

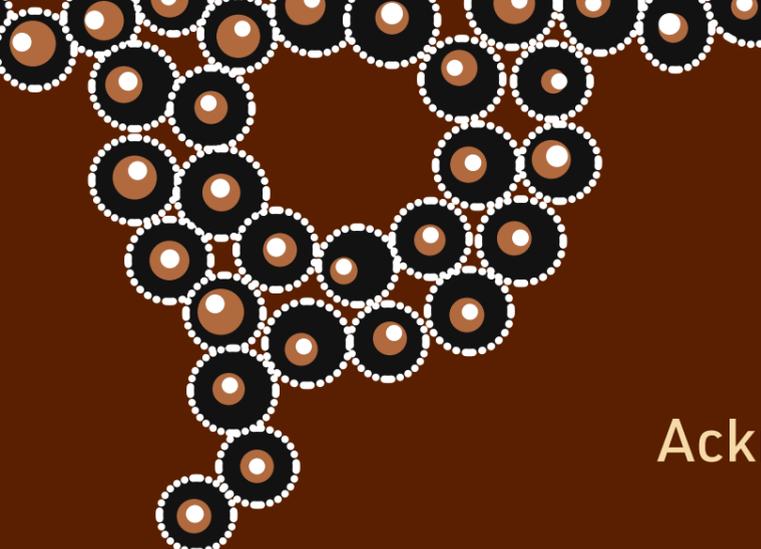


The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust
Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan
July 2023 – December 2024



The Greater Metropolitan
Cemeteries Trust
Lasting memories, peaceful places.





Acknowledgement of Country

GMCT operates across the lands of both the Bunurong People and the Wurundjeri People. We acknowledge them as the traditional owners. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and Aboriginal Elders of other communities who may use our sites and services.

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About the artist

Simone Thomson – Wurundjeri-Woi-Wurrung / Yorta-Yorta

'Boordup Durt – Comfort from the Stars'

We start with the earth.
With the grains of soil, we come from
– and return to.

For the Wurundjeri people, our Spirit Creator is Bunjil who comes in the form of the wedgetail eagle. After he created country and the lands and waterways, he made people. He took the clay of the earth and moulded his people. He took the string from the stringy bark tree and used it for their hair then blew into their mouths so they could breathe.

We are made from the land we walk on.

All the layers of country are represented by segments of soil symbolising our universal connection to the earth and the eternal cycle of life.

Trees are signified on the lower left, above those are circles symbolising our connection to water country and its life source. Diamond pointed chevrons to their right signify our valleys and gorges, below them; cross hatching symbolises our songlines that travel deep below country. Above our songlines are

the mountains that curve around us, to their left are interconnected arc shapes representing our connection to the plants and medicine foods we are nourished by. The upper layers of country symbolise the seeds of the trees above the ground and earth that gives us ceremony ochre. All these layers of country reflect our connection to our land and waterways and the balance of life – it is our responsibility to our environment.

We breathe the air of sky country.

Our voices carry in the wind to our loved ones, to the present and the past. Sky country symbolises the equal balance of earth to the sky representing life and the after.

A wooden dish made from the seeds of the trees from below it sits on the soil, a carved coolamon. In the Aboriginal way, the coolamon represents 'birth' for when we are born, we are placed in these carrying dishes as a crib. The dish symbolises the start of our 'life journey' in the physical world. Within the dish are flowering wattle and gum leaves, they are gently smoking. In the old traditional way passed down over

thousands of years, when we pass away, ceremony is held to cleanse and heal our family and to release our spirit into the Dreaming. We call this a Smoking Ceremony, it reflects our life cycle and honouring the spirit of those gone. The soft smoke drifts into the sky symbolising the lasting memories of our loved ones.

Several hands hold leaves around the dish placing them into the smoke. Each hand represents the people in our lives gathering for this ceremony and reflects compassion, protection and caring – it is welcoming to all cultures. The leaves of the dish symbolise the layers of country and the trees from which they came referencing their return to life through the seeds again.

The full moon lights the ceremony. Just as light disappears from the sky on our darkest nights – the moon returns to us in its cycle symbolising the season of life and the after. Journey tracks revolve around the moon representing our life journey, long or short – we are all equal. 'U' symbols encompass the inner circle. In the Aboriginal way, a person is

represented by this symbol. From the bird's eye view – this is the shape we make sitting on the ground, knees crossed. The 'U' symbols represent the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust and their commitment to reconciliation and acknowledging the past.

Milky Way lights scatter throughout star country, our peaceful place. After Bunjil created his people, he flew to the heavens to become the stars, this is where he remains today watching over country. Our belief is when we pass away, we go to the heavens, to the Dreaming. We believe the stars are the campfires of our loved ones, our ancestors. They are always connected to us in the eternal cycle of life. They are always there and comfort us from the stars – they 'Boordup Durt'.

Reconciliation Australia CEO Statement

Reconciliation Australia welcomes the Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (GMCT) to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

GMCT joins a network of more than 2,200 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 GMCT 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 GMCT, 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

GMCT CGO Statement

The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (GMCT) operates on the lands of both the Bunurong and Wurundjeri peoples. Given the nature of the services we provide to our communities, we take our responsibility for these lands seriously.

GMCT is genuinely committed to working with First Nations peoples, who have been custodians of this land since long before our cemeteries were established.

This Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan is the first formal step in our reconciliation journey and will establish a strong foundation for positive change in our organisation.

It will improve our business practices and provide greater opportunities for and better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I would like to thank all involved in the RAP development for their contributions, and I look forward to making progress on our commitments seriously.



Andrew Port
Chief Governance Officer
Executive Sponsor of the Reflect
Reconciliation Action Plan

Our business

The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (GMCT) is a community-focused state government-regulated organisation operating 19 cemeteries and memorial parks across Melbourne's metropolitan region. The role we play in our communities is fundamental: providing front-line care for those who have lost a loved one and looking after those they have lost. Our services provide comfort and closure to families and individuals in their times of need, and our cemeteries provide peaceful places for commemoration and reflection.

Situated in the north, east and west of Melbourne, GMCT cemeteries account for more than 650 hectares of public space. As our population grows and Melbourne's urban footprint expands, these open spaces will be maintained as important community assets for generations to come. As the architects of these special places, it is vital for us to reflect our city's rich cultural diversity and support the customs, traditions and funerary practices of its people. Our public cemeteries are archives of lives lived, and we are the committed

custodians of the history and heritage they represent. Our cemeteries and memorial parks have been here for generations; and we're planning ahead to ensure our cemeteries and memorial parks will be preserved for generations to come.

We play a role in the development of the death care sector nationally, through our research partnerships and outreach programs. Our aim is to engage communities and individuals in a conversation about death and dying to improve understanding in

this space of the choices people can make when it comes to interment and disposition. We also partner with many cultural groups to gain insight into their death rituals and practices to ensure we can meet their current and future needs.

GMCT employs over 230 employees across its 19 cemeteries, with the head office situated at Fawkner Memorial Park and additional regional offices at Altona and Lilydale Memorial Parks. We primarily serve the cremation and interment needs

of Victorian communities, however, also have a national and international reach by way of being the final resting place for many prominent historical figures, such as Dame Nellie Melba.

GMCT does not currently record statistics for the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed. We will seek to understand this information in a culturally appropriate way through the implementation of this RAP.



Image credit: McGregor Coxall

Our RAP

At its core, GMCT exists to deliver social value to its customers and the community more broadly. As part of this, GMCT must develop and manage our cemeteries to exist in perpetuity, and we recognise that this involves due consideration of the histories and stories of all those with connections to the site, in particular the histories and stories of our First Nations Peoples.

In 2021, GMCT developed its first ever comprehensive Sustainability Strategy to bring the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to life in the organisation. The definition of sustainability in the Strategy encompasses more than just environmental impact. Priority Objective #5 in the Strategy commits GMCT to 'Respect, respond and provide for indigenous rights, beliefs, and practices.' The first action under Priority Objective #5 is to develop a Reflect RAP as a roadmap to begin GMCT's reconciliation journey and guide us on suitable actions over the next 2-3 years.

As a public sector organisation reporting to the Victorian Minister for Health, GMCT also recognises our need to be in lockstep with the

broader reconciliation agenda of the Victorian Government. Victoria is the first Australian jurisdiction to commit to and action the elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart - Voice, Treaty and Truth. The Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 came into effect 1 August 2018 and sets out a roadmap towards Treaty negotiations, reflecting the intent to work in genuine partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to give meaningful and practical effect to the right of self-determination. The Reflect RAP is GMCT's first opportunity to tease out what Treaty and self-determination means for our organisation.

The RAP Champion will be the Chief Governance Officer, Andrew Port. As

a member of the Executive Team, the Company Secretary is responsible for legal, governance, compliance and governmental relations and is ideally placed to champion engagement internally with reference to the broader policy context of Treaty and self-determination. The Company Secretary will be supported by a RAP Working Group that is intended to have members from all areas of the organisation, including First Nations representation. An interim RAP Working Group has already been established to guide the development of this Reflect RAP document, and when the RAP Working Group is formally confirmed, it will play a central role assisting the senior leaders listed against the actions to deliver on the intent and outcomes of the RAP.



GMCT's values as an organisation are Compassion, Respect, Integrity and Sustainability, and these will be central to our approach in implementing the RAP. Progress against RAP objectives will be reported within our corporate reporting framework alongside other strategic plans such as the Disability Access & Inclusion Plan, Sustainability Strategy and Gender Equality Action Plan. This will include quarterly reporting on progress to the GMCT Board and annual reporting through GMCT's Annual Report. GMCT has already purchased access to the innovative Weavr platform to track and report on progress on our RAP, and has already onboarded the interim RAP Working Group to start reporting on reconciliation activities.

As one of the first organisations in the Victorian deathcare sector to develop a RAP, GMCT also believes it can take a leadership role for the entire cemetery sector with regards to reconciliation and collaborate with other like-minded organisations to ensure consistency in implementing RAP actions. To that end, GMCT has engaged First Nations consultants to conduct a Cultural Intelligence study across Victoria's five Class A Cemetery Trusts, with the goal being to understand where each Trust is at in their reconciliation journey. This Cultural Intelligence study will also include interviews with Traditional Owners and other First Nations stakeholders to understand their current views on the cemetery and deathcare sector.

GMCT will collaborate closely with the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (SMCT), who are also developing a Reflect RAP, to ensure consistency in RAP implementation. As the area covered by both GMCT and SMCT's cemeteries overlaps with both the Bunurong and Wurundjeri Peoples, we will hold joint meetings and engagements wherever possible to ensure that conversations with Traditional Owners and other First Nations stakeholders are not duplicated and are respectful of their valuable time.

Our partnerships/current activities

GMCT is currently at the early stages of developing meaningful relationships with First Nations Peoples. To date, GMCT's main engagement with First Nations stakeholders has been limited to the development of Cultural Heritage Management Plans when developing new masterplans or precinct plans for areas with our cemeteries. There was also a talk organised for the leadership team aimed at improving knowledge of Aboriginal burial practices.

In 2019, our Community Advisory Committee (an advisory group consisting mainly of community members) suggested that GMCT develop a protocol to acknowledge Traditional Owners at formal meetings and events. The adoption of the Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners protocol was marked by a Smoking Ceremony at Fawkner Memorial Park in February 2020, performed by an Elder from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

With the easing of pandemic restrictions and return to office at the end of 2021, GMCT engaged Traditional Owners to perform three more Smoking Ceremonies as a cleansing activity to welcome staff back to offices. These Smoking Ceremonies followed cultural protocols and included representatives from Bunurong Aboriginal Land Council Aboriginal Corporation who have been recognised as the Traditional Owners of some of our sites in western Melbourne.

More recently, the masterplan engagement process for Melbourne's biggest new public cemetery in 100 years has brought GMCT even closer to Traditional Owners and other First Nations stakeholders. The greenfield site sits on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people in the suburb of Harkness in Western Melbourne, and it was recognised early on that the masterplan should recognise the many layers of Country replete with hidden stories and an ongoing and unbroken connection to

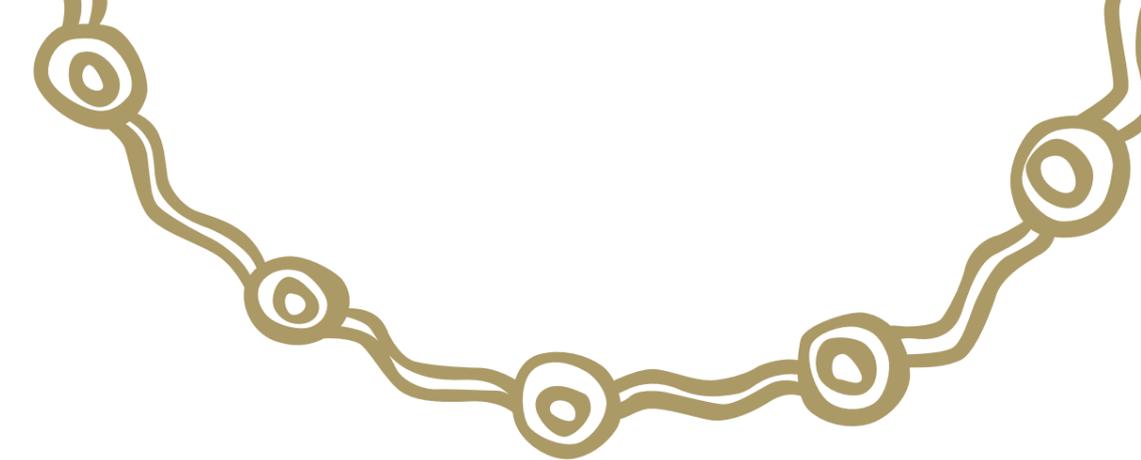
the world's oldest continuous living cultures. As part of the development of the masterplan, GMCT engaged Greenshoot Consulting to deliver a thorough engagement strategy that ensures that the needs and aspirations of the site's Traditional Owners, partners and stakeholders are listened to, understood and championed.

To date, Greenshoot has helped GMCT nurture the beginnings of deeper relationships with Traditional Owners. A cultural mapping exercise was conducted highlighting the cultural context of the greenfield site at Harkness. Then, through targeted meetings with Wurundjeri elders and stakeholders, Greenshoot presented an Insights Report detailing key considerations for GMCT from the domains of narrative, design and activation. Feedback was also sought from the Wurundjeri on early design concepts for the cemetery.

The Wurundjeri Traditional Owners expressed a desire for the project narrative to showcase the principles of Caring for Country and ensure that the design meets best practice standards for environmental sustainability. At the same time, the site should be safe and welcoming for people from all cultures, with acknowledgement that people interred there will be protected and cared for under Wurundjeri belief systems. They highlighted the importance of allowing space to reimagine the experience of death

through a new lens that creates a place for gathering and experiencing grief to celebrate multiculturalism and build connections between different cultures. The space may support learning and connection through the inclusion of stories from a broad range of cultures, whilst giving primacy to Wurundjeri stories in contextualising the site.

GMCT looks forward to continuing our reconciliation journey using the momentum from this project and implementing the RAP objectives in full.



Relationships



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	1.1 Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	Sep 2023	Manager Organisational Development & Inclusion
	1.2 Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Dec 2023	Community Engagement Lead
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	2.1 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024	Manager Community & Communications
	2.2 RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 Jun 2024	Chief Governance Officer
	2.3 Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 Jun 2024	Chief Governance Officer
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	3.1 Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	May 2024	Manager Community & Communications
	3.2 Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	Oct 2023	Manager Organisational Development & Inclusion
	3.3 Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	Oct 2023	Manager Organisational Development & Inclusion
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	4.1 Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	Feb 2024	Customer Insights & Service Design Lead
	4.2 Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	June 2024	Manager Workforce Development

Respect

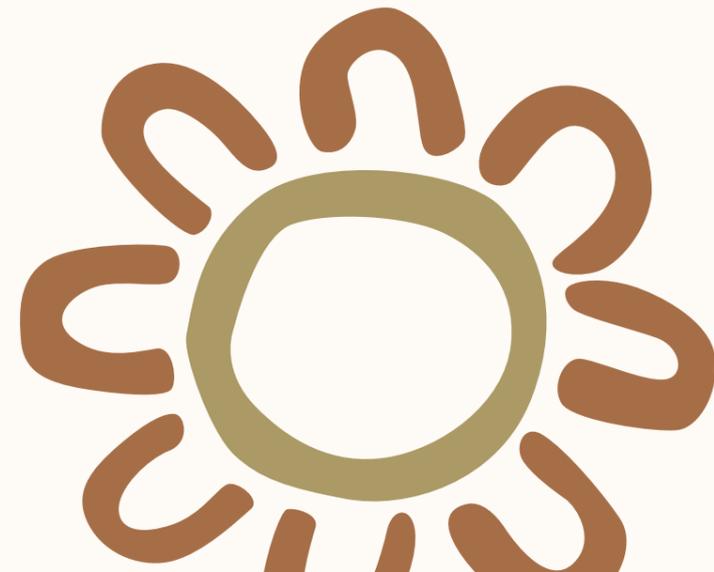


Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	5.1 Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	Dec 2023	Chief Governance Officer
	5.2 Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Mar 2024	Manager Organisational Development & Inclusion
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	6.1 Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	Sep 2023	Community Engagement Lead
	6.2 Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	May 2024	Manager Community & Communications
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	7.1 Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	Jun 2024	Manager Community & Communications
	7.2 Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	Jun 2024	Manager Community & Communications
	7.3 RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in Jul 2024	Chief Governance Officer

Opportunities



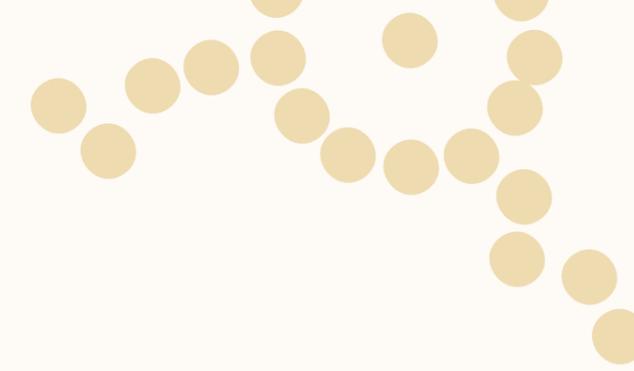
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	8.1 Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	Mar 2024	Chief Governance Officer
	8.2 Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	Dec 2023	Manager Organisational Development & Inclusion
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	9.1 Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	Jun 2024	Chief Governance Officer
	9.2 Investigate Supply Nation membership.	Jun 2024	Manager Workforce Development

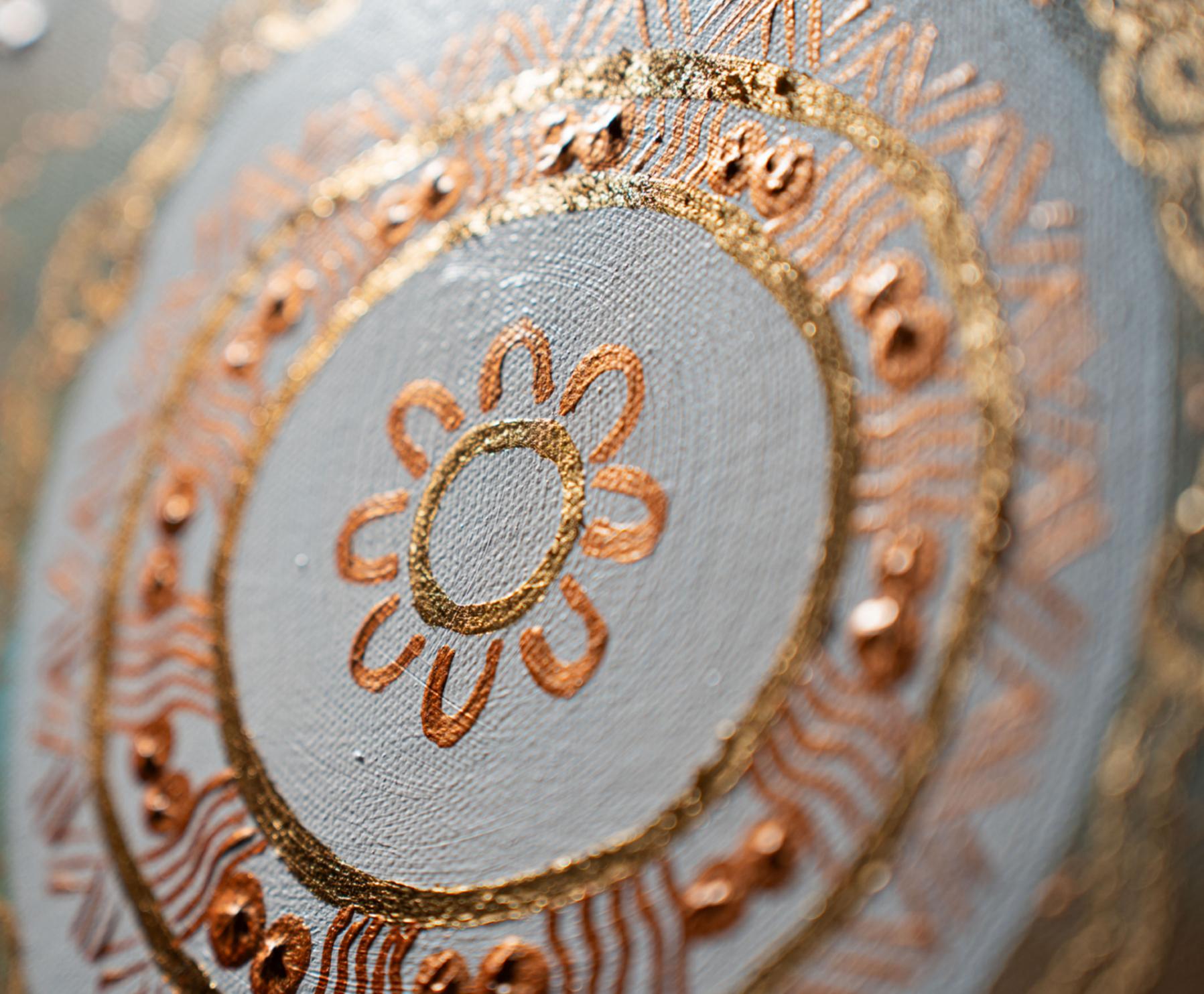


Governance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	10.1 Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	Jul 2023	Chief Governance Officer
	10.2 Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	Sep 2023	Chief Governance Officer
	10.3 Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Sep 2023	Chief Governance Officer
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	11.1 Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Jul 2023	Chief Governance Officer
	11.2 Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Jul 2023	Chief Governance Officer
	11.3 Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	Jul 2023	Chief Governance Officer
	11.4 Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Jul 2023	Corporate Planning & Reporting Lead
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	12.1 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.	June annually	Chief Governance Officer
	12.2 Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 Aug annually	Corporate Planning & Reporting Lead
	12.3 Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 Sep annually	Corporate Planning & Reporting Lead
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	13.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2024	Chief Governance Officer





Details from Simone's beautiful artwork – 'Boordup Durt – Comfort from the Stars'





The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust

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For further information about GMCT's RAP, please contact the Manager Organisational Development & Inclusion or the Chief Governance Officer via the Contact Us section on our website.