/materials that summarise ACER's work in Indigenous education and its impact have been produced	
3.4 Continue to build relationships with media contacts, including contacts in Indigenous communities, to communicate ACER's work in Indigenous education	CMC	April 2014	3.4.1 A database of Indigenous media organisations and contacts in Indigenous community has been developed	
3.5 Produce document to identify priorities for ACER's research and development work in the current triennium	Director Educational Monitoring and Research	April 2014	3.5.1 A document identifying priorities for ACER's research and development work in the current triennium has been developed and endorsed by ACER's Board of Directors	
3.6 Develop and promote products and services to improve Indigenous learning	PRD	April 2014	3.6.1 Products and services are available, sold and distributed throughout Australia;	
3.7 Provide professional learning in Indigenous education	ACER Institute	April 2014	3.7.1 A plan for ACER Institute to develop and deliver courses relating to Indigenous education has been established	

4. Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline
4.1 ACER's RAP Working Group to meet at least twice annually to monitor and evaluate RAP progress	Executive Manager	July, November 2013
4.2 Distribute a copy of the RAP to all ACER staff and to the Board of Directors and make RAP available to the public on ACER's website and the Reconciliation Australia website	Executive Manager	April 2013
4.3 Provide annual reports on the progress of the RAP to Reconciliation Australia and the ACER Board of Directors. This report would include the opportunities for cultural awareness training that had been presented to staff in the twelve months and the participation rates. The annual report would then be available to the public on the ACER website	RAP Working Group	April 2014
4.4 Update the RAP annually	RAP Working Group	April 2014



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