



Canberra  
Symphony  
Orchestra



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

# Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

MAY 2025 – AUGUST 2026







## Canberra Symphony Orchestra CEO statement

The Canberra Symphony Orchestra is uniquely positioned, geographically and culturally. We create and share music on Ngunnawal Country, a significant meeting place for far longer than the short history of Australia's capital city. Today, these lands are home to a diverse population united by our curiosity, openness, sense of community and appreciation for Canberra's natural beauty. This city is also an important centre of policymaking, research and thought leadership. In this context, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra (CSO) strives to offer artistically vibrant experiences that resonate with a broad audience.

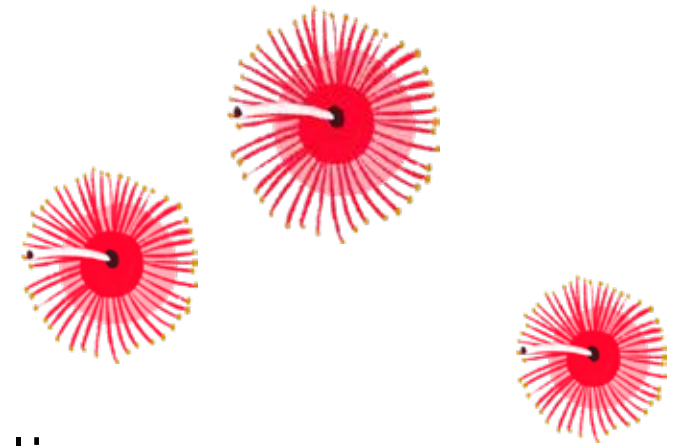
Developed in partnership with Reconciliation Australia, this inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) outlines our journey so far and sets out our commitment to deepening engagement with First Nations peoples. This RAP is an important step in realising our vision and values: to be an orchestra for all Canberrans, and to embrace and pursue creativity, community and collaboration. We recognise our need to listen and learn, and welcome this opportunity to deepen our understanding of what reconciliation looks like within and beyond the living tradition of classical and art music.

Creative practice is a powerful and ancient vehicle for connection, storytelling and healing. The CSO is honoured to make music in this time and place, and we look forward to fostering new relationships and growing in our capacity to support reconciliation in meaningful and long-lasting ways.

**Rachel Thomas**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Canberra Symphony Orchestra







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Reconciliation Australia welcomes the Canberra Symphony Orchestra (CSO) to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.



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The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities.





## Reconciliation Action Australia CEO statement

The Canberra Symphony Orchestra 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 the CSO 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 CSO, 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



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The Canberra  
Symphony Orchestra  
exists to engage  
and enrich broad  
audiences through  
artistically vibrant  
musical experiences.





# Our Orchestra

A professional part-time orchestra, the CSO delivers an annual concert season of orchestral and chamber music experiences. We strive to offer thoughtful, innovative and courageous programs, pairing iconic works of the Western classical canon with compelling Australian compositions. The CSO also commissions a significant volume of new Australian works each year, showcasing the breadth and diversity of contemporary classical and art music in Australia.

The CSO is committed to meaningful community engagement that delivers positive outcomes for the Canberra region in health and wellbeing, education, innovation and social cohesion. Exemplars include the long-running Rediscovering Music program for people with hearing loss, and an expanding program in schools for students with diverse abilities.

The CSO also generates vital pathways for young musicians through the fast-growing Kingsland Pathways Program. This program provides specialised training to musicians aged eight to 19 across a suite of ensembles, encompassing solo, chamber and orchestral performance as well as audition preparation and professional skills.

The CSO is a leader in programming and commissioning Australian music, most notably through the dedicated Australian Series. As the professional orchestra of the nation's capital, the CSO has also underpinned nationally significant productions, including National Opera productions and large-scale commemorative works by The Flowers of Peace.

The CSO currently employs 12 administrative staff (10.5 FTE) and a full-time Concertmaster. The orchestra is a major creative employer for the region, providing professional performance opportunities for a growing pool of Canberra-based musicians as well as a number of interstate players; in 2023, the CSO engaged more than 100 casual musicians. There are currently nine Directors on the CSO Board, and a small community of CSO volunteers. CSO is aware of one musician identifying as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. We are not aware of any administrative staff or Directors who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. The CSO office is located in central Canberra, in close proximity to the Australian National University's School of Music.

# Our Reconciliation Action Plan

As the professional orchestra of the nation's capital, the CSO has a unique opportunity and responsibility to contribute meaningfully towards reconciliation. Our Reflect RAP will provide a framework for listening and learning, informing the growth and development of existing initiatives and illuminating new opportunities within our organisation and across programming, community engagement, and collaboration with other artists and organisations.

Community is central to our organisational culture and ethos. Meaningful engagement with local peoples – the Ngunnawal community, as well as other First Nations peoples – is a key aspiration, as well as deepening relationships with First Nations artists and composers across Australia. In implementing our Reflect RAP, we will strive to embrace and promote inclusivity, openness, trust and respect.

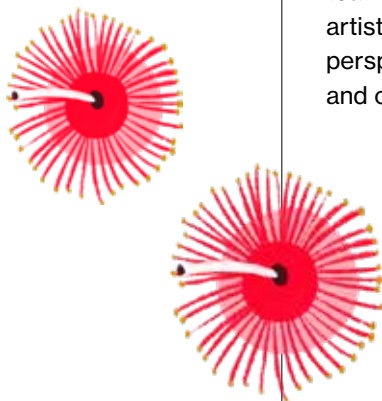
CSO implements RAP milestones through its operational and funding KPIs, championed by the CEO.







# Progress to date



## PROGRAMMING

The CSO has a longstanding commitment to Australian programming and commissioning, particularly through the dedicated Australian Series. In 2021, this series was curated by Yorta Yorta soprano, composer and arts leader Professor Deborah Cheetham Fraillon AO, who has made a significant contribution to CSO programming as a curator, composer and performer since 2019.

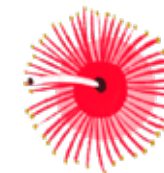
First Nations voices have occupied an important place in the Australian Series over the past five years, including a number of significant commissions. These works have created opportunities for CSO musicians and our administrative team to work closely with First Nations artists and composers, broadening perspectives on classical and art music and creative practice.

### Key works:

- *Emergence*, a substantial commission from Deborah Cheetham Fraillon AO, supported by the National Museum of Australia, which responds to the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- *HISTORY MEMORY POWER*, a commission from Murrawarri/Filipino artist Rhyan Clapham a.k.a. DOBBY which examines Australia's colonial history and its effect on our collective memory and consciousness.
- *Winangaylaylaya*, a commission from Yuwaalaraay storyteller Nardi Simpson which explores the relationship between language, knowledge and being.
- *Concertino for Flute*, a commission from Christopher Sainsbury, inspired in part by a Dharug song about a barru-waluri (dolphin) and suggesting that 'broken traditions can have hope'.

- A guest appearance by Kalkadunga composer and multi-instrumentalist William Barton, performing his improvisatory work *Square Circles Beneath the Red Desert Sand* with the CSO Chamber Ensemble.

First Nations voices also featured in the Australian Miniseries, the digital expression of the Australian Series delivered under COVID-19 restrictions in 2020. For this series, the CSO commissioned short solo works from 15 composers for online premiere, including Cheetham Fraillon, who wrote *Permit Me* for solo cello, and Dr Christopher Sainsbury – a Canberra-based composer of Dharug descent – who wrote *From the Deep* for solo double bass.







## PARTNERSHIPS

The CSO has established several key partnerships with other institutions, which have expanded our networks and created new opportunities for meaningful artistic engagement with First Nations creatives. The CSO has a longstanding relationship with the Australian National University (ANU), formalised in 2021 with the signing of a 10-year Memorandum of Agreement. This relationship has facilitated cross-pollination between the CSO's Australian Series and the Ngarra-Burria First Peoples Composers program developed by ANU Composition professor Dr Sainsbury, who has consulted for the orchestra on First Nations commissioning. The CSO has also contributed musical services for a recording project with Warren H Williams at the ANU's Indigenous-led Yil Lull Recording Studio.

The CSO also has an ongoing partnership with the National Museum of Australia (NMA), home to the Australian Series since 2021. This partnership led to a collaboration between the CSO and Djinama Yilaga, an intergenerational Yuin choir led by Walbunja and Ngarigo artist Cheryl Davison. The ensemble featured in the 2022 concert *Hearing the Land*, including a performance of the work *Marindamu* alongside CSO musicians, arranged by local composer Sally Greenaway.

The CSO works closely with the ACT Government each year to present Symphony in the Park, a free public concert staged as part of Enlighten Festival. In 2023, the orchestra performed with Electric Fields, an Aboriginal Australian electronic music duo made up of vocalist Zaachariaha Fielding and keyboard player/producer Michael Ross, with attendance estimated at 2,500 people.

CSO executive staff will undertake artsACT core cultural training.



## ASPIRATIONS

The CSO aspires to contribute meaningfully to reconciliation at the local and national levels, reflecting our dual roles as the orchestra of the nation's capital and a cherished Canberra institution. We are committed to connecting with the Ngunnawal community, Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and create, as well as other First Nations peoples with a connection to this region. We also have a responsibility to participate in national conversations about reconciliation, within and beyond the classical and art music sphere.

Specific opportunities include learning about Ngunnawal language and how it could be incorporated meaningfully into CSO creative practice, as well as exploring the ways in which our musicians could participate in Acknowledgements of Country. The CSO will continue to commission new music from First Nations composers, and we look forward to deepening relationships with First Nations artists and making new connections.







## RELATIONSHIPS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. 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.	Feb 2026	CEO
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Feb 2026	CEO
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	6–12 May 2025	Marketing & Sales Manager
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May to 3 Jun 2025	RAP Chair
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May to 3 Jun 2025	CEO
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	Aug 2025	CEO
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	Aug 2025	CEO
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	Aug 2026	Director, Artistic Planning and Development
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	Jul 2025	CEO
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	Nov 2025	CEO



## RESPECT

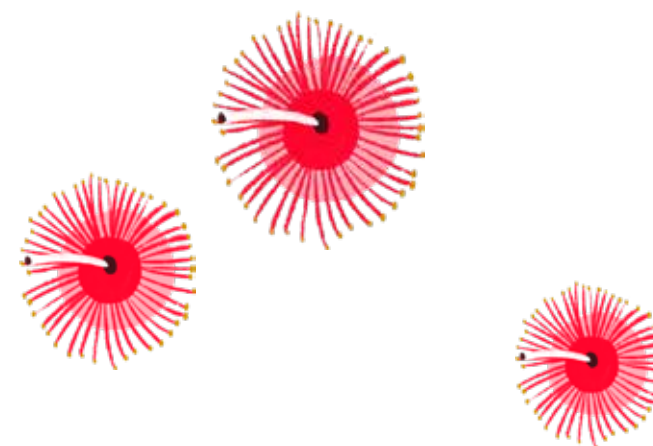
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	July 2025	CEO
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Oct 2025	CEO
	Review Cultural awareness training needs for our senior executive staff	July 2025	CEO
6. 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.	Oct 2025	CEO
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Oct 2025	CEO
	Consult with First Nations stakeholders regarding development of a musical acknowledgement to country	Mar 2026	RAP Chair
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	Jun 2025	RAP Chair
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	Jun 2025	RAP Chair
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in Jul 2025	RAP Chair
	Contribute meaningful artistic offering to NAIDOC week.	Jun 2025	RAP Chair





## OPPORTUNITIES

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. 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.	July 2025	CEO
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	July 2025	RAP Chair
9. 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.	July 2025	CEO
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	July 2025	CEO
10. Develop genuine and meaningful ways to acknowledge country relevant to our organisation.	Investigate resources required to develop a musical acknowledgement to country by consulting with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.	Oct 2025	RAP Chair





## GOVERNANCE

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	May 2025	CEO
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	Jun 2025	RAP Chair
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Aug 2025	CEO
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Appoint a senior leader to champion the RAP internally	Sep 2024	CEO
	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Jun 2025	CEO
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Jun 2025	RAP Chair
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Jun 2025	RAP Chair
13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify primary and secondary details are up to date for RAP correspondence	Jun 2025	CEO
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request unique link to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire	Aug 2025	CEO
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 Sep 2024, 2025	CEO
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website ( <a href="http://www.reconciliation.org.au">www.reconciliation.org.au</a> ) to begin developing our next RAP.	Mar 2026	CEO

### Contact

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# About the artist— Janelle Burger



## IMAGES



Hi, I'm Janelle Burger, a Noongar and Italian illustrator based in Paris, France. My work draws from pop culture, fashion, video games, and food (especially pastries). I've collaborated with Coles, Apple and Canva, and have even made illustrations for the Sydney Harbour Bridge pylons for the New Year's Eve fireworks. When I'm not drawing, I'm cycling around Paris, snapping photos of cats and baguette-toting old men in berets.

Staying connected to my Noongar and Sicilian roots is essential. Even though I live abroad, I feel deeply tied to my cultures and always feel connected to Australia. This connection flows into my art, no matter where I create it.

I work with markers, paint, ink and digital tools, designing everything from patterns to fashion to foodscapes! It took me a while to follow my dream of becoming an artist, but sharing my art online opened doors. It's still surreal seeing my work in the real world after hours of staring at it in my studio!

I'm a huge gamer and my PS5 still gets daily love. Gaming has always been part of my life – from *Dave the Diver* to *Black Myth Wukong*, it fuels my creativity. I love visiting museums to see art up close for inspiration, and street art always catches my eye. Baking is also in my blood – my family has a long history of bakers in Sicily. These days, I'm diving into French pastries, though croissants are still a work in progress!

I'm passionate about raising awareness of Indigenous culture and fighting racism, while also learning more about my own heritage, which was taken from my family.

**Janelle Burger**  
Illustrator

### **First Nations voices occupy a significant place in the CSO's commissioning program:**

Inside cover: Sally Walker and the CSO, conducted by Jessica Cottis, perform the world premiere of the Concertino for Flute by First Nations composer Christopher Sainsbury (Australian Series, March 2025)

Page 2: Rhyann Clapham a.k.a. DOBBY, a Filipino / Murrawarri rapper and multi-instrumentalist performs *HISTORY, MEMORY, POWER*, fusing elements of classical and hip hop during CSO's Australian Series in 2022.

Page 5: Reconciliation Australia CEO Karen Mundine. (Photo: Joseph Mayers)

Pages 6 & 11: In 2024, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra's Australian Series (presented in the National Museum of Australia) celebrated First Nations composers, featuring the works of James Henry and Nardi Simpson.

Page 9 & this page (above): In 2022, the CSO also collaborated with Djinama Yilaga, an intergenerational Yuin choir led by renowned Walbunga / Ngarigo artist Cheryl Davison.

This page: Artist Janelle Burger (Photo: Supplied)

Unless otherwise indicated, photography by Martin Ollman



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