

GUIDE FOR LEADERS

Creating a Close the Gap Action Plan

An alternative to a Reconciliation Action Plan



Taking action to close the gap

As a leader, you may be contemplating a **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)** and wonder what it does. We wonder, too.

For example, in October 2023, most Australians voted no to the Voice referendum. In the wake of that vote, Reconciliation Australia hosted a webinar for RAP partners to talk about reconciliation.

More than 1,000 members attended. Reconciliation Australia recommitted to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, specifically Treaty and Truth-telling.

It implored leaders in the RAP network to ‘transform’ their organisation and country and every individual employee to ‘take reconciliation beyond the workplace and into their communities, friendship groups and families.’

This looks like a **political movement.**

While your responsibility as an employer does not stop at the front door, you can only be responsible for what you control. Beyond that, you are spending your money on someone else’s agenda.

At Close the Gap Research, we think that hiring Aboriginal people and treating them equally with other staff is much more likely to change lives than a Reconciliation Action Plan.

You may have inherited a RAP when you took on the leadership role. Our advice is that you should exit the RAP. Close the Gap Research offers a way out with dignity to benefit your organisation.

Close the Gap Research is looking for **better ways to close the gap.**

The gap can close if you hire Aboriginal staff and treat them well. If you are competent in meeting your legal obligations, you can do your job well and tell the world.

Our vision is that **deep knowledge in the hands of specialists on your staff is indispensable.**

Our processes

-  Seek accurate advice on Aboriginal culture and compliance.¹
-  Set employment targets relevant to your labour market.²
-  Focus on business culture rather than identity culture.
-  Involve Aboriginal groups only where they are suppliers or represent staff.

“Injustice has to be dealt with at an individual level.”

— Trish Botha (Close the Gap Research)

¹The **Centre for Indigenous Training** has the only accredited Certificate IV on cultural competence.

²Labour market information developed by Close the Gap Research Limited.

A RAP is a journey to a destination that may not suit your organisation or Aboriginal people.

According to Reconciliation Australia, since 2006, RAPs 'have enabled organisations to take meaningful action to advance reconciliation' and 'provide tangible and substantive benefits ... and support First Nations self-determination.'

Reconciliation Australia presents no evidence that a RAP would benefit your organisation. As for supporting First Nations' self-determination, it is an agenda that may be at loggerheads with the purpose of your organisation.

Reconciliation Australia also claims a RAP will 'increase cultural safety in the workplace.' There needs to be evidence that a RAP will increase cultural safety, whatever that means.

According to Reconciliation Australia, reconciliation 'is about strengthening relationships ... for the benefit of all Australians.' The greatest good your organisation can do is to strengthen relationships among staff and suppliers.

Your organisation does not control the elements Reconciliation Australia argues (*italics*) are essential to reconciliation:

- *Overcome racism in a way that understands and values cultures, rights and experiences.* Your human resources people should be aware of the rights and experiences of staff. Accepting values that may be inconsistent with your organisation may damage your organisation.
- *Support equality and equity in a way that promotes Closing the Gap.* There may be no gap for many Aboriginal Australians or people you hire. If your organisation chooses to

employ on diversity rather than merit, it should assess the costs and benefits.

- *Actively support reconciliation by creating a more comprehensive range of opportunities for Aboriginal employees.* Your organisation should provide opportunities for all employees.
- *Support unity by supporting a process to recognise Australia's First Peoples in our Constitution.* Continuing the debate will divide staff.
- *Accept past misdeeds.* Your organisation is unlikely to have been the architect of misdeeds. Your organisation should be cautious of claims not supported by historical records.

Close the Gap Research understands the desire for organisations to help Aboriginal staff and to hire new staff.

A survey of RAPs undertaken by Close the Gap Research suggests that many activities conducted under the RAP are **unlikely to help** your organisation.

Close the Gap Research is willing to advise on the best alternative to a RAP that focuses on your organisation's goals, not someone else's.

Close the Gap Research will certify that you have followed our processes.





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