



GEELONG FOOTBALL CLUB - *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan*

January 2025 — December 2027



ARTIST **MICHELLE SEARLE**

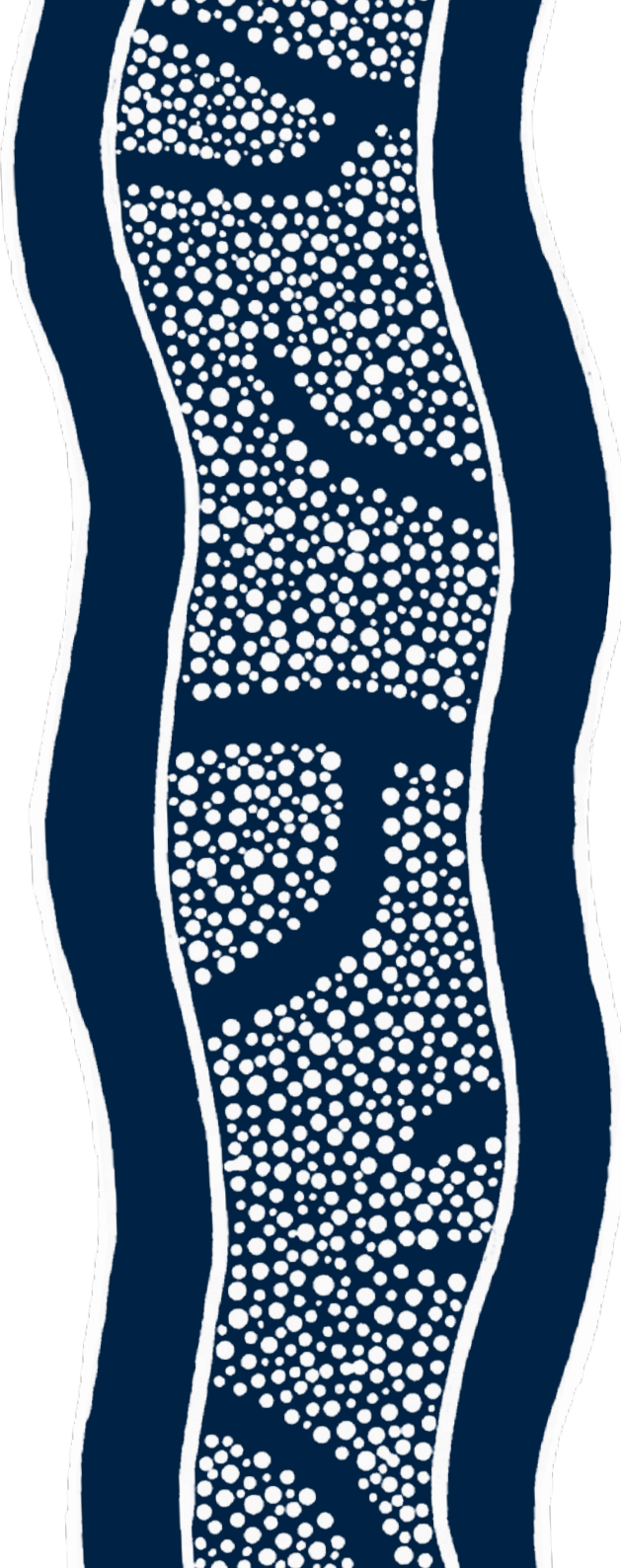
"I currently live in Geelong and have lived and grown up on Wadawurrung Country land my whole life, except for moving away for a little while before coming back. I am a mother of three and a proud Awabakal woman from Newcastle, New South Wales.

For me, painting as an Aboriginal artist is a way of telling stories, we learn them, we grow them and share them with one another. I have always been artistic, but through the COVID period it sparked an interest, and I really go enthusiastic in redeveloping myself and finding out who I am. It is exciting to be back and developing and being able to share people's stories through my painting.

When I saw the opportunity to submit my art to the Cats, it was exciting and nerve-racking. I never thought that I would ever be accepted to be the artist so when I got the call, I sat down for a couple of weeks and did the painting. I wanted to bring it back to basics as I paint by hand, it's a different skill in itself and to be able to put paint to canvas and develop it into a guernsey is amazing.

I am a big believer in supporting one another, a big believer in reflective practice when we all come together, share knowledge and support one another in different ways.

Unity and coming together – I come from a big family so for me bringing everybody back together to share, to grow and to learn is what this means. In our Aboriginal culture, kinship is massive. Within kin means not just our family but our friends, our aunts, uncles and grandparents, and that is part of how we learn, grow and support each other."



THE **CONTENTS**

Artwork and Artist	2
Acknowledgement of Country	5
Message from Reconciliation Australia	6
Foreword	8
Our Vision for Reconciliation	10
Our Business	11
Our RAP	12
Relationships - Table of actions	14
Respect - Table of actions	16
Opportunities - Table of actions	18
Governance - Table of actions	20

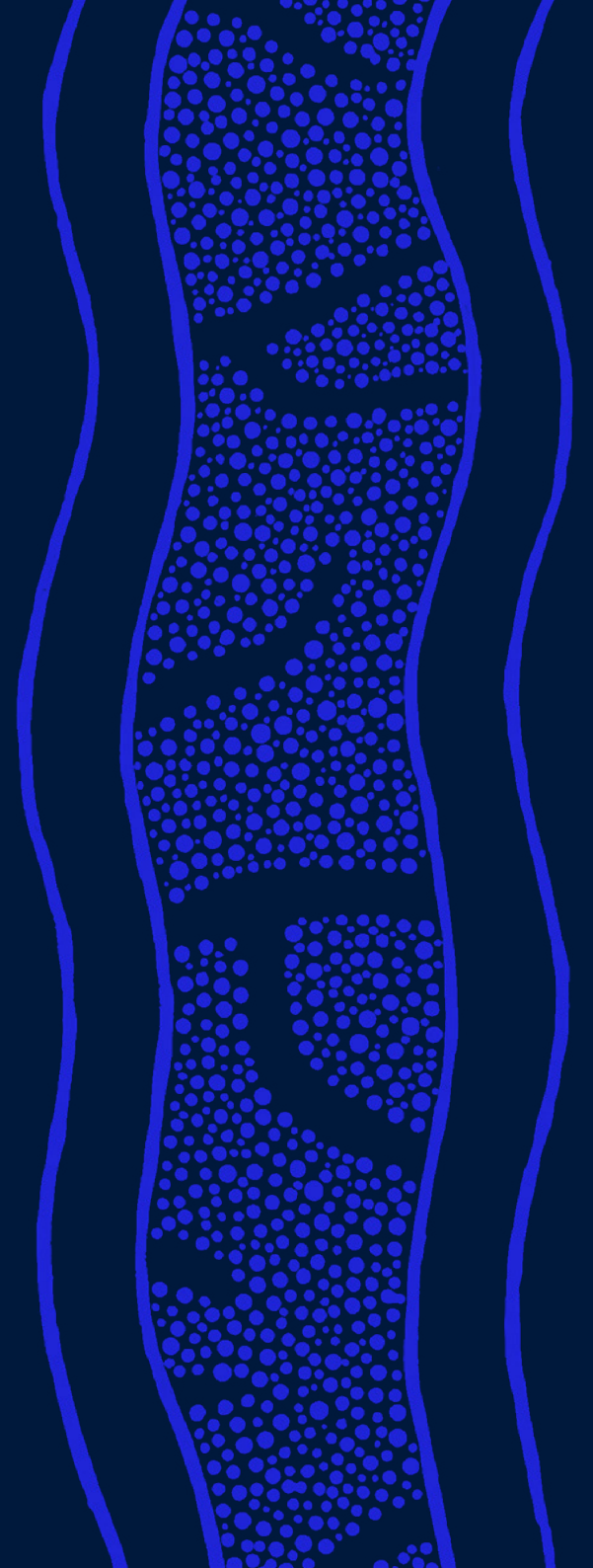


ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Geelong Football Club acknowledges Wadawurrung as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Land on which our Club, our families and our communities work and play. We pay our respects to Elders of the past, the present, and those that will lead their collective future.

Kardinyu, in Wadawurrung language is the place of the morning sun, a place of deep cultural connection and significance, a meeting place since the beginning of time. We are honoured to walk with the Wadawurrung People, to listen, respect and talk together on our journey on Wadawurrung Country.

Under the Wadawurrung sky, we gather, history under our feet, the future in our hearts. We are grateful for our part and our time here on Wadawurrung Country.



MESSAGE FROM RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA



Reconciliation Australia commends Geelong Cats Football Club on the formal endorsement of its second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Geelong Cats Football Club continues to be part of a strong network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and

not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways.

An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that Geelong Cats Football Club will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to Geelong Cats Football Club using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders.

The RAP program's emphasis on relationships, respect, and opportunities

gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for Geelong Cats Football Club to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, Geelong Cats Football Club will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of Geelong Cats Football Club's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Geelong Cats Football Club on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



FOREWORD

PRESIDENT, GRANT MCCABE AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, STEVE HOCKING

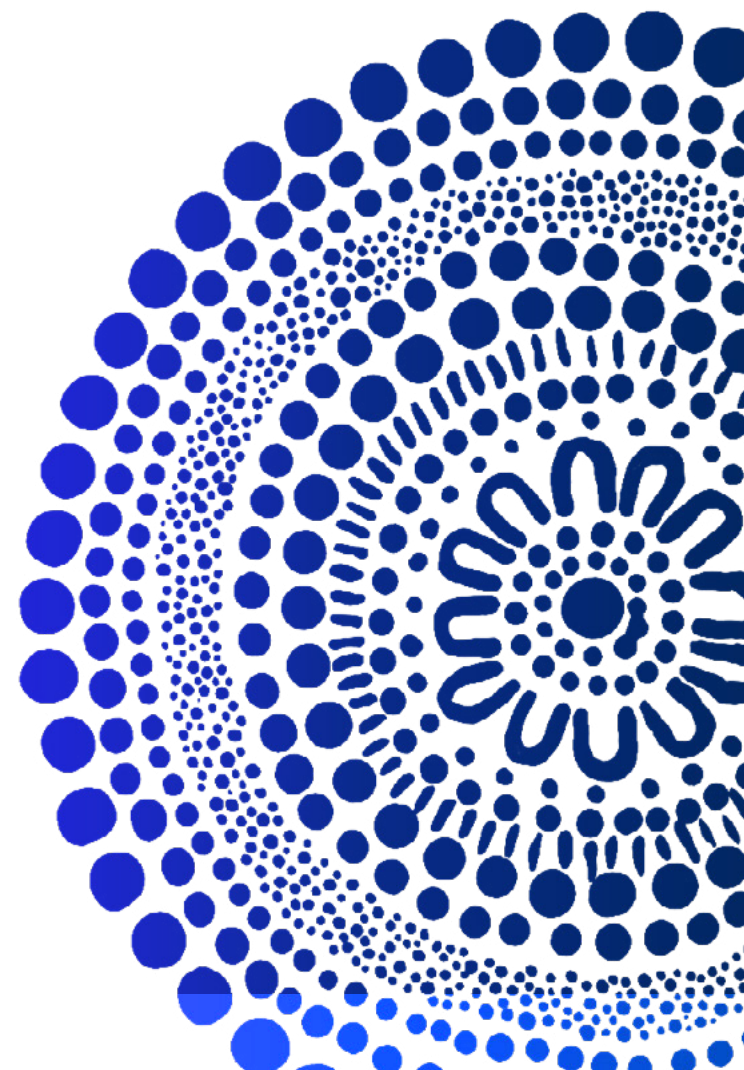


The Geelong Football Club is proud to present this, our fourth Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Whilst our inaugural RAP was launched in 2013, our focused efforts started much earlier, when Geelong Football Club player, Nathan Djerrkura travelled with a number of other players to his country in Yirrkala, a well-known community in East Arnhem Land. That trip became the catalyst for many more activities which gave us the chance to build deeper connections, though the focus of this new RAP is closer to home.

Over the years as our connections have strengthened and our understanding about the nature of reconciliation has grown, our work has evolved and matured.

Through listening to and learning from First Nations communities, we understand the role that our Club plays being inclusive and celebrating the history of First Nations players and stories in our game.

Having seen firsthand the positive impact that AFL Clubs can have on our nation's journey towards reconciliation and closing the gap, we know that our football club can make a difference. There are areas in the Closing the Gap socio-economic targets that we can't impact but there are many that we can, and our RAP document outlines those goals.







OUR VISION FOR **RECONCILIATION**

The Australian Football League (AFL) is an extraordinary force in Australia's sporting, social and cultural landscape. With a massive and connected fan base, AFL has one of the largest spectator groups of any sport, whether in attendance at games, watching on broadcast or via technology.

Naturally, this momentum equates to an interest in people wanting to play the game, and so AFL has one of the highest participation rates of sport across the country. As a result of the sheer size and scale of our sport, the reach and impact that the Geelong Football Club (GFC) can have is significant. We don't take that responsibility lightly.

The Club was established on Wadawurrung Country in Geelong in 1859 and is one of the oldest and largest Clubs in the AFL. We understand that we have an important role to play by using our great game of Aussie Rules as the vehicle to create a culturally responsive and welcoming place for First Nations people.

In this RAP period, our vision for reconciliation is to reduce racism and vilification in our local community

leagues to create culturally inclusive spaces for all Australians involved in our game. Through innovation and collaboration, the Club can influence systems change and provide evidence-based resources from the AFL to support this outcome.

We aim to elevate and celebrate First Nations cultures through celebrations and storytelling and are committed to work alongside First Nations communities in our region.

The Club is located at Kardinia Park, which originates from the Wadawurrung word, Kardinu, meaning place of the morning sun. The Kardinia Spirit encompasses our role as humble custodians; and our duty to honour the past while shaping the future. Our engagement is focused across Wadawurrung and Gunditjmarra Country in Victoria.

The Geelong Football Club continues to support the aspirations contained in the Uluru Statement of the Heart and the Victorian Treaty Negotiation Framework.

OUR BUSINESS

Known as the Geelong Cats, The GFC is one of the oldest continuously existing sporting clubs at an elite level of any code in the world.

We participate in both the Australian Football League (AFL) and AFL Women's (AFLW) and in the Victorian Football League (VFL) and (VFLW). We also support the continued development of indigenous participation in football within our NGA region through our dedicated academy strategy.

We have an off-field team of around 150 permanent staff, including 3 identified as First Nations, across several departments including commercial operation, finance and administration, community, memberships, brand, marketing, media, content, digital, communications, and the people experience team.

Beyond the business of football, the Geelong Football Club also includes subsidiary businesses Higher Mark, and events and catering business, and 10South, a gym and health service.

We have in excess of 90,000 members with a goal to reach (and surpass) 100,000 during the term of this Reconciliation Action Plan.

As a Club we have four strategic drivers that help to propel us forward – these strategic areas are supported by annual operating plans and budgets. This structure ensures that we remain aligned and focused.

The Club 'pursuit' is to:

Chase Greatness. Be Unstoppable and Unmistakably Geelong.

Our three strategic drivers are:

1. Groundbreaking Football
2. Memorable Impact
3. Sustainable Future

Our Guiding Principles articulate how we 'go about our business' and are at the heart of what we do. They are:

Team of All

Legit inclusion, diversity seekers, collective identity, win together

Unlock excellence

Progressive thinking, fierce alignment, energy management, environment and edge

Connected in calm and chaos

Care for our culture, clear communication, assume good intent, Geelong Hospitality

Kardinia Spirit

Embrace new dawns, honour heritage, service mindset, humble custodians

Be the catalyst

Get in the equation, awake and accountable, seize the opportunity, make magic



Albert "Pompey" Austin was the inaugural First Nations Geelong player in 1872. Pompey is the first known First Nations player to play at the highest level of the game. Over 30 First Nations players have represented the Geelong Football Club since that time.

OUR RAP

There is no coincidence that the Geelong Cats RAP journey commenced with a “Reflect” RAP which asked us to deeply consider our role towards reconciliation and what the impact of our actions (or inaction) might have had on our community.

It seems now as we prepare our fourth RAP, that whilst we have made some headway towards our goals that we still have a way to go. Through a Team of All approach our RAP Working Group comprises of key leaders across the club with ongoing support from our Executive Team and Management Teams and key First Nations stakeholders.

Organisations are a dynamic, evolving enterprise with ebbs and flows of effort, and our football club is no different. Over the past 11 years since our first RAP, our Club and community has changed. We have weathered COVID where the Club reduced numbers of staff members and AFL was played in interstate “hubs”. Our revenue base eroded, and we lost many of our valuable resources.

The community has also changed with greater numbers of First Nations people moving to our region. Whilst we may have hoped that our RAP focus was part of “business as usual” focus, it seems now with the benefit of hindsight and First Nations consultation and advisory that this was not the case.

This “Innovate” RAP highlights some refreshed thinking, renewed relationships and deeper connections and understanding, with First Nations communities. The RAP was developed with advisory and insights of First Nations

Working Group members across the region, consulted with staff and executive, and finally endorsed by the Board. A strong back to basics approach is being adopted with two major new initiatives to be delivered based on the learnings over a decade. This includes the Catalyst Club to support the career and workforce development of one individual annually, and a partnership to increase anti-discrimination and vilification throughout AFL Barwon in a new partnership.

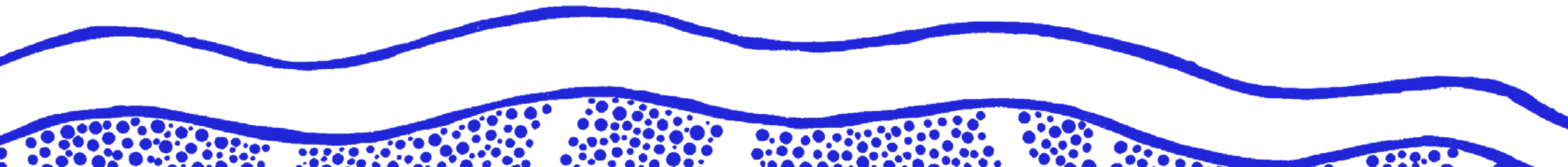
Subtle changes of leadership have also built some momentum. We have a new scaffolding of support through First Nations staffing that has the right people plugged into the right places across the Club from player support, community engagement through to Board level.

This change in focus culminated with the Geelong Football Club position on the Voice to Parliament in 2023:

“Towards the end of this year, the Australian people will vote in a referendum to enshrine in The Constitution an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament. As a humble custodian of Kardinia Park, the Geelong Football Club honours the contribution First Nations people have on our great game. We recognise the impact a Voice to Parliament could have on better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the healing moment this would create for future generations of all Australians. We encourage all members of our Club and community to be informed and to care for the expression of differing opinions. We respect how our players, employees, members and supporters will choose

to vote in the upcoming referendum. We celebrate the differences that give our collective identity as a Club such strength. The Board and Executive of the Geelong Football Club support the Yes position in the referendum in what we believe will be a unifying and inspiring moment for our Country.”

Through our current and future commitments and in meaningful engagement, we hope to have measurable success and use the opportunity of a new RAP to ensure the foundations are right to achieve reach and impact.





RELATIONSHIPS

Our Guiding Principle. *Team of All* means legit inclusion. being diversity seekers. having a collective identity and winning together.

This Guiding Principle emphasises how important it is for the Club to build and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations and other Australians. Our partnerships and engagement, reflect the Team of All principle, with the aspiration of connecting experiences and learning about our shared history. The Geelong Cats with AFL Barwon is committed to reducing discrimination and vilification at the local league level, promoting best practice and learning for the wider community, officials and players.



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to review our past approach to engagement and to develop new guiding principles for future engagement.	March 2025	First Nations Working Group
	Review and implement an Engagement Plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	July 2025	First Nations Working Group
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to GFC staff and board members	May & June, annually	People Experience Team
	Promote NRW resources via GFC social media platforms to fans, members and stakeholders.	27 May- 3 June Annually	Brand & Marketing Team
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders (including RAP Working Group members) to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June Annually	First Nations Working Group and People Experience Team
	Organise at least one NRW event each year within the GFC.	May 2025, 2026	People Experience Team, Head of Community & Pathways
	RAP Working Group members to participate in two external NRW events.	27 May – 3 June annually	EGM People Experience
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Raise awareness of reconciliation across GFC's workforce including staff and players and senior leaders through annual engagement strategies.	May, annually	Community Team
	Demonstrate and communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly by hosting the Sir Doug Nicholls Round (SDNR) and the Djilang Round annually	May, annually	EGM Brand & Stadium Experience
	Deliver our SDNR and AFLW Indigenous round initiatives including the creation of a First Nations Guernsey design and imagery by First Nations artists for both AFL and AFLW, match day activations such as Welcome to Country, Guard of Honour and other game day ceremonies, digital content and social events with sponsors, RAP organisations and philanthropists.	May, annually	EGM Brand & Stadium Experience Events Manager, Head of Community & Pathways and People Experience Team
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders, such as sponsors to drive reconciliation outcomes.	May, annually	Head of Partnerships
	Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation, this may include sponsors.	May, annually	Head of Partnerships and Head of Community
	Celebrate and elevate stories of activities within wider community via partnership with AFL Barwon.	May and June, annually	Brand & Marketing Team
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy	May, annually	EGM People Experience
	Implement, review and communicate of our anti-discrimination policy (embedded in the GFC Inclusion policy)	Implement: July 2025 Review: July 2026	EGM People Experience
	Conduct a review other HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	July 2025	People Experience Team
	Increase anti-discrimination and vilification knowledge across local leagues in partnership with AFL Barwon by promoting the AFL Final Quarter resources.	June, annually	Head of Community & Pathways
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism by increased Cultural Responsiveness for all Board, Executive, Staff and Players through Cultural learning.	May, annually	People Experience Team and Head of Community

RESPECT

Our Guiding Principle *Kardinia Spirit* means the Geelong Cats embrace new dawns, honour our heritage, with a service mindset and as humble custodians.

It is our hope that the people of our Club and community share deep pride through increased learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and stories, including the built environment that we work and play. Our annual calendar of events captures possibilities and opportunities to include ceremony, traditions and storytelling to increase understanding of First Nations people and cultures internally and externally. The Club's activities seek to acknowledge and celebrate in a respectful way, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, cultural authority and rights.



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy for GFC.	February 2025	People Experience Team, Community Team, Indigenous Player Development Manager
	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural learning document for our staff.	Develop: March 2025 Implement: March 2025	Community Team, Indigenous Player Development Manager
	Implement and review ongoing cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Implement: February 2025 Review: February 2026	People Experience Team
	Include Cultural Responsiveness for all Board, Executive, Staff and Players through On Country experiences, cultural learning, invited speakers and evidenced based resources.	February, annually	EGM People Experience
	Provide opportunities for all permanent staff, RAP Working Group members, Head of People, key leadership staff, AFL players and AFLW players to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	March and July annually	People Experience Team
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Review Member Code of Conduct and communicate to GFC members, stakeholders and commercial partners.	February 2025	Chief Customer Officer, People Experience Team
	Review, update and communicate the cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	March 2025, 2026	People Experience Team
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	July 2025, 2026	People Experience Team
	Ensure that the Events team briefs the appropriate individuals that will be facilitating the Events including guest speakers regarding the GFC Acknowledgement of Country (and includes in the Event plans).	March 2025	EGM Brand & Stadium Experience
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year including our first home game, SDNR, Djilang round and Carji Greeves medal night.	August, annually	EGM Brand & Stadium Experience
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	March 2025	Chief Executive Officer, Executive Team
	Play Acknowledgement of Country video produced in consultation with Traditional Owners.	March, annually	EGM Brand & Stadium Experience
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff by	June and July, annually	People Experience Team
	Review, update and communicate operational requirements and remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week event.	May 2025, 2026	First Nations Working Group
	RAP Working Group to participate in external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, annually	People Experience Team

OPPORTUNITIES

Our Guiding Principle *Be the Catalyst* is to get in the equation, be awake and accountable, to seize opportunities and make magic.

Our strength is our community and local network. We can create impact and connect others with our Club – through our people, sponsors and AFL and AFLW players. Through these initiatives we aim to create and improve opportunities and existing pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, stakeholders and businesses.



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Participate in the Geelong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Taskforce and the Regional RAP Communities of Practice	As per annual calendar of meetings commencing February 2025	Chief Executive Officer
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	Develop: June 2025 Implement: October 2025	People Experience Team
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	October 2025	People Experience Team
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	June 2025	People Experience Team
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders	Monthly as vacancies 2025, 2026	People Experience Team
	Facilitate discussions with GFC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to build understanding and ensure we deliver appropriate future employment and professional development opportunities.	February, annually	People Experience Team
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	May 2025	Chief Finance Officer (Finance Team)
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	Develop: May 2025 Implement: July 2025	Chief Finance Officer (Finance Team)
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	July 2025	Chief Finance Officer (Finance Team)
	Design and implement the 'Catalyst Club' to enable opportunities for First Nations entrepreneurs and business leaders.	January 2025	Head of Community & Pathways
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	February 2025	Chief Operating Officer
10.. Unique action Continue to support Geelong Aboriginal Employment Taskforce objectives to create and promote employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workforce.	Attain signatory with the Geelong Aboriginal Employment Taskforce	December 2024	Chief Executive Officer
	Organise for support from the Taskforce to elevate our organisation's capacity like; Cultural appropriateness Cultural safety Employment opportunities	June 2025	EGM People Experience, Head of Community & Pathways

GOVERNANCE

Our Guiding Principle *Unlock Excellence* means progressive thinking, fierce alignment, energy management, environment and edge.



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
10. Maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	February 2025	EGM People Experience and Head of Community & Pathways
	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	February, May, October, December annually	First Nations Working Group
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	February 2025 May 2025 October 2025 December 2025 Then ongoing dates TBC in 2026	First Nations Working Group
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Review resource needs for RAP implementation	January 2025	EGM People Experience and Head of Community & Pathways
	Improve and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	April 2025, 2026	EGM People Experience and Head of Community & Pathways
	Appoint an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	January 2025	EGM People Experience and Head of Community & Pathways
	Engage our GFC leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	February & April, annually	First Nations Working Group
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	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.	June, annually	Head of Community & Pathways
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire	1 August, annually	EGM People Experience and Head of Community & Pathways
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	EGM People Experience and Head of Community & Pathways
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	February, May, August and November	Head of Community & Pathways
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	May annually	EGM Brand & Stadium Experience
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer	May 2026	EGM People Experience and Head of Community & Pathways
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	December 2026	EGM People Experience and Head of Community & Pathways
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2026	First Nations Working Group

CONTACT

People Experience

Email: peopleexperience@geelongcats.com.au

