



Cowell Electric

December 2017 – June 2019



**RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN**

REFLECT

Reconciliation Australia CEO's Statement

Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia is delighted to welcome Cowell Electric to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program and to formally endorse its inaugural Reflect RAP.

As a member of the RAP community, Cowell Electric joins over 1,000 dedicated corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have formally committed to reconciliation through the RAP program since its inception in 2006. RAP organisations across Australia are turning good intentions into positive actions, helping to build higher trust, lower prejudice, and increase pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Reconciliation is no one single issue or agenda. Based on international research and benchmarking, Reconciliation Australia defines and measures reconciliation through five critical dimensions: race relations; equality and equity, institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance. All sections of the community—governments, civil society, the private sector, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities—have a role to play to progress these dimensions.

The RAP program provides a framework for organisations to advance reconciliation within their spheres of influence. This Reflect RAP provides Cowell Electric a roadmap to begin its reconciliation journey. Through implementing a Reflect RAP, Cowell Electric will lay the foundations for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

We wish Cowell Electric well as it takes these first critical steps in its reconciliation journey. We encourage the organisation to embrace this journey with open hearts and minds, to grow from the challenges, and to build on the successes. As the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation reminded the nation in its final report:

“Reconciliation is hard work—it’s a long, winding and corrugated road, not a broad, paved highway. Determination and effort at all levels of government and in all sections of the community will be essential to make reconciliation a reality.”

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend Cowell Electric on its first RAP, and look forward to following its ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Background

In 2017 Cowell Electric formed a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) committee to commence the development of a RAP. The committee researched Cowell Electric's rich history of Indigenous employment spanning 90 years with projects in regional and remote areas of Australia including electricity generation and supply in Indigenous communities. From this research a Draft RAP was developed and distributed for comment prior to submission to Reconciliation Australia for approval. During the following months the RAP has continued to evolve to incorporate the feedback from Reconciliation Australia and interested parties within the business that resulted in the release of the "Reflect" versions release in April 2018.

In June 2018 an offer to purchase Cowell Electric by the Ahrens Group was accepted effective 1/08/2018. Ahrens shares many similarities to Cowell Electric as they are a family owned business operating in regional Australia formed at Sheoak Log in 1906. The new owners have embraced and fully support the RAP and the continued strengthening of relationships between Cowell Electric, Ahrens and the traditional owners of the lands where we operate.

Acknowledgements

Cowell Electric acknowledge and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Nations people of Australia and that they are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waterways throughout our country. We acknowledge the many Traditional Owners of the lands on which Cowell Electric conducts our daily business, the Barngarla (Cowell), Kokatha (Olympic Dam), Pitjantjatjara & Yankunytjatjara (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, Yalata & Maralinga Tjarutja Lands), Yandruwandha (Moomba) & Kurna (Adelaide) peoples and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Through our purchase by Ahrens we also acknowledge the following traditional owners of the lands where Ahrens conducts daily business, Nyiyarparli and Martu (Newman), Kariyarra (Pt Headland), Ngarluma (Karratha), Whadjuk (Perth), Boonwurrung (Braeside), Palawa (Westbury), Wotjobaluk (Nhill), Gadigal (Sydney), Wiradjuri (Gilgandra), Turrbal (Brisbane), Giabal (Toowoomba) and Larrakia (Darwin) peoples and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Cowell Electric welcomes all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to our organisation.



Our Vision for Reconciliation

Cowell Electric is proud to introduce our first Reconciliation Action Plan for the business. Reconciliation is about creating an Australia where there is equality for all and we are proud of the company's heritage which is based on relationships, respect and opportunities for all.

We understand our role in the achievement of our vision as we endeavour to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, offering positive engagement and collaboration.

Cowell Electric was founded in 1928, and has a long established history of providing essential service maintenance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne regions of WA, the southern region of NT and the far north region of Queensland, in addition to power generation and maintenance work in the APY lands, and state sites.

Cowell Electric and its associates have a clear policy and practice position with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and participation. Cowell Electric prides itself in understanding the context in which it conducts its business, and is proud of its historical Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement performance.



Our Commitment to Reconciliation

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples of Australia, the original owners and custodians of this land. We recognise the diversity and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in the face of the loss of land, children, languages, health and family and kin.

An important feature of Cowell Electric's work in regional and remote regions is our understanding of the local economic and business imperatives, as well as client policies and expectations in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes.

Our Values

SAFETY



We value all members of Cowell Electric actively contributing to embedding a 'Zero Harm Safety Culture' within our organisation to collectively achieve a safe, productive and enjoyable workplace for all.

QUALITY



Because every project is unique, we believe project delivery requires flexibility and innovation without sacrificing schedule. A quality product delivered both internally and externally by all areas of our organisation is essential to the success of our business.

INNOVATION



Our ability to remain competitive within our markets relies on our ability to provide unique solutions to our customers' requirements. We value our employees' independent thinking, we encourage them to take ownership of their roles and practice continual improvement in their respective areas of the business.

RESPECT



We value the wellbeing of our employees, their families and their communities, and provide a work environment that fosters respect amongst our employees, and respect towards all cultures and communities outside of our organisation.

RELATIONSHIPS



We value the relationship we create with our customers, suppliers, employees and the communities within which we operate and aim to develop long term relationships with these people for the benefit of all parties.

ENTREPRENURIAL



We empower our employees to seek out and identify new business markets, products and customers and to continually add value to our organisation through their respective work practices.

ENVIRONMENTAL



Actively reducing the footprint of the Company's activities on the world around us.

Our Work & Partnerships

Cowell Electric is a prestigious multi trade contracting company, established in 1928 and has become renowned for achieving exceptional results in often adverse conditions.

Cowell Electric are specialists in working in regional and remote areas of Australia, principally for the mining, oil and gas industries, renewable energy, defence and privately owned construction projects. Cowell Electric currently employs 110 staff members, three of which identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Cowell Electric recognised from these early days, working in and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that important contributions, progress and improvements can be made within the company and community by incorporating cultural diversity. By launching an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy, Cowell Electric has formally documented our commitment to foster employment, participation and professional development opportunities for the first peoples of Australia.

Our Managing Director and major shareholder, Susan Chase established "The Sue Chase Foundation" in 2010 to build a corpus of funds with the purpose of generating income from those funds invested to provide ongoing support to charities that are dear to her heart and in particular provides support to people experiencing hardship in regional, rural and remote areas. For example some of the charities supported by The Sue Chase Foundation include:-

- The Royal Flying Doctor Service
- Eyre Peninsula Community Foundation
- Cancer Council
- Julian Burton Burns Trust
- SCOSA – (Spastic Centre of South Australia)
- Australian Red Cross



Our Work & Partnerships cont.

In recent years, she has elected to add The Yalari Foundation (see <http://www.yalari.org/>) to those charities that she supports. Yalari is a not for profit organisation that offers quality, secondary education scholarships at leading Australian boarding schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from regional, rural and remote communities.

When Cowell Electric won the SA State Government tender for the Remote Areas Energy Scheme, 5% of Cowell Electric's annual profits from the contract are provided to the Yalari Foundation to support a scholarship for an APY Lands secondary student each year of the duration of the contract.

We firmly believe that the most critical success factor in creating sustainable opportunities in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment, is to first of all, provide quality education, mentoring and support for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, so that they are confident, ready and able to either:

- Continue study through secondary tertiary education before entering the workforce, or
- To enter the workforce in specialist trades areas and have the necessary skills and abilities to be able to successfully complete a trade.

We are keen to work in partnership towards long term support of scholarships to ensure there are long term successful outcomes, rather than solely concentrating on short term labour hire arrangements for labouring type positions.



Our Work & Partnerships cont.

Historically, Cowell Electric has strong relationships with;

- Flinders Crest Services Pty Ltd (Liquidated in 2016),
- Parakeelya Architecture and Construction Pty Ltd,
- Regional Anangu Services Aboriginal Corporation (RASAC)

Cowell Electric has extensive experience working in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities throughout South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia. In particular, we understand the politics, sensitivities and challenges endemic in the APY Lands.

The lack of employment opportunities, high truancy from school, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty and domestic violence issues all combine to make it very difficult for individuals to be able to work effectively and reliably in ongoing roles. This makes it difficult to successfully employ locally when the entire contract is about providing essential service of reliable power through regular servicing and maintenance of power station equipment and distribution systems.

Cowell Electric has direct and extensive experience in the employment, recruitment, and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. In addition, our associates (Parakeelya) have extensive experience in this area.

Our Plan

Moving forward, our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan for December 2017 – June 2019 is driven by our Reconciliation Action Plan Taskforce, which consists of;

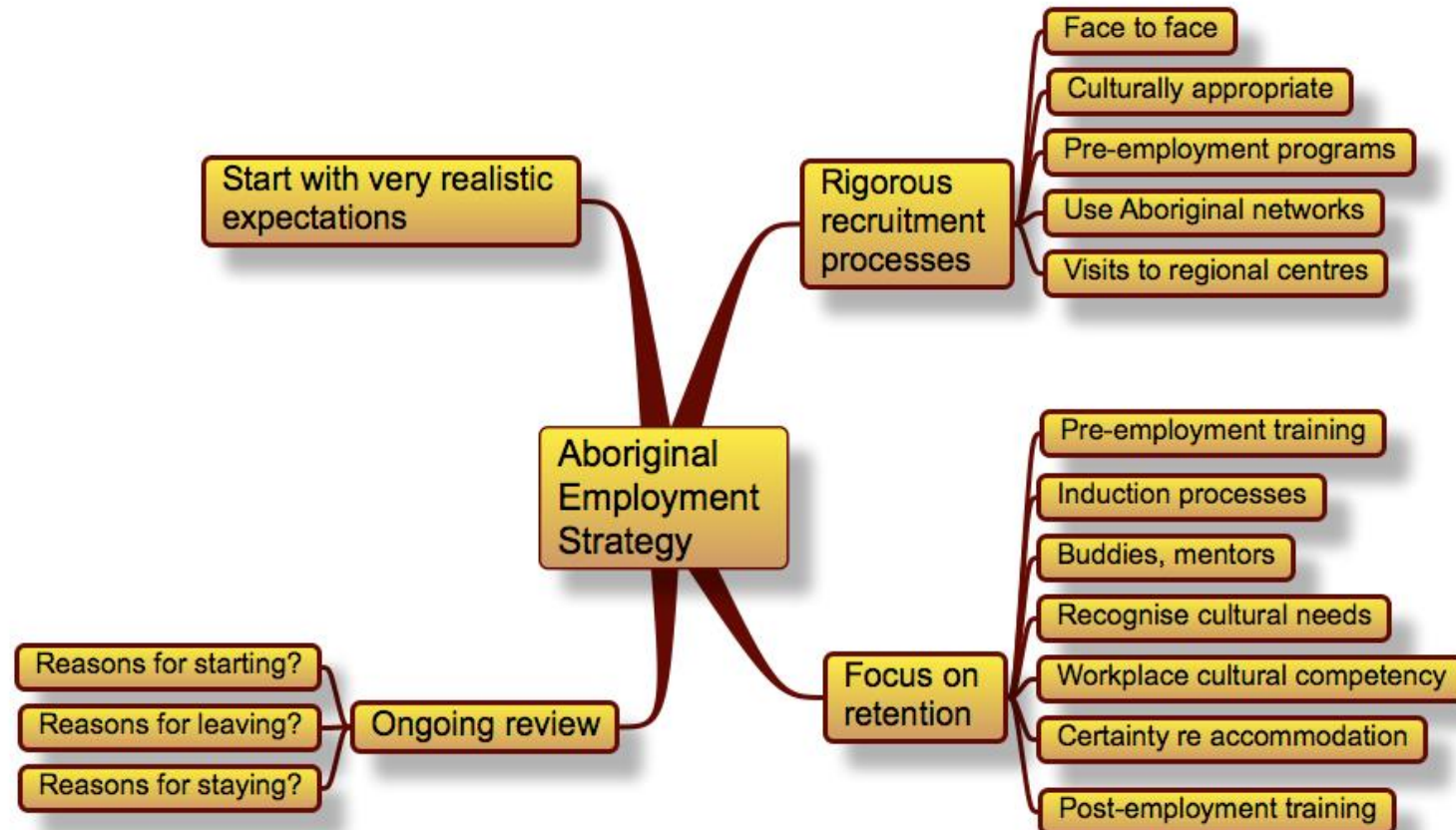
- Stefan Ahrens (Managing Director)
- Craig Roberts (Corporate HSEQ Manager)
- Ken Lechleitner (Chairman)
- Phil Poole (Communications & Systems Manager)

This will see the successful implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy. The objectives of the strategy is to make Cowell Electric an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to implement, monitor and review on an ongoing basis, an employment strategy to support the participation and career progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within Cowell Electric.

The following diagram summarises our broad approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention. There is no doubt that economic marginalisation and social challenges within APY communities pose special challenges to effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff recruitment and retention. Our own experience as well as that of our associates in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in various locations across Australia is a challenge. There is no single solution to the diverse issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and we approach the challenge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment on the APY Lands in the context of local circumstances.

Notwithstanding that local circumstances demand local solutions, our general high-level collaborative approach to the topic of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment emphasises the importance of setting realistic expectations, a very vigorous, culturally appropriate consultative approach to the recruitment process, a culturally appropriate retention strategy, and thorough review of what works and what does not work in respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

Our Plan cont.



Our Plan cont.

When Cowell Electric was engaged by Arup Australasia for the provision of essential services (power, water, waste water) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in the Pilbara, Gascoyne and Murchison Region of WA, there were few communities with individuals who possessed the capability (trained and confident personnel) to effectively discharge the responsibilities.

The approach to overcoming this deficiency was to develop and implement a co-ordinated community-based training and employment initiative for Essential Services Operators. This was delivered through an RTO accredited to deliver the curriculum. Technical modules were delivered within the communities utilising community-based essential service assets. The mobile trainer, maintenance teams and qualified community members provided the support framework for the trainees. The program delivered a curriculum that was accredited by the WA Training Accreditation Council. Training was linked to an employment outcome and was funded from a combination of ATSIC CDEP and CHIP funds and DHW funds. This initiative was seen as the one component that had the greatest potential for achieving long term, sustainable benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The initial pilot-phase was successfully delivered by Cowell Electric during the period of their contract and the results were very positive as evidenced by a 75% success rate in training 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths as Trainee Essential Service Operators in WA over an 18-month period.

In addition to our own experience and expertise, Cowell Electric consider that its associates add significant in-house expertise in relation to all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement generally, and specifically the mentoring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. All strongly believe that the success of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment program is highly dependent on the depth, quality, and timely mentoring provided.

The JV Partners see the mentoring process as an integral part of the recruitment and retention strategy, and is core to the unique business model required to assure successful employment outcomes.

The above testifies to our experience and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, issues and our ability to employ, recruit and train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and of the challenges faced.

Our Plan cont.

In order for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy to succeed, Cowell Electric identified specific objectives which will ensure positive engagement and retention of new potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruits;

Objective 1 – The Cultural Environment

- Recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages and history in all branches and sites, and acknowledge the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Australian society.

Objective 2 – Culture and Leadership

- Foster the ongoing development of a culture and environment which values diversity and provides leadership for the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy.

Objective 3 – Recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff

- Develop and implement further strategies for attracting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across all areas of the company.

Objective 4 – Work Environment

- Provide a work environment which supports employment equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Our Plan cont.

Objective 5 – Career Development

- Maximise staff development opportunities, along with the transfer of job skills and information, in order to increase expertise, remuneration, job security and career progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Objective 6 – Monitoring and Reviewing Implementation

- Hold regular Management meetings to discuss implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy and monitor and review Cowell Electric's progress in relation to the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Objective 7 – Relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Businesses

- Establish strong and long lasting relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses within our industries. Utilising the services of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contractors, suppliers and labour hire companies to fill the gaps within our existing procurement process.

Our actions are designed to enhance reconciliation through **Relationships, Respect, Opportunities and Awareness**.

Relationships

Cowell Electric strives to proactively build and maintain internal and external relationships to ensure high quality outcomes at all our sites.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Establish a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Taskforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Form a RAP Taskforce which oversees all efforts and activities during implementation. Taskforce to meet quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dec, 2017	Managing Director
2. Build external relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establish relationships with WA & SA contractors, labour hire and suppliersDevelop a list of RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach and connect with on our reconciliation journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Feb, 2018Jun, 2018	RAP Taskforce
3. Establish a long-lasting relationship with Reconciliation Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage with Reconciliation AustraliaHave our RAP reviewedRAP formally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dec, 2017Feb, 2018Jan, 2019	RAP Taskforce

Respect

Our respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culture, land and history is fundamental not only to the advancement of our business but also for our commitment to working towards reconciliation nationwide.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
4. Investigate cultural learning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review current Cultural Awareness Training course, with intent to also include content relevant to the areas we work• Include 'Refresher' in bi-yearly online induction completed by all our employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jul, 2018	RAP Taskforce/HR
5. Participate in and celebrate NAIDOC week	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week which includes information about the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.• Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting community events in our local area• Ensure our RAP Taskforce participates in at least one external NAIDOC Week event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First week of July, 2018	RAP Taskforce
6. Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore who the Traditional Owners are of the lands and waters in our office/project locations• Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness and understanding of the meaning and significance behind Acknowledgement of Country protocols (including any local cultural protocols)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jul, 2018	RAP Taskforce

Opportunities

Our belief in opportunities for equal standards of education and training are particularly important to our business.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
7. Engage school-based traineeship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	• Engage at least 1 student	• Jun, 2018	Chief Executive
	• First student to complete traineeship	• Dec, 2019	Chief Executive
	• Engage at least 1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentice at our Olympic Dam branch	• Feb, 2019	HR
8. Procurement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses	• Attend an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander function (INDIGENUITY 2017)	• Nov, 2017	Chief Executive
	• Set targets and objectives for engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses	• Jan, 2018	RAP Taskforce
	• Build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers	• Feb, 2018	
	• Increase annual spends to \$500k	• Jun, 2018	
	• Increase annual spends to \$1m	• Jun, 2019	

Opportunities cont.

Our belief in opportunities for equal standards of education and training are particularly important to our business.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
9. Implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy which will lead to at least 1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidate for every 5 to 10 vacancies• Identify current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment and development opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apr, 2018 (reviewed quarterly)	RAP Taskforce/HR
10. Establish clear employment pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First contribution of 5% from Remote Areas Energy Supply Scheme (RAES) profits to the Yalari Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dec, 2017	Managing Director

Awareness

At Cowell Electric, all individuals have an important role to play in closing the knowledge gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
11. Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage our staff to attend a NRW event• Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff• Ensure our RAP Taskforce participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 27 May – 3 June, 2018	RAP Taskforce
12. Raise internal awareness of our RAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness amongst all staff across the organisation about our RAP commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jul, 2018	RAP Taskforce

Governance and Tracking Progress

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
13. Build support for the RAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation• Define systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP activities• Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sep, 2018	RAP Taskforce
14. Review and Refresh RAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements• Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review• Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jul, 2019	RAP Taskforce



Further Contact Details:

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Cowell Electric

"Taking Power beyond the horizon!"