



# Swan River Trust 2012 - 2015 Reconciliation Action Plan

*Caring for the Swan Canning Riverpark*





## Chairman's message



I am very proud of this document. It is far more than a blueprint of hopes and aspirations - it is an action plan that the Swan River Trust will pursue with vigour.

The spiritual, cultural and practical connections that the Noongar people have with the Swan and Canning rivers and surrounding lands are immeasurable.

They are custodians of over 40,000 years of caring for country and respecting the environment.

This Reconciliation Action Plan binds the Trust to not only recognise those links but actively embrace them in all aspects of our work.

Our continued commitments to indigenous employment, work experience, board representation and promoting opportunities for Aboriginal businesses will play a particularly important role in the years ahead.

We are excited participants in the recent heritage protocols and look forward to establishing new understandings with the Noongar people while strengthening our existing partnerships as we work together to protect and maintain our amazing rivers.

**Michael Poole**

**Chairman, Swan River Trust**

## Our vision for reconciliation

The Swan River Trust recognises and celebrates Aboriginal culture and heritage and respects the significance that *Derbal Yerrigan* (the Swan River) and *Dyalgarro beelier* (the Canning River) hold for Aboriginal people. Our vision for reconciliation is to provide opportunities for genuine partnerships with Aboriginal people that encompass all aspects of the Trust's business, ultimately leading to a healthy river for all, forever.



## Our Reconciliation Action Plan

**Cultural awareness training of Trust staff began in 2004. As staff became interested in how to involve Aboriginal people in projects, informal discussions identified a need to formalise a group to keep track of Trust projects involving the Aboriginal community, promote these connections, and seek new opportunities.**

The Internal Noongar Working Group was formed and meets monthly to discuss all aspects of the Trust's work involving or of interest to Aboriginal people in the Riverpark including consultation, planning approvals, partner projects and strategic direction.

Aboriginal values and uses of the Swan Canning Riverpark are at the forefront of Trust projects. These projects have emphasised to the wider community the value of the Swan and Canning rivers to Aboriginal people. Of particular relevance are the River Protection Strategy and the Swan Canning Riverpark Trails Project.

The River Protection Strategy is the key mechanism to achieve coordination, cooperation and collaboration among river managers. The Strategy begins with a Noongar Statement signifying the importance of the rivers to the Noongar people. The Strategy expresses a commitment to continue to work towards more active involvement of the Noongar community in river management, through meaningful ongoing partnerships.

At a specific project level, the Swan Canning Riverpark Trails Project involved a comprehensive consultation process through the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) to engage the Noongar community in identifying significant sites for inclusion in an interpretive trails project. A major outcome of this project was the provision of guidelines on how Elders would like to be engaged with the Trust's business.

The development of this Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) aims to acknowledge these and other projects, formalise current actions and guide future priorities. The Trust's commitment to partnership with the Aboriginal community has been developed in recognition of the significance of the rivers to Aboriginal people, and the unique and invaluable role that the Aboriginal community play in their protection and management.

The RAP was developed by combining community recommendations from previous projects, liaising with external agencies and using the experience of the Working Group for direction and advice. The RAP is unashamedly outcome-based and looks to provide a range of initiatives ranging from high level negotiations with government to providing opportunities for work experience placements for Noongar students, and all levels in between. It is anticipated by taking such a wide ranging approach that the Aboriginal community and the Trust can work together to achieve our vision.



A photograph of two men standing on a concrete riverbank, looking out over a body of water under a clear blue sky. The man on the left is wearing a white polo shirt, dark trousers, and a hat with a red band. The man on the right is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, a dark vest, and dark trousers. They are both standing with their backs to the camera, looking towards the water.

## Our business

Established in 1989, the Trust is a state government agency charged with protecting and managing the Swan Canning river system. In our role as caretaker of one of Perth's most iconic treasures, we work with community, industry, local government and other state government agencies. We focus on maintaining and improving the environmental health of the Riverpark and ensuring the community can enjoy our rivers now and in the future.

The *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006* explicitly recognises the significance of the rivers to the Noongar community. It places a responsibility on the Trust to have regard for this significance in all its work and to ensure, where possible, that Noongar interests are represented on the Trust's Board.

The Act also provides for participation of Aboriginal people and the wider community in Riverpark management and activities affecting the benefits and amenity of the area. While much is already being achieved, there is always more that can be done to genuinely involve the Aboriginal community in the ongoing management and protection of the Swan Canning Riverpark. The Trust values establishing and maintaining genuine partnerships and considers this approach an ongoing journey and opportunity for mutual exchange.

As an integral component of Trust business, efforts are being made to improve working relationships with the Noongar traditional owners of the river system and surrounding lands. Decision making processes are being examined for opportunities to better incorporate and protect Noongar values to ensure consistency is maintained with high-level commitments and objectives.

The Trust delivers a range of programs, all of which involve partnerships with the Aboriginal community at a variety of levels. The programs and their objectives include:

- **Environmental management** – improve river system health and resilience to environmental and community pressures
- **Riverpark management** – manage shoreline restoration, operational, recreational and commercial activities to enhance community benefit and amenity
- **Community engagement** – enhance community social responsibility so that all catchment residents help look after the Riverpark
- **Statutory planning** – ensure land-use planning and development protects and enhances Riverpark values and meets community demands
- **Strategic programs** – implement a planning and policy framework to guide the Trust and others to achieve collaborative, coordinated Riverpark management
- **Agency management** – ensure accountability, good governance and financial sustainability by improving management systems.

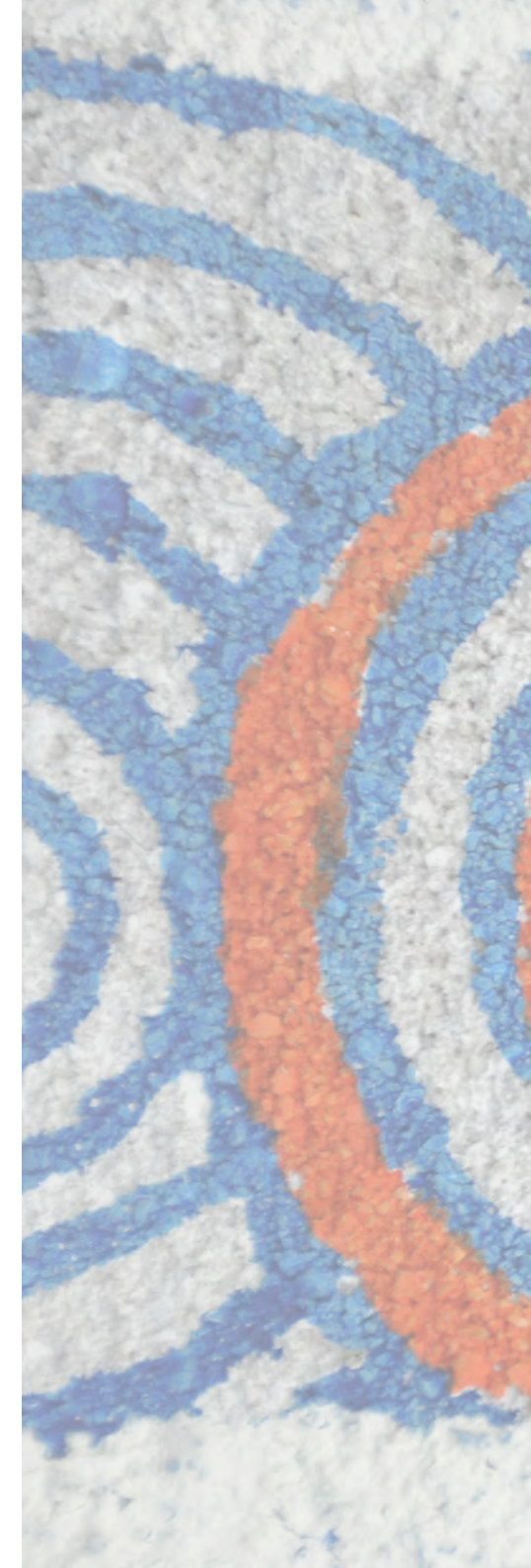
The Trust has a Full Time Equivalent ceiling of 58 public service staff and eight Board Members and currently has one staff and one Board member of Aboriginal descent.



<b>Relationships</b>	<b>The Trust recognises the importance of having strong partnerships with Noongar people as they play a unique role in protecting and managing the Swan Canning river system which is the Trust's main goal.</b>
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**Focus area: strengthen partnerships**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Measurable Target</b>
Ensure priorities of the Internal Noongar Working Group are guided by RAP actions and monitor the progress of the RAP through this group.	Internal Noongar Working Group	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	The group meets at least four times a year  RAP as a standing item on Internal Noongar Working Group meeting agenda
Promote the inclusion of at least one Noongar person on the Trust's Board subject to <i>Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006</i> terms.	Swan River Trust Board	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	At least one Noongar Board Member at all times
Maintain a culturally appropriate system of contacts (database) of Aboriginal stakeholders.	Communications Manager (lead) with Internal Noongar Working Group	July to June 2013 July to June 2014 July to June 2015	Database is maintained on a monthly basis
Build a better understanding of Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) planning approvals process.	Internal Noongar Working Group with Statutory Assessments Manager	June 2013  June 2015	Identify approaches to build rapport with and understanding of DIA approvals officer  At least one approach is scoped and pursued
Assist Department of Indigenous Affairs, Department of Premier and Cabinet and South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council to improve <i>Heritage Act</i> processes, enhancing the protection of Aboriginal Heritage to provide a better outcome for all partners and the Riverpark through the Interagency Reference Group.	General Manager and Riverpark Manager	June 2013	Two projects assessed through pilot project
Celebrate National Reconciliation Week by providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and other employees to build relationships.	Communications Manager (lead) with Internal Noongar Working Group	May 2013 May 2014 May 2015	Host one internal event during National Reconciliation Week



<b>Respect</b>	<b>The Trust is committed to demonstrating respect through cultural awareness, access to information and establishing and maintaining genuine partnerships with Aboriginal people that encompass all aspects of the Trust's business.</b>
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**Focus area: respect and promote culture**

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Document Trust procedure to obtain translations into Noongar language to facilitate use of Noongar land use in signage, newsletters, mapping etc.	Riverpark Manager and Internal Noongar Working Group	June 2013	Procedure documented and in use
Support and/or promote an appropriate activity during NAIDOC week each year, as resources allow, for example a River Guardians event.	Internal Noongar Working Group	July 2013 July 2014 July 2015	One or more events per year
Implement a protocol to encourage use of Aboriginal Welcome and Acknowledgment of Country at significant internal and external meetings/events.	Internal Noongar Working Group	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	Protocol established for Trust employees  Provide opportunity for interested staff to attend Aboriginal acknowledgment session (or similar training)
Recognise and celebrate Aboriginal culture by using Aboriginal language, art and designs in Trust documents and projects, including but not limited to, artwork in the office, interpretative signage, brochures and documents.	Communications Manager with all Branch Managers	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	At least one document or project a year

**Focus area: information availability and access**

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Circulate relevant strategic documents and materials to the Internal Noongar Working Group for input/submission, for example strategic plans, policies and procedures, to better enable this group to perform its commitment to other Reconciliation actions.	Internal Noongar Working Group	June 2013	New documents and information distributed to the Internal Noongar Working Group within a month of becoming available to any Internal Noongar Working Group member
Provide topical updates in the Trust-e newsletter, including links and contacts where appropriate to further information sources.	Internal Noongar Working Group	By January and June each year	At least two articles a year relating to Aboriginal culture are incorporated into Trust-e





### Focus area: staff training and cultural opportunities

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
All new staff are made aware of Trust's RAP within induction package.	Business Service Manager	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	All new staff have read and understand RAP
All staff to attend Aboriginal cultural awareness training.	Business Service Manager	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	All staff trained, including all current, new permanent or long term contract staff  Training register is kept up to date biannually
Provide opportunity for interested staff to represent the Trust at cultural events.	All Branch Managers	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	Calendar of cultural events collated and promoted to staff, one cultural event attended per year

### Focus area: improving process

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Review Trust policy <i>SRT/E5 Heritage</i> as identified in discussion paper "Recognising Noongar values at the Swan River Trust".	Statutory Assessments Manager	June 2014	Policy reviewed





## Opportunities

The Trust will create opportunities for Aboriginal people, organisations and communities through business, employment, education and cultural development. These opportunities are vital to progress towards a healthy river for all, forever.

### Focus area: Noongar employment and training

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Conduct best practice with regard to Aboriginal recruitment.	Business Service Manager	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	Meet strategic employment percentage target of 3.2 %  Linking to Aboriginal cadetship program  At least one work experience placement a year  Provide opportunities for short term secondments  Representing the Trust at Aboriginal employment expos  Jobs are appropriately advertised
Investigate including a clause in Trust procurement guidelines that a contractor will be preferred if they have positive working relations with the Aboriginal community, for example employing Aboriginal people, having strategic documents such as a RAP, and/or having consulted with local Aboriginal families about project. NB: Any changes to these guidelines will require Department of Treasury and Finance approval.	Riverpark Manager	June 2013	Review Trust procurement guidelines to include a clause that gives preference to contractors those that have positive working relations with the Aboriginal community
Promote Trust opportunities to Aboriginal businesses (e.g. catering, foreshore restoration and Aboriginal consultation) and ensure that Trust employees and stakeholders are aware of relevant Aboriginal commercial enterprises. In particular include opportunities for employment through River Guardians culture themed programs.	Internal Noongar Working Group (lead) and all Branch Managers	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	List of potential businesses developed and promoted to Trust staff (updated annually)



## Focus area: strengthen partnerships

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Review Trust grant funding agreements to encourage recipients to maximise opportunities for Aboriginal involvement in projects and activities, (e.g. work experience) including reporting of this involvement.	River System Management Manager and Riverpark Manager	June 2013	Grant funding agreement and reporting templates reviewed and updated where required
Continue ongoing engagement with Aboriginal people in the development and implementation of specific projects outside <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act</i> approvals process.	All Branch Managers	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	Report on major projects
Continue to provide Noongar learning opportunities within Trust led education programs.	Communications Manager	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	At least one Noongar learning opportunity provided or facilitated by Trust programs per year







## Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
Develop an annual RAP reporting format to report on progress of actions.	Internal Noongar Working Group	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	Complete and submit an Annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia
Align RAP review with strategic and business planning review timelines, processes and reporting.	Internal Noongar Working Group	June 2013 June 2014 June 2015	RAP actions identified in relevant operational plans.  'RAP action update' is standing agenda item on all Branch meeting agendas.  Report on RAP actions in Strategic Plan 2015





**Perth artist Rod Garlett's *Wagyl Kep Dreaming* features throughout the pages of this plan, and is on display in the Trust's head office. The painting shares the story of the sacred tunnels formed when *Wagyl* the Rainbow Serpent travelled the land taking fresh water to her people.**

Created using sands from Gulgulga, or the Avon River, *Wagyl Kep Dreaming* highlights the interconnection of the waterways, as the Avon connects to the Swan and Canning rivers.

"The story of the painting is from the dreamtime of Aboriginal culture," says Rod. "It's about the underground water tunnels that exist throughout the earth's crust. Our families believe that the water this earth holds is interconnected across the world, especially the fresh water that flows within the earth's crust."

"The sand on the painting comes from a sacred waterhole near the Avon River. It was put together with the river sand, so it included the spirituality of the land, the river, the cultural significance of that place, and that water is a giver of life. For all cultures, we know if we don't look after the water, we're going to be in trouble."

"I think it's awesome the Trust has acquired this piece. I hope it will help them build a stronger working relationship with the traditional owners of this country here, and tick off on a lot of joint management partnerships in resurrecting our rivers."





## Swan River Trust

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