



Statement from Professor Fabienne Mackay, QIMR Berghofer Director and CEO

QIMR Berghofer's 2025-2026 Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is the Institute's first formal step toward acknowledging the deep and enduring connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to the lands on which we work.

In our archives, notes indicate that early medical research conducted in Queensland recognised the invaluable knowledge held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about health, the environment, and the treatment of disease. QIMR Berghofer forebears learned from Indigenous communities about the medicinal properties of native plants, and, after the Institute was established in 1945, researchers sought to understand and address the unique health challenges of northern Australia by drawing on the lived experience and expertise of First Nations people.

However, there is still much to achieve in collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to advance health outcomes through research that is ethical, inclusive, and impactful. By strengthening partnerships, increasing representation, and deepening our understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems, we strive to contribute to a more equitable future.

As Queensland's largest medical research institute, QIMR Berghofer is uniquely positioned to support transformative change in the medical research space. By listening, learning, and integrating Indigenous knowledge into our work, we can conduct research that is innovative, culturally responsive, reflects the health priorities of First Nations communities and improves outcomes in areas such as chronic disease, mental health, and preventative care.

Yet our commitment also extends beyond research. We are dedicated to creating a workplace that is welcoming, inclusive, and respectful of diverse perspectives. We strive for an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, and collaborators feel valued and supported, and which ensures First Nations perspectives help shape our policies and decision-making. By fostering cultural competency among our workforce, we can ensure reconciliation is not just a concept, but a lived experience.

As Director and CEO, I am proud to lead an organisation that embraces this responsibility and commits to meaningful change. I would like to thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have given their time and expertise to developing this RAP and the Institute staff who have brought it to fruition. I encourage all staff and students, our Council, partners, and stakeholders to engage with our RAP and work together towards a future built on respect, opportunity, and shared success.

Professor Fabienne Mackay
Director and CEO
QIMR Berghofer



Statement from Karen Mundine, Reconciliation Australia Chief Executive Officer

Reconciliation Australia welcomes QIMR Berghofer to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

QIMR Berghofer joins a network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables QIMR Berghofer to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations QIMR Berghofer, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this document contains images of deceased persons.

About QIMR Berghofer

QIMR Berghofer is a leading medical research institute dedicated to improving health and wellbeing through impactful research. Our core focus areas include cancer, infectious diseases, chronic inflammation, genetics of disease, population health, and brain and mental health. We aim to address major health challenges, including those affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, through cutting-edge research and innovation.

QIMR Berghofer has a dedicated team of over 1,000 scientists, support staff, and students within the Institute. Currently 6 employees in our workforce identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples (representing less than 1% of our total workforce).

While based in Queensland, our research collaborations extend across Australia and internationally, influencing health outcomes worldwide. While the primary research facility is in Brisbane, our work extends across various regional and remote communities through research partnerships and outreach programs.

At QIMR Berghofer, we are actively translating scientific discoveries into real-world health solutions. Our work moves from the research bench to the bedside, influencing public health policy, medical practice, and new treatments. By fostering collaboration with universities, hospitals, government agencies, and industry partners, we accelerate the translation of research into meaningful health outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.



Photo by David Kelly.

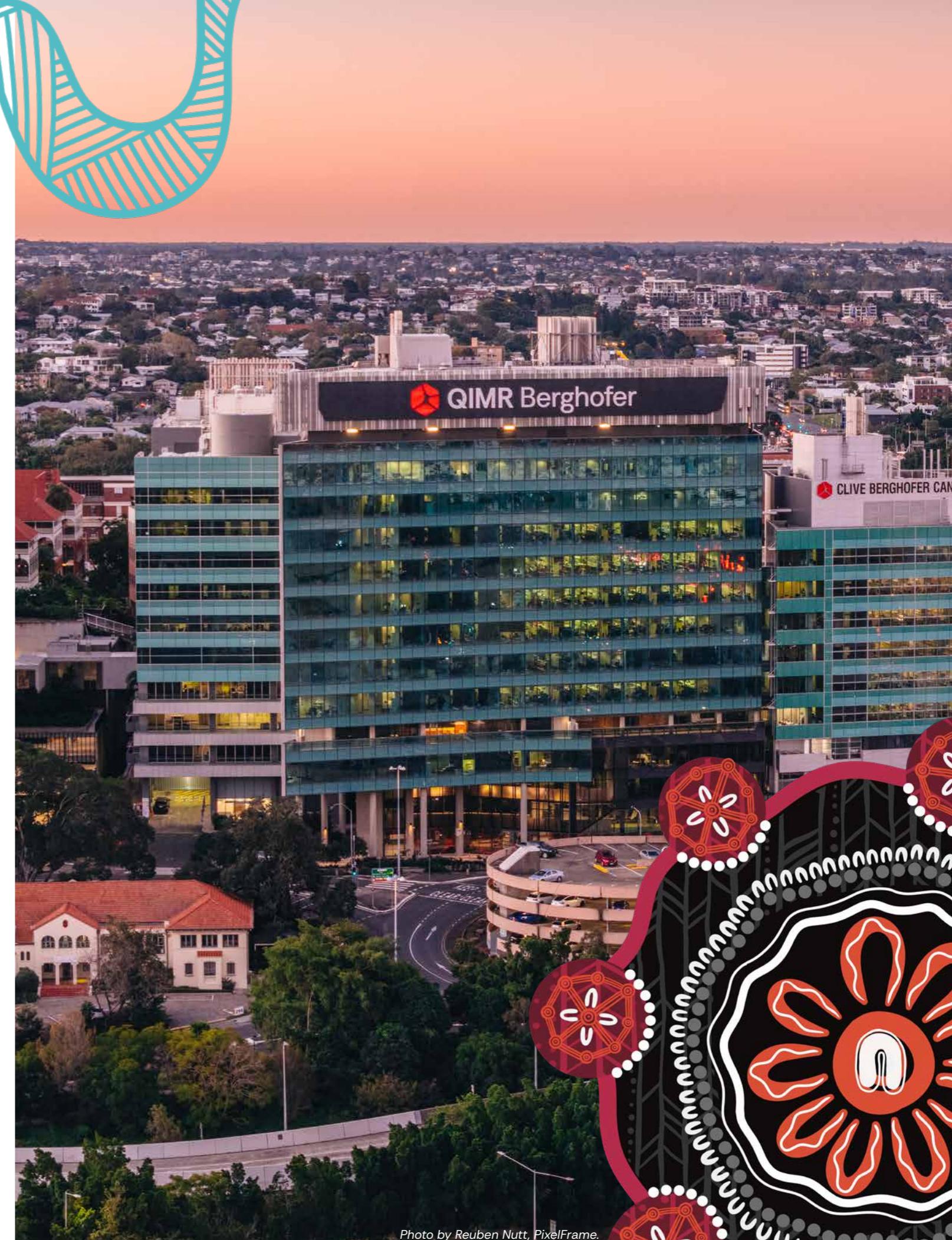


Photo by Reuben Nutt, PixelFrame.



A Journey of Healing, Growth and Discovery

By artist Leah Cummins,
Bunya Designs

This artwork for QIMR Berghofer's Reconciliation Action Plan represents a powerful journey of healing, growth, and discovery.

Yathi winja (Good day)

My name is Leah Cummins, I am a proud Mayi woman from North-Western Queensland. Mayi-Kulan from my father and Kalkadoon from my mother. I have family connections from the Simpson Desert up to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

I find inspiration in my cultural identity and bring my stories of my country and people to life in my art. I paint stories of strength for women and children, love of the land and all my people. I pay respect to the ancestors who give me these stories in my creativity, to share my culture that transcends words and draws people into wanting to learn about First Nations people.

I paint both traditional and contemporary art using storytelling in every art piece to educate and teach everyone of my people's culture. I hope to inspire and uplift my people by contributing to the sharing of culture and stories through my art.

I want to share all my pieces with love and harmony
"Bunya Sister".

I find inspiration in my cultural identity and bring my stories of my country and people to life in my art.

— LEAH CUMMINS, BUNYA DESIGNS



Photo by Stacey Lee Photography.



At the heart of the piece is a central figure — symbolising the individual — supported by staff, services, and the wider community. Surrounding this figure are eight pillars, each representing one of the eight decades QIMR Berghofer has dedicated to advancing research.

These pillars reflect the core values and areas of focus that form the foundation of QIMR Berghofer:

- Respect
- Brain health
- Mental health
- Accountability
- Population health
- Infection and inflammation
- Cancer research
- Collaboration
- Excellence
- Integrity

Encircling these elements are microbes — the subjects of intense research by QIMR Berghofer scientists. Flowing through the artwork are river pathways, symbolising the discovery process and the growth it nurtures — mirrored in the thriving plant life depicted throughout the design.

The helping hands of QIMR Berghofer are shown through symbols of connection: palm leaves, shells, the reef, flowing rivers, and the vast blue ocean — linking bush to sea, and spreading across our communities like seeds carried on the wind.

These elements illustrate QIMR Berghofer's outreach — its staff connecting with communities, seeking solutions and cures for the health challenges faced by many Queenslanders.

May this journey of healing, growth and discovery continue to flourish, honouring the spirit of reconciliation through every step of research and care.

- 6 Population health
- 7 Infection and inflammation
- 8 Cancer research
- 9 Collaboration
- 10 Excellence
- 11 Integrity
- 12 Discovery and growth
- 13 People on the journey
- 14 Microbes

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

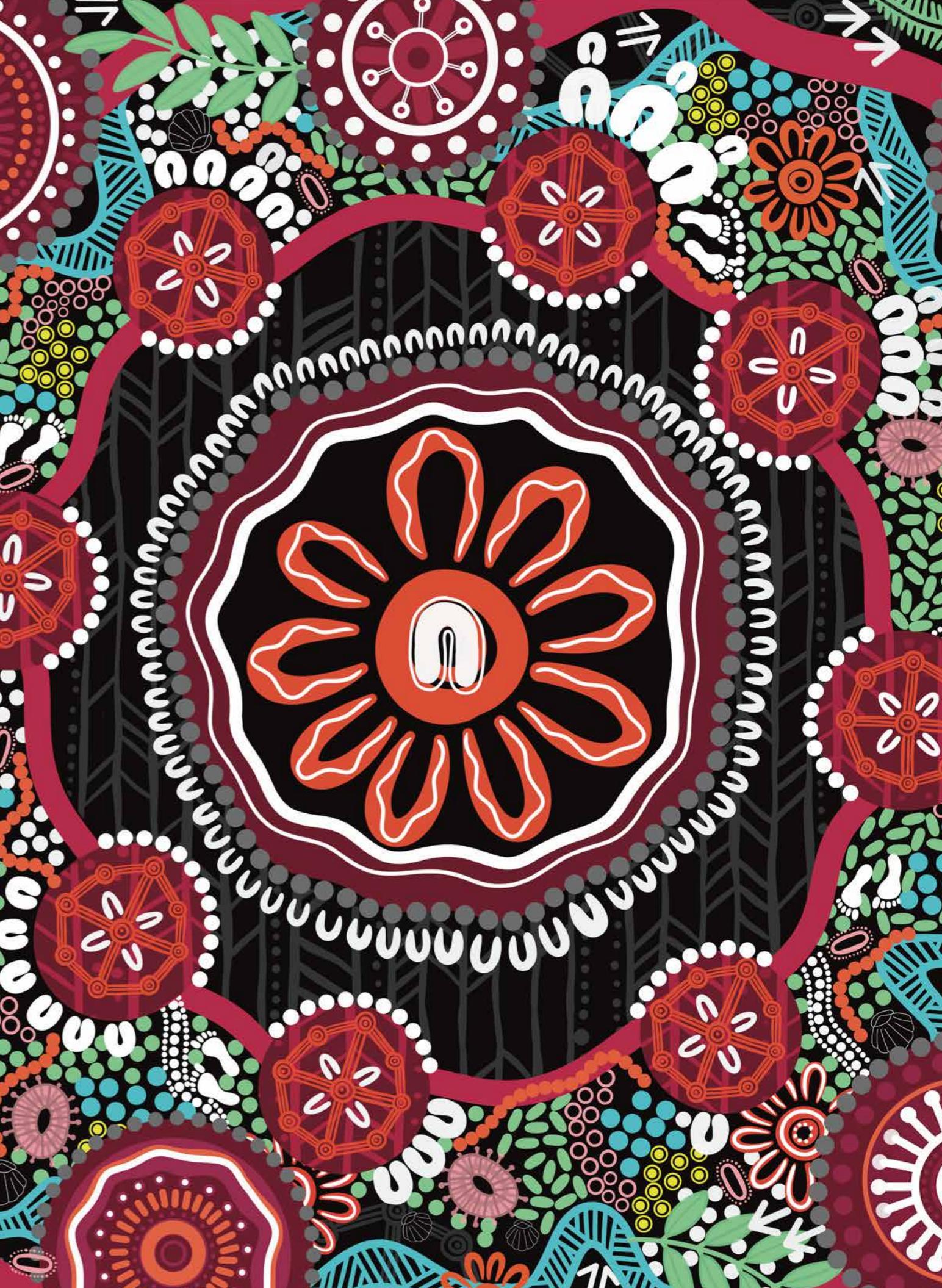
This Reflect RAP represents a public commitment and the opportunity for QIMR Berghofer to advance reconciliation in Australia. The RAP is a critical step to advancing and formalising our current activities, and a basis from which to build on relationships and mutually beneficial partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations. The RAP aims to provide a structured framework for strengthening cultural awareness, engagement, and collaboration in all areas of our work, from research to recruitment and program delivery. Through the RAP, we aim to ensure that reconciliation is embedded into our core practices and values.

QIMR Berghofer has a long history of working towards improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Over the years, we have integrated cultural awareness into our research and operations through the leadership of Greg Pratt, our former Manager of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, who worked at QIMR Berghofer for over a decade. Greg, an Aboriginal descendant of the Noonucal tribe of the Quandamooka people, championed research focused on health equity and improving services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples communities. His efforts have laid the foundation for QIMR Berghofer's ongoing reconciliation journey, and QIMR Berghofer has demonstrated its dedication to creating meaningful, culturally safe spaces and partnerships. Our Reflect RAP now builds on this history, aiming to reinforce and expand our efforts in reconciliation, creating a more structured and comprehensive approach to advancing health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The implementation of our RAP will be guided by a dedicated Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, composed of 15 staff members from across the scientific and professional areas of the organisation. This group will be responsible for overseeing the development and execution of the RAP, ensuring that it aligns with our organisational goals and values. We will adopt a holistic approach, integrating reconciliation principles into our recruitment, consultation, research, education, and program design processes. The RAP will not only focus on creating awareness but also on actively building and maintaining meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

The QIMR Berghofer Chief Operating Officer will be our RAP Champion, with Professor Darren Gray chairing the RAP Working Group and the Manager, Community Engagement and Events as the RAP Working Group Secretariat. The QIMR Berghofer RAP Working Group comprises:

Professor Darren Gray	Program Director, Population Health
Bridget French	Manager, Community Engagement and Events
Alicia Nally	Acting Manager, Media, Communications and Government
Dr Nancy Cloake	Consumer and Community Involvement Lead
Dr Manuel Serrano-Santos	Education Coordinator
Professor Sarah Medland	Distinguished Scientist, Psychiatric Genetics
Paul Collins	Analytical Facility Manager
Dr Suzy Ossipow	Senior Research Fellow and Research Centre Manager
Rachael Adams	Senior Manager, Strategy and Development
Associate Professor Katja Fischer	Senior Group Leader, Scabies
Dr Deepani Fernando	Senior Research Officer, Scabies
Dr Catherine Gordon	Team Head, Applied Tropical and Molecular Parasitology Lab
Dr Katie Lineburg	Senior Research Officer, Immunopathology Group
Tash Jobson	Senior Media and Communications Advisor
Professor Patricia Valery	Group Leader, Cancer and Chronic Disease



Our partnerships and current activities

QIMR Berghofer is committed to addressing the significant health disparities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. Since establishing its first Aboriginal Health Research Unit in 1971, the Institute has focused on sustainable, consultative, and translational research aimed at improving Indigenous health outcomes. Key areas of research have included asthma and bronchiectasis in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, cancer care pathways, genomic health research, and culturally adapted clinical communication training, such as the Clinical Yarning initiative. The Institute has also worked closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to raise awareness of pressing health concerns, in the areas of cancer, scabies, strongyloidiasis, pain management and chronic liver disease.

QIMR Berghofer has forged significant research partnerships to improve Indigenous health, including a collaboration with the MJD Foundation to enhance patient care for Machado-Joseph Disease, and a pilot elimination program for strongyloidiasis, a parasitic infection which disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This multidisciplinary project led by Professor Darren Gray attracted an \$5 million National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Synergy Grant. A \$1.4 million Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) grant was awarded to Professor Sarah Medland to improve our understanding of pharmacogenomic variation with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and Professor Medland will participate in the ground breaking \$5 million MRFF-funded Australian Alliance for Indigenous Genomics Network (ALIGN).

Past projects include research on neonatal health, and mosquito control in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as Professor Patricia Valery's groundbreaking research on respiratory health, and cancer care for First Nations peoples. This includes asthma studies in Torres Strait Islander children, such as a large prevalence study and a randomised controlled trial (RCT) on an education intervention, as well as research on bronchiectasis in First Nations children in the Northern Territory. Additional initiatives include Clinical Yarning in pain management and integrated genetic healthcare research for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Ongoing projects include a chronic liver disease and liver cancer program, featuring an RCT to deliver training, education, liver health checks, and On Country liver cancer surveillance for remote First Nations communities.

Recognising scabies as a neglected yet serious health issue linked to overcrowding and poverty, scabies research has been a major focus for the Institute, particularly its impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote northern Australia. Associate Professor Katja Fischer and her team have secured three successive NHMRC grants (2013 – 2019) and over \$3 million in international funds (2021 – 2028) for biomedical scabies research and are leading the development of the first Scabies Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) to

improve early detection and management. The group has also secured funding to explore how scabies affects the healthy skin microbiome and to understand the link between scabies and secondary bacterial infections as well as developing next-generation drugs to treat the condition.

Since 2006, the Scabies Group has actively engaged Indigenous students and teachers through work experience programs, as well as the Science and Young Minds initiative in North Queensland. The program, which collaborates with QUT's Oodgeroo Unit, has positively impacted remote schools with at least 60% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, encouraging university pathways for participants. Associate Professor Fischer has raised over \$135,000 for this initiative. Dr Nathan Stevenson and Dr Kartik Iyer have leveraged artificial intelligence to identify developmental delays in preterm babies – an issue disproportionately affecting First Nations peoples – while Dr Emily Hielscher's work has shed light on the higher prevalence of youth self-harm in regional and remote areas.

The Institute remains dedicated to fostering health equity and Indigenous representation in medical research. QIMR Berghofer's Regional Outreach Programs visits regional and remote Queensland high schools every year to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to pursue careers in medical research. The Mosquito Control Laboratory, in collaboration with CSIRO, hosted a workshop for students from Tagai State College, Thursday Island, introducing them to mosquito-borne disease research and control strategies. Ongoing networking efforts with the Northern Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Health Alliance further strengthen engagement with First Nations communities.

The Institute has celebrated National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week for over a decade and, in 2013, unveiled Water Memory in the Central Building foyer, a significant artwork by internationally renowned Waanyi artist Judy Watson, commemorating the Aboriginal history of the Herston site.

These initiatives reflect the Institute's enduring commitment to reconciliation, community engagement, and improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Photo by Tony Phillips.



Relationships

QIMR Berghofer will foster meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and organisations. These partnerships will be foundational to our reconciliation journey and our commitment to respectful collaboration and shared progress.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
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.	November 2025	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : RAP Working Group Secretariat
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	January 2026	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : RAP Working Group Secretariat
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2026	Lead : General Manager, Engagement & Advancement Support : RAP Working Group
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May-3 June, 2026	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : RAP Working Group Secretariat
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May-3 June, 2026	Lead : General Manager, Engagement & Advancement Support : RAP Working Group
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	August 2025	Chief Executive Officer
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	December 2025	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : RAP Working Group Secretariat
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	December 2025	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : RAP Working Group Secretariat
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	February 2026	Chief People Officer
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	March 2026	Chief People Officer



Respect

QIMR Berghofer will strengthen awareness and cultural capability across our organisation by deepening understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, achievements, and the ongoing challenges faced by communities.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	June 2026	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : RAP Working Group Secretariat
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	October 2026	Chief People Officer
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	June 2026	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : RAP Working Group Secretariat
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	September 2025	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : Chief People Officer
	Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	June 2026	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : RAP Working Group Secretariat
Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2026	Lead : General Manager, Engagement & Advancement Support : RAP Working Group
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2026	Lead : RAP Working Group Chair Support : RAP Working Group Secretariat





Opportunities

QIMR Berghofer will explore opportunities to improve the accessibility, relevance, and cultural safety of our research, programs, and services. We are committed to supporting health equity and capacity-building initiatives that benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	October 2026	Chief People Officer
	Continue QIMR Berghofer Regional Outreach Program that encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to pursue careers in medical research	December 2026	Lead: RAP Working Group Chair Support: RAP Working Group
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	October 2026	Chief People Officer
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.	December 2026	Chief Financial Officer
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	December 2026	Chief Financial Officer



Governance

QIMR Berghofer will establish genuine consultation and robust governance processes to guide the development and delivery of our 15-month Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan. We are committed to building cultural awareness and capability across our organisation, and to contributing to improved health, social, and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	August 2025	Lead : RAP Champion Support : Chair RAP Working Group
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	August 2025	Lead : Chair RAP Working Group Support : Secretariat RAP Working Group
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	August 2025	Lead : Chair RAP Working Group Support : Secretariat RAP Working Group
	Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	August 2025	Lead : Chair RAP Working Group Support : Chief Operating Officer
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August 2025	Lead : RAP Champion Support : Chair RAP Working Group
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Maintain a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	August 2025	Chief Executive Officer
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	August 2025	Lead : Chair RAP Working Group Support : Secretariat RAP Working Group
	Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	June annually	Lead : Secretariat RAP Working Group Support : Chair RAP Working Group
	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.	30 September annually	Lead : Secretariat RAP Working Group Support : Chair RAP Working Group
Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey	30 September, annually	Lead : Secretariat RAP Working Group Support : Chair RAP Working Group
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	Lead : Secretariat RAP Working Group Support : Chair RAP Working Group
	Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	October 2026	Lead : Secretariat RAP Working Group Support : Chair RAP Working Group

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To learn more about QIMR Berghofer's
Reconciliation Action Plan, visit qimrb.edu.au

