



**sydney opera house**

# **reconciliation action plan.**

**Contents–**  
Introduction.  
Message from the CEO.  
Our achievements.  
Message Sticks: Case Study 1.  
Work Experience: Case Study 2  
**Our Vision–**  
Relationships.  
Respect.  
Opportunities.  
Tracking progress & reporting.

# Weaving reconciliation principles into the fabric of everything that we do.

**Sydney Opera House acknowledges the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians, on whose ancestral land the Opera House sits.**

For millennia the Gadigal people expressed their culture through music, dance and storytelling on the rocky outcrop of Bennelong Point. This place was known to the Gadigal as Dh-bow-gule and remains an important cultural site.

We acknowledge custodians and elders, past and present, and pay respect to the cultural authority and traditions with which they have gifted this land. We recognise the rich contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures make to the diversity of the Australian community.

Sydney Opera House is committed to furthering reconciliation and ensuring that the First Peoples of this nation are valued for their contribution to Australian life.



## Message from the ceo.

The first year with a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was a rich learning experience for Sydney Opera House that demonstrated the need for ongoing commitment to closing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

As a performing arts centre, a tourist destination and a national icon, Sydney Opera House is in a unique position to exhibit, promote and support Indigenous arts and culture, language and community. As an organisation, we are committed to further weaving reconciliation principles into the fabric of all that we do at the House.

This second RAP builds on progress Sydney Opera House has made so far and refines the scope of its targets. We remain focused on increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment levels and retaining existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Professional development will also be a priority, with the continuation of our Indigenous Work Experience Program and our School Based Traineeship Program that was implemented in 2011/12.

This RAP provides greater opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work to be created, produced and performed at the House, through the annual *Message Sticks* festival and the vision of our new Head of Indigenous Programming. We will also be partnering with The Deadly Awards to present a Sydney Opera House Deadly Award which will enable an Indigenous person to record an album with the Sydney Opera House's Grammy Award winning sound engineers in our recording studio.

In addition to these commitments, Sydney Opera House will increase its level of community engagement with the establishment of a Community Connections Group that will provide us with guidance and an avenue for consultation with the Indigenous community. We look forward to working as a team with our many partners across government, the performing arts sector and within the community to realise the goal of reconciliation.

We commit ourselves to the actions and targets contained in Sydney Opera House's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for 2012/13.

**Jonathan Bielski**  
Acting Chief Executive Officer



# our achievements

Sydney Opera House's first year with a Reconciliation Action Plan was a rich learning experience that demonstrated the need for ongoing commitment to closing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.



## Message Sticks.

### 2012 Festival.

In 2012, Sydney Opera House expanded its *Message Sticks* festival into a week-long celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and knowledge keepers. Our newly created senior position, Head of Indigenous Programming, developed a program of ticketed and free events which attracted over 10,000 people. A detailed case study on *Message Sticks* can be found on page 5.

## Indigenous Work Experience Program.

### Indigenous students.

Sydney Opera House piloted an Indigenous Work Experience Program with participation from twelve high-school students from schools across the Sydney region. In a four to five day interactive program, the students experienced a range of jobs across all areas of the House, learned specific and transferrable job skills and attended a number of performances and rehearsals. A detailed case study on the Indigenous Work Experience Program can be found on page 7.

## School Based Traineeships.

### 2 Year Program.

In 2012 we also introduced an Indigenous Schools Based Trainees Program, a two year program for five students involving a rotation through various departments within the organisation. Current students will complete the traineeship at the end of 2013 and another five students will enter the program in 2012/13.

## Cultural Awareness.

### Training Program.

Over the past year Sydney Opera House has been working towards a more educated and aware workforce through piloting a Cultural Awareness Training Program for Sydney Opera House staff. The Training Program is currently being refined and will run throughout 2012/13.







# message sticks : case study 1

*Message Sticks*, Sydney Opera House's annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts festival, underwent a major expansion in 2012 to include live performances, talks, debates and a photography exhibition.

## The annual festival underwent a major expansion, attracting over 10,000 people.

In 2012, the *Message Sticks* festival was expanded under the guidance of Rhoda Roberts, Sydney Opera House's newly appointed Head of Indigenous Programming, attracting over 10,000 attendees. The appointment of this senior position was supported by significant funding from Arts NSW for the initial two years.

In recent years, *Message Sticks* was principally the Indigenous film festival curated by Rachel Perkins and Darren Dale of Blackfella Films. The 2012 festival was broadened to include free film screenings and talks, a music performance by the Black Arm Band and outdoor dance performances in a sand circle on the Western Broadwalk titled *Dancestry*. The festival marked 40 years of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy and

this was celebrated by a photography exhibition in the Western Foyers. *Message Sticks* closed with the performance *Dirtsong* by The Black Arm Band Company, an event of music and images featuring artists Archie Roach, Dan Sultan, Lou Bennett, Emma Donovan and special guest Tim Rogers.

Further expansion and development is planned for 2013 with the goal to present a range of outstanding performances to foster audience development and to create partnerships and philanthropic support for the festival.





# work experience :case study 2

Piloted in 2011, Sydney Opera House's Indigenous Work Experience Program is an interactive vocational learning program that gave twelve students the opportunity to work for a week at an international performing arts centre.

"I learnt different ways to act and respond to different people and situations, and how focussed and professional you have to be at work."

Student, Simone Armstrong, Year 10

"Being here this week was an amazing experience and a great opportunity..."

Student, Amy Johnson, Year 9

Sydney Opera House piloted an Indigenous Work Experience Program in partnership with the Aboriginal Education Unit of the Department of Education and Training. Twelve Indigenous high school students interested in pursuing careers in the arts, from a range of schools in the Sydney region took part in the Program.

Over the week the students took part in a vocational learning program designed to expose them to a variety of roles and departments across Sydney Opera House. These included Stage Managers, Sound/AV and Lighting Technicians, Front Of House, Customer Service and Box Office, Producers, Designers and Marketers, Commercial and Tourism staff and Production staff and performers from Bangarra Dance Theatre. The students also attended rehearsals and performances by Sydney Symphony, Opera Australia and Babies Proms and finished their week with afternoon tea in the CEO's office where they shared and evaluated their experiences.

This program established a solid working relationship between Sydney Opera House and the Department of Education and Training's Aboriginal Education Unit and it is hoped that collaboration on future projects will continue. A database of Indigenous students who are interested in future opportunities at the House has since been created and Sydney Opera House is now developing methods and protocols for working with young people on work experience programs. One of the students, Simone Armstrong, has been selected as a member of the Sydney Opera House Youth Advisory Committee.

The Indigenous Work Experience Program will continue as a full five day program in 2012/13.





Sydney Opera House’s vision for reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians is a firm commitment to embrace, engender respect for, and celebrate the culture of our First Peoples, with the nation.

# our vision for reconciliation.



- 1] Relationships.**  
Supporting Sydney Opera House’s existing relationships and establishing new relationships.  
Sydney Opera House encourages participation and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences

**2] Respect.**  
Sydney Opera House reflects our national identity.  
Sydney Opera House fosters respectful relationships.
- 3] Opportunities.**  
Promoting education and employment pathways.  
Supporting strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content at Sydney Opera House

**4] Tracking and Progress Reporting.**  
Sydney Opera House is committed to the reconciliation journey and recording and building on progress.



# relationships.

Sydney Opera House is built on land which has a rich Aboriginal history. It is very important to ensure these historical ties are celebrated and integrated into everything we do. It is through our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that we will be able to celebrate with all Australians the cultures of our First Peoples.

## Sydney Opera House encourages participation and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Sydney Opera House will implement a strategy to measure and increase participation of both (1) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences, and (2) audiences for Sydney Opera House Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activities including performances and products	Director Marketing, Communications and Customer Service	September 2012	SOH to develop and implement an audience development strategy based on the results from <i>Message Sticks</i> 2012.
Sydney Opera House will target and connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through its Digital Education Program	Executive Producer, Sydney Opera House Presents	June 2013	Sydney Opera House to trial the Digital Education Program in a minimum of two Indigenous communities.

## Supporting Sydney Opera House’s existing relationships and establishing new relationships.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group implements and monitors actions in the RAP	Chief Executive Officer	Aug, Nov 2012, Feb, May 2013	Quarterly RAP Working Group meetings to track progress with each area of Sydney Opera House.
		Ongoing	RAP Working Group membership to be made up of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other staff at all levels of the organisation.
		Ongoing	RAP Working Group meetings include a standing invitation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Sydney Opera House Trust.
Sydney Opera House to celebrate key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates and events	Head of CEO’s Office	May & July 2013	Sydney Opera House to celebrate a minimum of one event or initiative during Reconciliation Week and two events or initiatives during NAIDOC Week.
Sydney Opera House to work with partnering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and Individuals to enrich relationships and create further opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Executive Producer SOH Presents	July 2012	Sydney Opera House to make all in-house training available to Bangarra Dance Theatre
	Head of Indigenous Programming	September 2012	Sydney Opera House to set up a Community Connections Group that Includes peer Industry specialists who can give guidance and provide an avenue for consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
	Director Theatre and Events	September 2012	Sydney Opera House to sponsor a Deadly Award, giving the winner the opportunity to record an album in the Sydney Opera House Recording Studio.
	Executive Producer SOH Presents	September 2012	Formalise partnership or undertake a minimum of one project with an Indigenous education institution such as Eora College, the Indigenous unit of the Department of Education and Training.
	Director, Venue Partners and Safety	November 2012	SOH to set up an apprenticeship program at Sydney Opera House food outlets for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people interested in working in the food and beverage industry.
	Head of Indigenous Programming/ Chief Financial Officer	December 2012	Complete research into how Sydney Opera House can support mid-career Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and arts workers.
	Executive Producer SOH Presents	May 2013	Use Sydney Opera House’s Teacher Accreditation to partner with the NSW Teachers Institute to deliver Indigenous perspectives workshops.
	Chief Financial Officer	June 2013	Sydney Opera House to partner with Bangarra Dance Theatre as the Registered Training Organisation to oversee two Indigenous traineeships with Bangarra.



# respect.

Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, land and history is important to Sydney Opera House as a National and World Heritage listed icon built on a site of significant national heritage. Our international and Australian profile in the Arts brings with it a great responsibility. Respectful relationships with our First Peoples support us to provide engaging performing arts that reflect our national identity.

## Focus area: Sydney Opera House fosters respectful relationships

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Sydney Opera House will develop and roll out the Sydney Opera House RAP	Head of CEO's Office	July 2012	Sydney Opera House to launch its second RAP during NAIDOC Week 2012.
			RAP placed on the Sydney Opera House and Reconciliation Australia websites.
Sydney Opera House will increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness across the organisation.	Chief Executive Officer/ Head of Indigenous Programming	July 2012	All staff invited to NAIDOC Week BBQ with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Sydney Opera House to investigate hosting the NAIDOC Committee Awards Ceremony and Gala Ball in 2013.
	General Manager, Tourism	July 2012, May 2013	Sydney Opera House to acknowledge NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week on tours during these weeks
	Chief Financial Officer/ Head of Indigenous Programming	June 2013	Cultural Awareness training available to all staff through bi-annual training sessions, during inductions, and during lunchtimes throughout NAIDOC week.
	Head of CEO's Office	June 2013	Sydney Opera House to publish a calendar of significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates and Sydney Opera House events on the website.

## Sydney Opera House reflects our national identity.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Sydney Opera House will use appropriate cultural protocols including Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country	Head of CEO's Office	September 2012	Sydney Opera House Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols document given to all staff, resident companies and hirers.
		June 2013	Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country to be given at all significant events including the <i>Message Sticks</i> festival
		October 2012	Sydney Opera House to develop a model for Welcome and Acknowledgements of Country that are event and context specific.
Sydney Opera House will acknowledge the Aboriginal history of the Bennelong Point site	Head of CEO's Office/ General Manager Tourism	May 2013	History of the Sydney Opera House site to be researched and appropriately acknowledged: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On Sydney Opera House website</li><li>• On Sydney Opera House tours</li><li>• In Sydney Opera House's Digital Education Program</li><li>• In staff training and inductions</li></ul>
		July 2012	Sydney Opera House representative to sit on Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Aboriginal Interpretation Advisory Panel.
	Director, Building, Development and Maintenance/ Head of Indigenous Programming	May 2013	Sydney Opera House to develop an Aboriginal Interpretation Strategy for the site as recommended in the Sydney Opera House Conservation Management Plan.





# opportunities.

Providing education and employment pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations is a priority for Sydney Opera House. We believe it supports greater economic participation, social inclusion and allows us to directly benefit from increased access to diverse skills and knowledge.

## Focus area: Supporting strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content at Sydney Opera House

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Sydney Opera House will include new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent and guests in its programming.	Executive Producer Sydney Opera House Presents	May 2013	A minimum of five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander shows programmed during <i>Message Sticks</i>  <i>Message Sticks</i> 2013 to feature a performance by NAISDA Graduates.  Increase audience attendance at the <i>Message Sticks</i> festival by 10%.
		June 2013	A minimum of four shows per year by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creatives and performers programmed outside <i>Message Sticks</i> , including two during NAIDOC week with presenting partners.
		June 2013	Plans for Sydney Opera House's 40th Birthday celebration to include a focus on the Aboriginal history of the Bennelong Point site.
	Head of Indigenous Programming	July 2012	Head of Indigenous Programming to mentor an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander producer.

## Focus area: Promoting education and employment pathways

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Sydney Opera House will continue work experience program targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander High School students	Executive Producer SOH Presents	May 2013	A minimum of 15 students to complete the Indigenous Work Experience Program.
SOH to participate in Destination NSW program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to create tourism businesses and become tour guides	Chief Financial Officer	May 2013	A minimum of three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in work experience as tour guides at Sydney Opera House.
Sydney Opera House will participate in an Indigenous School Based Traineeships Program	Chief Financial Officer	May 2013	A minimum of five Trainees to complete the second year of the program working across several departments within Sydney Opera House.
	General Manager, Tourism	May 2013	Sydney Opera House to set up a database of Trainees who are interested in receiving information about job opportunities at Sydney Opera House.
Sydney Opera House will increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff employed at Sydney Opera House from 1.7% of total staff.	Chief Financial Officer	December 2012	Sydney Opera House to set up mentoring program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to assist with retention and professional development.
		May 2013	Sydney Opera House to meet with Australian Employment Covenant to investigate Sydney Opera House signing up.
		June 2013	Sydney Opera House to advertise all available positions through an Indigenous-led recruitment agency.
		June 2013	Sydney Opera House to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to 2%
Sydney Opera House to increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers	Chief Financial Officer	October 2012	Sydney Opera House to investigate becoming a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Minority Supplier Council.
		February 2013	Sydney Opera House tender processes to require a demonstrated commitment to reconciliation in submissions.
	Director, Venue Partners and Safety	December 2012	Sydney Opera House to request commercial precinct operators source wine from Indigenous wine suppliers for Indigenous events and generally stock at least one wine or food product from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander wine company.  Sydney Opera House shops to stock eight quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander products.

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# tracking progress & reporting.

Sydney Opera House is committed to the reconciliation journey and recording and building on progress.

Focus area: Recording and building on progress

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Annual review of the RAP	RAP Working Group	September 2012	RAP progress reported in the RAP Impact Measurement Report through the Measurement Impact Questionnaire.
		December 2012 and June 2013	Bi-annual reports provided to Reconciliation Australia, Sydney Opera House Executive Team, Management Team and Sydney Opera House Trust  Bi-annual report to be placed on the Sydney Opera House website
		June 2013	RAP progress against targets submitted for inclusion in the Sydney Opera House Annual Report 2012/13.
2. RAP refreshed based on learnings identified in the RAP Report and upcoming opportunities	RAP Working Group	June 2013	Refreshed RAP drafted by the RAP Working Group in consultation with key stakeholders, including Reconciliation Australia.
		June 2013	Refreshed RAP endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.  Refreshed RAP placed on Sydney Opera House and Reconciliation Australia websites.

[Image L-R] Casey Donovan. Photo by Prudence Upton. Chocky Dancers. Photo by James Morgan. Schools Based Traineeship. Photo by Susannah Wimberley. Indigenous Work Experience. Photo by Sydney Opera House.





### **Cover Artwork**

The design represents the skin markings and traditional designs of NSW and east coast clan groups. Reference was made to shield and message stick original designs. It is important that we revitalise and highlight the diversity of specific markings across the country that reflect what we now see in contemporary art.

This specific design is about connecting with each other on this, the land of the Gadigal, and the importance of the Bennelong site. The arrows indicate moving forward into the future together.