

# Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

January 2019 - January 2020

Ethel Thomas My Mother's Country



## Message from our **National Managing Partner**

Since our firm was established in 1975, social justice and contributing to the community have been central to who we are. Our commitment to social justice has included our support for Indigenous people seeking to vindicate their legal rights through the courts:

- In the 1980s and early 1990s, we supported the Mabo proceedings in the High Court;
- In the 1990s we acted for members of the Stolen Generation from the Northern Territory in proceedings against the Commonwealth;
- In the 2000s we acted for two Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory in a challenge to the Commonwealth's Intervention legislation; and
- In 2011, we acted for prominent Aboriginal people in the successful action against Herald-Sun columnist Andrew Bolt for breaching the Racial Vilification provisions in the Racial Discrimination Act.

While Holding Redlich will continue to support significant test cases to protect the rights of Indigenous people, we also acknowledge our responsibility, as part of the business community, to support reconciliation.

As a firm employing over 400 Australians, we wish to build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to better understand the heritage and culture of the many First Nations they represent, and support employment initiatives and help maximise business opportunities for indigenous people.

Words are empty without action – and while our record is strong, our aim is to do more. In addition to supporting Indigenous Australia through legal work, we have formed an alliance with Marrawah Law, a Supply Nation-certified Indigenous business with offices in Cairns and Brisbane.

**IAN ROBERTSON AO**  
National Managing Partner



Netta Loogatha My Country



## Our **Business**

Holding Redlich is a leading, full-service Australian commercial law firm with more than 40 years' experience.

We provide solutions tailored to our client's needs, underpinned by innovative legal thinking and expert industry knowledge.

# **STRONG FOUNDATIONS, NATIONAL REACH**

Founded in Melbourne in 1975, Holding Redlich has evolved into an Australia-wide practice with offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and Cairns. Our 60 highly experienced partners are supported by 148 legal staff and 205 support staff. Our clients range from the largest superannuation fund in Australia and ASX 100 enterprises through to emerging businesses and aspiring individuals. We also have a strong government practice acting for all levels of Commonwealth, State and Local Government. We provide a full service offering including real estate, property, corporate, dispute resolution, employment, intellectual property and advisory across a range of industries including development, government, superannuation and agriculture.



# Our Commitment

**Holding Redlich has a long and demonstrable history of commitment to promoting human rights and social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as part of our pro bono, corporate sponsorship and supporting indigenous business programs.**

**We have represented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in some of the most important indigenous legal test cases in Australia, including:**

- North Kimberly land rights - negotiated a diamond exploration deal between CRA (now Rio Tinto) and the Umbulgurri community in the north Kimberly in 1985;
- Mabo proceedings – during the 1980s and early 1990s, our firm was the Melbourne agent for the Queensland firm acting in the Mabo litigation;
- Stolen generations – in the mid to late 1990s, we represented approximately 2,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People from the Northern Territory in proceedings against the Commonwealth. This case, while unsuccessful, involved a long trial in the Federal Court and appeals to the Full Court and the High Court;
- Bark etchings case – we represented three Aboriginal elders in seeking to keep in Australia two bark etchings and a ceremonial piece on loan from the United Kingdom;
- Northern Territory Intervention case – we represented an Aboriginal Corporation in the Northern Territory and individual plaintiffs in a test case challenging the validity of the Commonwealth’s legislative intervention into Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory;
- Breach of the Racial Discrimination Act – we acted for the plaintiffs in the successful action against Melbourne’s Herald-Sun Columnist, Andrew Bolt in 2012;
- Promoting indigenous home ownership – we successfully represented two Torres Strait Islander People in Land and Supreme Court litigation in Queensland to facilitate the grant of long term residential leases over houses in the Torres Strait. This paved the way for a further 230 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to be granted secure tenure over their homes.

We also often represent individuals and organisations seeking representative rights under State land use and cultural heritage legislation, and have strong relationships with community legal centres, including the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. We have a very experienced Native Title and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage legal practice to assist our clients to comply with native title and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage laws.

We have a dedicated pro bono team that provides over \$1.7 million/5,000 hours<sup>1</sup> of free legal services annually to groups and individuals who may otherwise not have the opportunity to access quality legal advice.



## Our Reconciliation Journey So far

This RAP formalises our ongoing commitment to reconciliation and is aimed at strengthening and building upon our existing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander associations, businesses and Peoples and forging new ones. Our aim is to significantly contribute towards closing the economic, health and wellbeing disparities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the broader Australian society by supporting Indigenous owned business, assisting associations which provide services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals through our pro bono legal service.

We aim to develop a national RAP Working Group [RAPWG] comprising diverse members of our legal and support team across our four offices together with external stakeholders.

### **IMPLEMENTING OUR RAP**

The RAPWG will oversee the implementation of this RAP and will actively work towards the development of our next target – the adoption of our Innovate RAP in 2019/2020.



# OUR PARTNERSHIPS/ CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Holding Redlich has a genuine commitment to our clients as the cornerstone of our business. It is this approach that has seen us grow to become one of the nations' top 20 law firms. We have a strong and compassionate industry focus which allows us to understand the issues relevant to our clients' business.

Since our inception, social justice, active community involvement and contribution and provision of our pro bono legal services **is at the heart of what we do and is central to who we are.**

Our founder, Peter Redlich established Holding Redlich as a firm with a strong emphasis on supporting those who may not otherwise have access to quality legal advice. This founding commitment has evolved into a well-developed social conscience that manifests as an active community involvement and service – orientated company culture.

We do not do this work to simply win awards or raise our profile. We give back wherever we can because it is the right thing to do.

Holding Redlich's pro bono program focuses on promoting human rights and social justice through providing legal work in several key areas including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;
- Refugees and asylum seekers;
- Women, youth and prevention of family violence;
- Seniors law and elder abuse; and
- The arts.



Our National Pro Bono Manager, Guy Donovan oversees the program and ensures we maintain a coordinated, cohesive and consistent approach. More than 100 partners and lawyers across our four offices are at any point actively involved in our pro bono program.

We are also a signatory to the **Australian Pro Bono Centre's National Pro Bono Target**, which encourages law firms to achieve an annual average of 35 hours of pro bono work per lawyer. Many of our lawyers exceed this amount including 13 of our lawyers who in the 2017/18 financial year alone recorded more than 100 hours of pro bono work.

We are active members of Justice Connect and LawRight, both non-profit/non-government organisations that connect people locked out of the justice system to free legal support. We have strong relationships with many community legal centres, including the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and the Arts Law Centre of Australia.

We have a strong commitment to supporting the arts through our pro bono program and a longstanding relationship with the Arts Law Centre of Australia, a leading advocate for Indigenous artists. Through this relationship we regularly provide pro bono legal assistance to Indigenous artists.

Further, through our relationship with Justice Connect and its Local Aboriginal Land Council Project, we regularly provide pro bono legal assistance to local Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales.

We provide pro bono advice to charities and community organisations working to empower and promote the public good including:

- Wurundjeri Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Aboriginal Corporation;
- Victorian Traditional Owner Land Justice Group;
- Walgett Local Aboriginal Land Council; and
- Biraban Local Aboriginal Land Council.

As part of our commitment to strengthen our relationship with Indigenous businesses we have formed an alliance with Indigenous law firm, Marrawah Law, a Supply Nation certified Indigenous business with offices in Cairns and Brisbane.

This alliance will involve:

- Referring specialist work to Marrawah Law;
- Sharing our knowledge and resources;
- Supporting Marrawah Law lawyers by involving them in our learning and development program; and
- Offering secondments to Marrawah Law lawyers.



# OUR PROPOSED ACTIONS:

## RELATIONSHIPS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence	30 April 2019	Guy Donovan, National Pro Bono Manager
	Develop at least three new associations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations	30 June 2019	Guy Donovan, National Pro Bono Manager
	Draft an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement policy and promote it to partners and employees	30 June 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	30 June 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development
	Build our relationship with Marrawah Law by offering secondments	30 April 2019	Paul Venus, Managing Partner-Queensland
	Rename our meeting rooms in the Brisbane office to appropriate Traditional Owner language names in consultation with relevant Traditional Owners	30 June 2019	Colman Kenna, Chief Executive Officer
	Invite representatives of the local Traditional Owners to an official renaming ceremony	30 June 2019	Colman Kenna, Chief Executive Officer/Joel Lentin, Head of Marketing
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Host a National Reconciliation Week (NRW) event in each of our four offices each year	27 May – 3 June 2019	Chairperson, RAPWG/State Managing Partner in each office
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event	27 May – 3 June 2019	RAPWG members for each office nominated by Chairperson, RAPWG
	Encourage and support employees and senior leaders to participate in at least one event to recognise and celebrate NRW	27 May – 3 June 2019	Ian Robertson, National Managing Partner
	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our partners and employees	17 May 2019	Jenny Humphris, Partner
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to our partners and employees	28 February 2019	Ian Robertson, National Managing Partner
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	31 March 2019	Guy Donovan, National Pro Bono Manager
3. Promote Reconciliation through sphere of influence.	Launch and promote this RAP to employees at each office through an appropriate social event	March/April 2019	State Managing Partner in each office
	Deliver a presentation in each of the offices to introduce and promote our RAP and an understanding of the firm's strong commitment towards the empowering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	March/April 2019	Ian Robertson, National Managing Partner/Jenny Humphris, Partner/Guy Donovan, National Pro Bono Manager
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey	31 March 2019	Jenny Humphris, Partner/Guy Donovan, National Pro Bono Manager



## RELATIONSHIPS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination	31 May 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development
	Review HR policies and procedures to encourage the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	31 May 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development

## RESPECT

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning	Develop and implement cultural awareness education and training a strategy for partners and employees to include cultural awareness training in each office lead by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person	31 May 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development/Marissa Dosen, National Learning & Development Manager/ Guy Donovan, National Pro-bono Manager
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation	30 April 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development/Marissa Dosen, National Learning & Development Manager
2. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area	31 April 2019	Jenny Humphris, Partner
	Increase partner's and employee's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols	30 April 2019	Chairperson, RAPWG
	Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a 'Welcome to Country' to at least one significant event each year.	30 June 2019	Colman Kenna, Chief Executive Officer
	Through our sponsorship of Flying Arts, identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Artists and/or artwork for profiling in our offices	30 June 2019	Joel Lentin, Head of Marketing
3. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	Raise awareness and share information amongst our partners and employees about the meaning of NAIDOC Week	28 June 2019	Chairperson, RAPWG
	Introduce our partners and employees to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area	28 June 2019	Chairperson, RAPWG
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event	7 July – 14 July 2019	RAPWG members for each office nominated by Chairperson, RAPWG
	Encourage and support partners and employees to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW	7 July – 14 July 2019	Chairperson, RAPWG

## OPPORTUNITIES

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to inform future employment and professional development opportunities	31 May 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development
	Review HR policies and procedures to maximise opportunities for employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	31 May 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development
	Develop a plan to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants as part of our undergraduate program with the goal of offering at least one position to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person	31 May 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development
	Advertise job vacancies in appropriate publications such as the Koori Mail and National Indigenous Times	31 May 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development
	Through our relationship with the University of Queensland, build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	30 June 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development, Joel Lentin, Head of Marketing, Guy Donovan, National Pro bono Manager
	Review the firm's national pro bono program to ensure that a focus remains on assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities and organisations	30 April 2019	Guy Donovan, National Pro Bono Manager
2. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses	30 April 2019	Colman Kenna, Chief Executive Officer/Joel Lentin, Head of Marketing
	Investigate Supply Nation membership	30 March 2019	Helen Ayres, Head of People & Development
	Identify, through Supply Nation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business that we can support during the course of delivering our services and including any areas of legal services, administration services and corporate functions	31 July 2019	Colman Kenna, Chief Executive Officer/Joel Lentin, Head of Marketing



## GOVERNANCE

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RAPWG) to drive governance of the RAP	Form a RAPWG to govern RAP implementation	31 January 2019	Jenny Humphris, Partner
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RAPWG	15 January 2019	Jenny Humphris, Partner
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAPWG	31 January 2019	Jenny Humphris, Partner
2. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments	Define resource needs for RAP implementation	28 February 2019	Chairperson, RAPWG
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments	28 February 2019	Chairperson, RAPWG
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	28 February 2019	Managing Partner
3. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia	30 September 2019	Chairperson, RAPWG
4. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP	31 August 2019	Jenny Humphris, Partner





## FEATURED ARTISTS



ETHEL THOMAS

### **My Mother's Country**

Artist Location: [Gununa, Mornington Island](#)

Medium: [Acrylic on canvas, 2018](#)

Mum was born at Minikuri on the west side of Bentinck Island. You can see Dalwai Island across the sea from here.



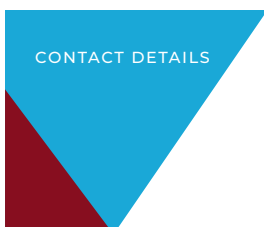
NETTA LOOGATHA

### **My Country**

Artist Location: [Gununa, Mornington Island](#)

Medium: [Acrylic on canvas, 2018](#)

This is my Country on Bentinck Island at Oak Tree Point. We call it Lookati in our Kayardild language. I was born here at Bilmee, Dog Story Place. We lived in humpies then - no clothes, nothing at all. I learned to hunt from an early age: how to fish and collect shellfish, how to gather foods from the bush. I was young when the Europeans came in 1946 to take us away from our home. They forced us to live on Mornington Island in the dormitory at the Mission there.



CONTACT DETAILS

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