



THEBENCHMARKGROUP  
excellence in education

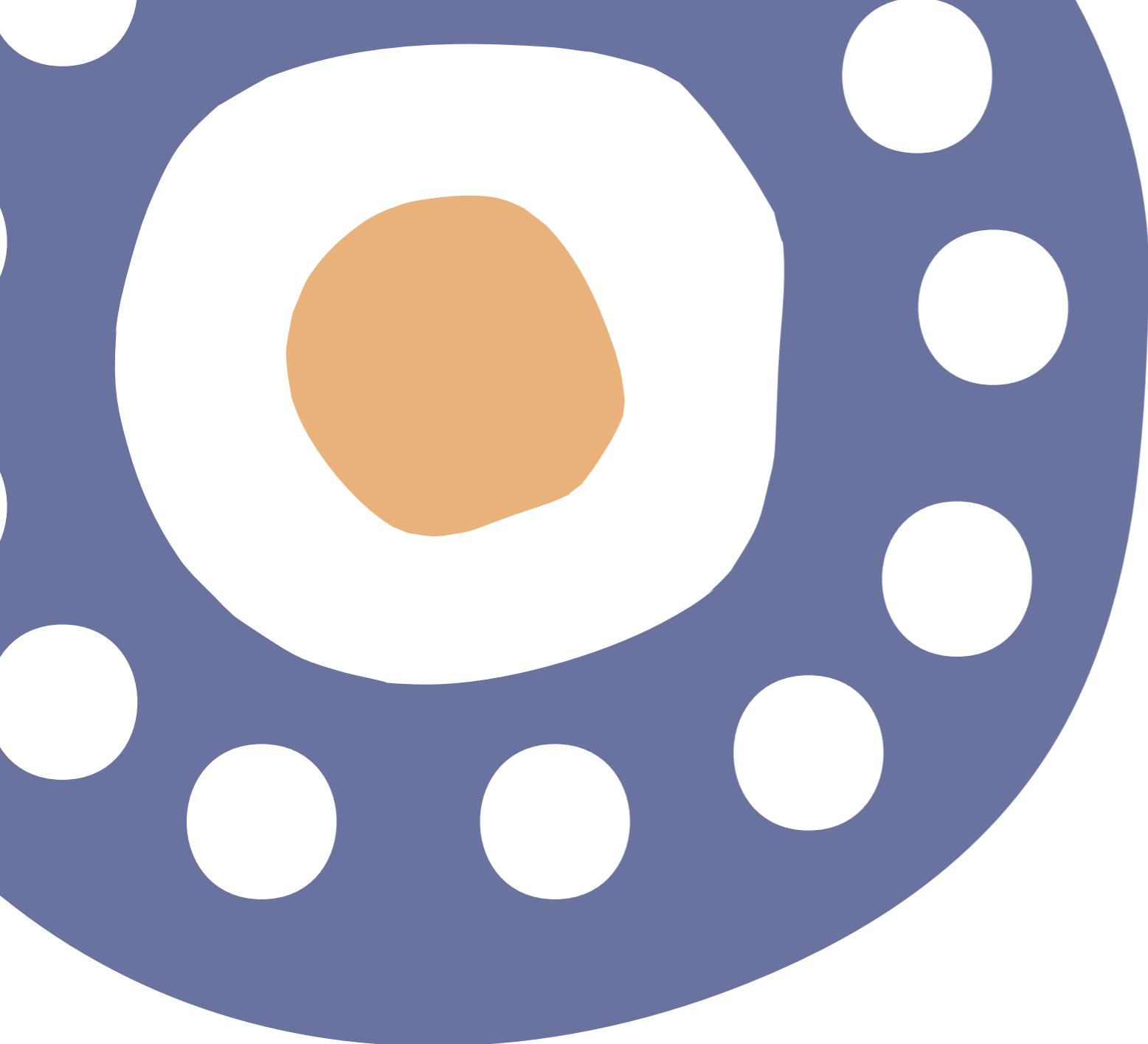
# Reconciliation Action Plan

May 2020-May 2022



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

INNOVATE



## A Message from the CEO

As the CEO and founder of The Benchmark Group, I am privileged to launch our first Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The decision to commence the organisation's journey and my own journey towards a process of reconciliation is one of my proudest accomplishments as CEO.

From within The Benchmark Group, I have been one of many voices driving this process and am hoping to continue to support and influence the growing number of people within our organisation shaping and implementing our Reconciliation Action Plan.

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Original Custodians of Australia and pay our respects whenever we meet on their lands and waters.

We recognise the ongoing impacts of colonisation and subsequent government policies, including the removal of people from their families, their lands and their cultures, that continue to threaten the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

As part of our Reconciliation Action Plan, we will explore and implement a range of actions that work towards achieving our unique vision for reconciliation.

We aspire to achieve authentic change, to be active listeners, story tellers and leaders within our industry and be part of an ongoing conversation with our customers, our stakeholders and our students about the importance of reconciliation and our commitment to this process.

Launching our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan is the first step in an ongoing process for us as individuals and for our organisation and we look forward to the road ahead.

Drew Sutherland  
CEO



## Better Connections, Better Outcomes artwork story

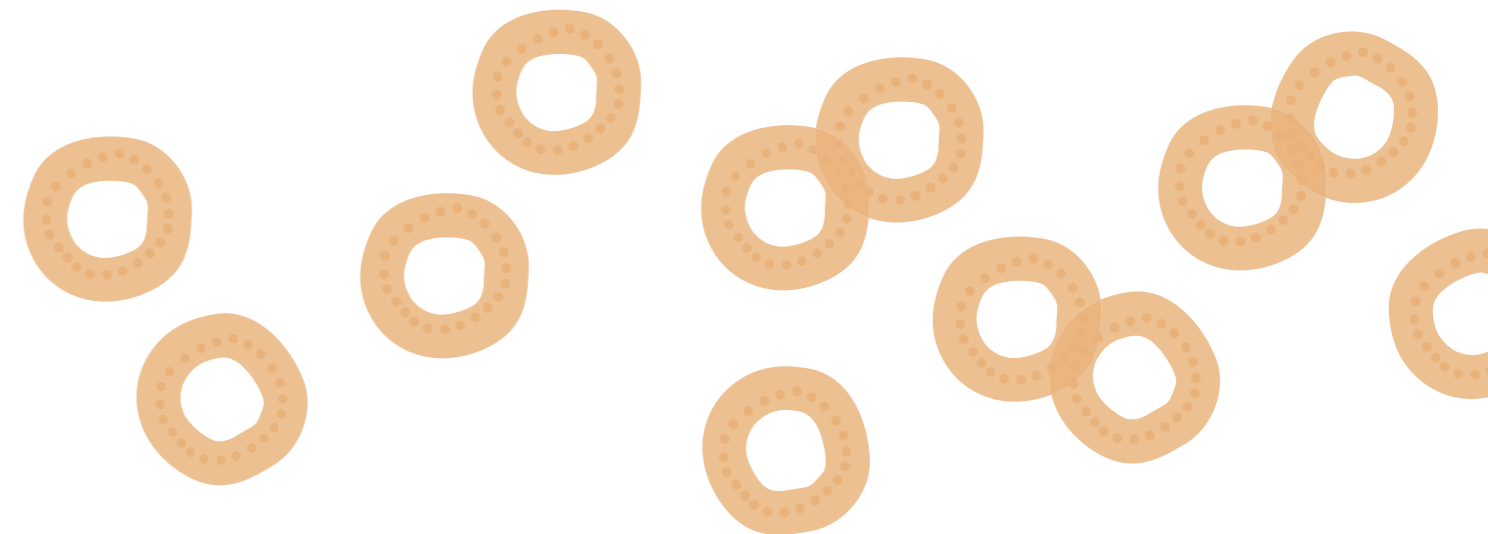
The Benchmark Group's 'Better Connections, Better Outcomes' artwork was developed using Gilimbaa's unique creative framework, the 'Fish Trap', which allows critical and complex cultural, historical and social contexts to be incorporated into a contemporary creative process.

The artwork depicts the people who drive authentic health experiences for communities and build better connections and outcomes that improve the health system for individuals everywhere.

The journey begins with a shift in thinking towards the need for stronger connections, but building the right connections is just the beginning. When all the artwork elements come together, a single, interlocked system is revealed; symbolising the strength and lasting nature of connection.

Through the artwork, we can see how a system of strong connections has advantages for health professionals, patients and the system as a whole, and how it paves the way for a shift towards a more positive, genuine, and supported journey.

The artwork was created by Gilimbaa artist Rachael Sarra, Goreng Goreng in 2018.



## Our vision for reconciliation

Our vision is a future where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and individual and collective rights are recognised by all of Australia. It is to increase awareness across our business, and the wider community of the importance of closing the gap with regard to health outcomes and supporting the socio-economic development of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities.

Reconciliation is central to the driving principles behind The Benchmarque Group's mission. For harmony across Australia to occur, we, as a business and as individuals, must encourage and foster an environment in which Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their fellow Australians, are represented by understanding and mutual respect.

This will ultimately lead to positive change in Australia's culture, where opportunities are available to all.

To achieve this, The Benchmarque Group commits to the following principles:

- To embed Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledges in all research, learning, and engagement activities
- To learn from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations and embed these learnings into everything we do
- To demonstrate an understanding and respect for the traditions and perspectives of the many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait communities across Australia
- To deliver culturally appropriate and engaging course content by building genuine, respectful relationships with all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations, peak bodies and communities.



Nationally accredited skills-based training, delivered nationally - Photography: Gilimbaa, 2019

## Our business

The Benchmarque Group is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO. 21824) delivering a range of clinical skills, courses and programs to meet the needs of health professionals nationally. Courses are delivered both online and face-to-face in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote Australia. We deliver approximately 500 face-to-face workshops to around 6000 health professionals nationally each year. Additionally, we provide online learning via our learning management system and student administration platform, BenchmarqueIQ. Since launching the platform in 2016, we have provided online training to more than 15,000 students.

As an RTO working in the primary health sector, our focus is on the delivery of programs designed to provide students with the opportunity to expand their scope of practice, their skills and careers. We concentrate on skills and knowledge that can be immediately implemented in a vocational context. Skills learnt today can be used tomorrow.



Nationally accredited skills-based training, delivered nationally - Photography: Gilimbaa, 2019

The Benchmarque Group currently employs 15 permanent staff members across three states, and contracts approximately 20 expert trainers nationally. We currently employ one Aboriginal staff member on a permanent basis and engage through contracts with several Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander expert trainers nationally. We have two office locations – a head office located in East Melbourne, Victoria; and a secondary office on the Gold Coast, Queensland.

Over the past several years The Benchmarque Group have been delivering content funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, which has seen increased delivery into Regional, Rural, and Remote communities around Australia, specifically to individuals working within Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health. During this process The Benchmarque Group have worked cooperatively across the primary health industry, with State and Commonwealth agencies, private sector institutions, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations, with the aim of creating positive learning outcomes for students, and positive health outcomes for their clients.

## Our RAP

**The Benchmark Group recognises that close, respectful and collaborative working relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations, peak bodies and communities not only benefit our operations but will help to contribute to better health outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.**

To formalise our commitment to reconciliation, we have formed a RAP Working group to guide our organisation through the process of RAP development and implementation. The Group currently consists of:

- Nicky Blackmore (Marketing and Partnerships Manager)
- Sara Drew (Education Manager)
- Brad Young (Education Project Support)
- John von Dadelszen (Partnerships Manager)

John von Dadelszen (Partnerships Manager) champions our RAP internally. Brad Young (Education Support), a proud Gunai Kurnai man, sits on our RAP working group.

Though we haven't previously formalised our reconciliation journey in a RAP, our organisation has made several informal steps over the past several years towards reconciliation. These steps include regular cultural safety training for our entire administrative team including contracted trainers, and inclusion of an Acknowledgement of Country in our offices, on our website, email signatures, and before course delivery and meetings. In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags adorn our offices and NAIDOC week celebrations are held and promoted. These steps have helped to improve the cultural competency of our staff, and cultural safety of our workplaces. We have also encouraged all staff to develop their own knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures by providing literature within the office and as gifts for all staff, such as Welcome to Country, by Marcia Langton, and A Rightful Place: A Roadmap to Recognition, edited by Shireen Morris.

For several years, we have been delivering content to individuals and organisations working within Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health around Australia such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and Services. To better coordinate the delivery of our courses and to ensure our content is meeting the needs of the sector, we have built meaningful and ongoing relationships with several peak bodies within the space including the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), its state-based affiliates, the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA). In addition to attending regular meetings and other events, we regularly request their collaboration with projects, invite their participation in advisory groups, and take part in their conferences and other activities. We are currently exploring co-design of content for new and current courses in partnership with several of these organisations.

Having previously engaged Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander consultants to review multiple copies of our course materials and content for cultural competency, in February of 2018 we employed Gilimbaa, an Aboriginal owned and directed creative agency based in Brisbane, to assist in the creation of a cultural element for our organisation. Created by Rachael Sarra (Goreng Goreng) this element represents the individual (students, patients, health professionals), the health system, current gaps, and the need for authentic connections. When the elements come together it tells the story of our work - creating better connections that will lead to better outcomes for our students and within healthcare more broadly. This patterning now proudly adorns the course materials and presentations for our five Australian Government funded courses, the glass frosting of our meeting rooms and are scattered throughout our new website, launched in August 2019.

We look forward to continuing our organisation's journey and formalising our commitment to reconciliation in our Innovate RAP.



## Relationships

The Benchmark Group recognises that genuine connections and collaboration fosters better outcomes organisationally, for our students, and for the broader community. Within the context of our work, we acknowledge meaningful ongoing consultation is necessary to best meet the needs of the health workforce and help to produce better outcomes for healthcare consumers.

As we build new and strengthen existing relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations we will better be able to equip health professionals to meet ever-changing health priorities.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes	Meet with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	June 2020	Partnerships Manager
	Develop an Engagement Plan to actively engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations including the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and its affiliates.	June 2020	Partnerships Manager
2. Celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week (NRW) by providing opportunities to build and maintain relationships between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2020 & 2021	Partnerships Manager
	Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June, 2020 & 2021	Partnerships Manager
	Encourage and enable staff to participate in external events to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June, 2020 & 2021	CEO
	Organise an event at our head offices for NRW.	27 May- 3 June, 2020 & 2021	Marketing & Partnerships Manager
	Register the above via Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	May 2020 & 2021	Marketing & Partnerships Manager
	Communicate with all trainers informing them of activities during NRW and equipping them with relevant information.	May 2020 & 2021	Education Manager
	Promote NRW activities actively via monthly newsletter, social media and email signatures	May-June 2020 & 2021	Marketing & Partnerships Manager



## Relationships

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Raise internal and external awareness of our RAP to promote reconciliation across our business and sector	Develop and implement a strategy to communicate our RAP to internal and external stakeholders including internal staff, contracted trainers, clients and students.	May 2020	Marketing & Partnerships Manager
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publically.	May 2020	Marketing & Partnerships Manager
	Promote reconciliation through ongoing active engagement with all stakeholders.	Review May 2020 & 2021	Partnerships Manager
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	Review May 2020 & 2021	Partnerships Manager
	Host our RAP on our website.	June 2020	Marketing & Partnerships Manager
	Collaborate with like-minded organisations working within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and healthcare spaces to develop ways to advance reconciliation.	Review Oct 2020 & 2021	Partnerships Manager
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	Sep 2020	Education Compliance
	Develop, implement and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	Sep 2020	Education Compliance
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	Dec 2020	Partnerships Manager
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	Feb 2021	CEO



## Respect

The fact that Australia is home to the world's oldest continuous civilisations is something that all Australians should be immensely proud of. Survival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples despite adversity should be celebrated.

Respect for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures informs how our business designs and delivers our content nationally. Delivering culturally safe content in a culturally competent manner will equip our students to better meet the needs of their patients and, hopefully, contribute to closing the gap in health outcomes between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	May 2020	CEO
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy.	Jul 2020	Partnerships Manager
	Investigate opportunities to work with local Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander consultants to develop regular cultural safety training.	May 2020	Partnerships Manager
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training strategy for our staff which defines cultural learning needs of employees in all areas of our business and considers various ways cultural learning can be provided (online, face-to-face workshops or cultural immersion).	Sep 2020	Education Manager
	Provide opportunities for all staff to participate in formal and structured cultural safety training at least yearly.	Review May 2020 & 2021	CEO
	6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Review May 2020 & 2021
Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.		Sep 2020	Education Project Support
Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country at significant events, including at the commencement of our annual trainers' conference.		Jun 2020 & 2021	CEO
Include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all internal and external meetings.		Review May 2020 & 2021	CEO



## Respect

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in Jul 2020 & 2021	Marketing & Partnerships Manager
	Provide opportunities for all staff to participate in NAIDOC Week activities.	First week in Jul 2020 & 2021	CEO
	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	Apr 2021 & 2022	Operations Manager
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	First week in Jul 2020 & 2021	Partnerships Manager
	Support an external NAIDOC Week community event.	First week in Jul 2020 & 2021	CEO
	Contact our local NAIDOC Week Committee to discover events in our community.	Apr 2021 & 2022	Partnerships Manager
8. Celebrate and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates of significance	Recognise National Close the Gap Day through our monthly newsletter and via social media.	20 Mar 2021 & 2022	Marketing Coordinator
	Recognise National Sorry Day through our monthly newsletter and via social media.	26 May 2020 & 2021	Marketing Coordinator
	Recognise Mabo Day through our monthly newsletter and via social media.	3 Jun 2020 & 2021	Marketing Coordinator
9. Celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through promoting staff engagement with texts and resources.	Create an internal communication channel to share texts, articles, and resources that explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and celebrate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' successes.	Jul 2020	Marketing & Partnerships Manager
	Establish an office collection of texts for staff to access to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.	Aug 2020	Partnerships Manager



## Opportunities

The Benchmark Group seeks to create new and strengthen existing opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations to become involved at every level of the work we do. Providing employment, professional development and other opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people helps to build workforce capacity and will ultimately help to bridge the gap in employment, economic, and health outcomes between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Collect information on our current Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment opportunities.	Mar 2021	CEO
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	Jun 2021	CEO
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	Jul 2021	Operations Manager
	Submit all permanent vacancies for advertisement in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander media and via peak bodies such as the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA) and Australian Indigenous HealthinfoNet.	Aug 2020	Operations Manager
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	Jul 2021	Education Compliance
	Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce.	Dec 2021	CEO
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants participating in our workplace.	Sep 2020	Operations Manager
	Invite Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisational representation on course development and design panels.	Review Oct 2020 & 2021	Education Manager



