

ACADEMY OF
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN AUSTRALIA

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

Outcomes Report

July 2021-June 2023



Acknowledgement of Country

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (the Academy) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work each day, throughout Australia. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' continuing connection to land, waters, and culture.

We pay respect to the Elders of the Ngunnawal Nation both past and present, on whose ancestral lands our National Office stands and recognise any other peoples and families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

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OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia has a vision for a society in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their continuing knowledge, including their languages, and their ongoing ownership and custody of lands and waters, is more fully recognised, understood and celebrated.

This includes recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution and including them in the processes of all three levels of government, guided by the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We envision a future in which well-resourced and evidence-based policies and programs have eliminated the structural disadvantages faced by so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy every opportunity to pursue and develop their life aspirations in all their diversity.

We envisage a future in which our own and other research and teaching disciplines include a much greater representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and knowledge custodians, with an increasing number of eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars elected to our own Academy.

We acknowledge the truth of the past and recognise that building awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, customs and differences plays a critical role in our path to reconciliation.



*Academy Fellow Professor Marcia Langton AO FASSA FISE
launches the Academy's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan in Canberra in 2021.*

MESSAGE

FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



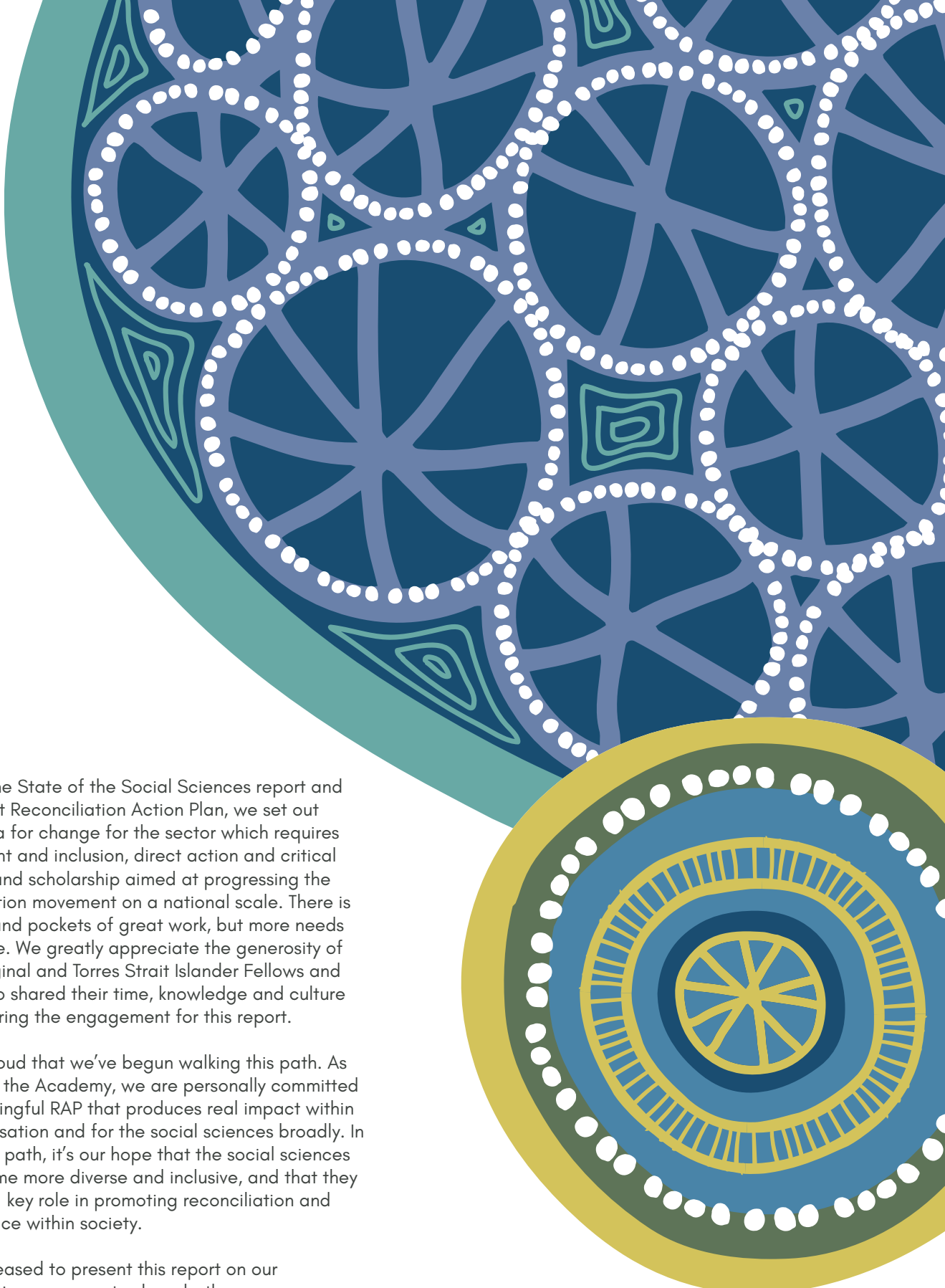
Our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) has been a turning point for our organisation; one that has galvanised our efforts, motivated staff and many of our Fellows, and provided a coherence to new and ongoing activities.



Front of mind as we have embarked on this reconciliation journey has been our collective reflection on where we have come from. Non-Indigenous social scientists have long been interested in learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and understanding their expansive and varied cultures, languages and societies. Social science knowledge and advocacy has helped to motivate and inform vital social policy changes that have advanced our nation in its journey towards reconciliation.

However, we also acknowledge that social science inquiry has not always operated in the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that harm has been done by deficit-focused research and by researchers who failed to understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews and perspectives.

The ripple effects of this history continue to this day. We know that nearly half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students choose social science degrees, yet their completion rates are lower than non-Indigenous students and they remain starkly under-represented in research and leadership roles in our disciplines. This is a missed opportunity for all of us to benefit from the living academy of First Nations peoples in this country.



Through the State of the Social Sciences report and our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, we set out an agenda for change for the sector which requires involvement and inclusion, direct action and critical research and scholarship aimed at progressing the reconciliation movement on a national scale. There is progress and pockets of great work, but more needs to be done. We greatly appreciate the generosity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fellows and others who shared their time, knowledge and culture with us during the engagement for this report.

We are proud that we've begun walking this path. As leaders of the Academy, we are personally committed to a meaningful RAP that produces real impact within our organisation and for the social sciences broadly. In taking this path, it's our hope that the social sciences can become more diverse and inclusive, and that they can play a key role in promoting reconciliation and social justice within society.

We are pleased to present this report on our reconciliation progress, to share both our achievements and learnings from the past two years.



Professor Richard Holden
President

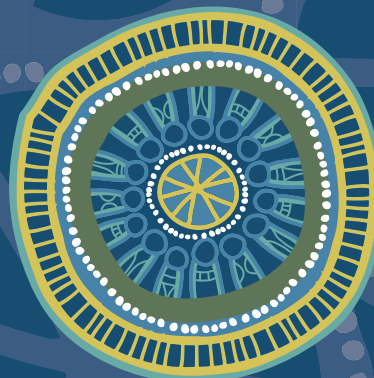


Dr Chris Hatherly
CEO

OUR RECONCILIATION JOURNEY

2020

- Acknowledgement of Country video developed and used for all Academy events during COVID.



2021

- Developed Reflect RAP: 53 actions.

- Reconciliation page launched on Academy website.

- Two Aboriginal members appointed to the RAP Working Group.

- Academy staff cultural awareness survey complete.

- *State of the Social Sciences* Report launched with a focus on First Nations involvement in the social sciences.

- RAP Working Group appointed.

2021 - 2022

Can Australia achieve meaningful reconciliation? and *Democracy and constitutional change*, Academy panel discussions broadcast on ABC Big Ideas.

- Reflect RAP launched in Canberra with Professor Marcia Langton.



2021 - 2023

Cultural capability initiatives delivered including National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

2022

- Professor Chelsea Watego delivers annual Fay Gale lecture *No room at the inn* on rethinking critical race studies.
- Academy facilitates BBC StoryWorks feature *Giving life to new languages in Australia*.
- Commenced scoping of a First Nations grants program and award.

2022 – 2023

Podcast episodes – *I'm not racist, but...* and the *The weird and wonderful world of micronations* released.

2023

- Applications open for Rehnitz Fund Grant Program: \$20,000 grants to support early-career Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social scientists.
- Reflect Outcomes Report published: 52 actions complete and one transferred to our Innovate RAP.
- New First Nations Business section on website.
- *Exploring Australia's complex history with The Hon Dr Barry Jones AC* video released in collaboration with the Australian Academy of Humanities and the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering.
- Adopted RAP Network Voice Referendum education opportunity commitments.
- Our journey continues, Innovate RAP registration complete.
- Academy statement in support of the Voice referendum released.

MEASURING OUR RAP PROGRESS

Our Reflect RAP is focused on steps to set the foundation and prepare our organisation for reconciliation initiatives in successive RAPs.

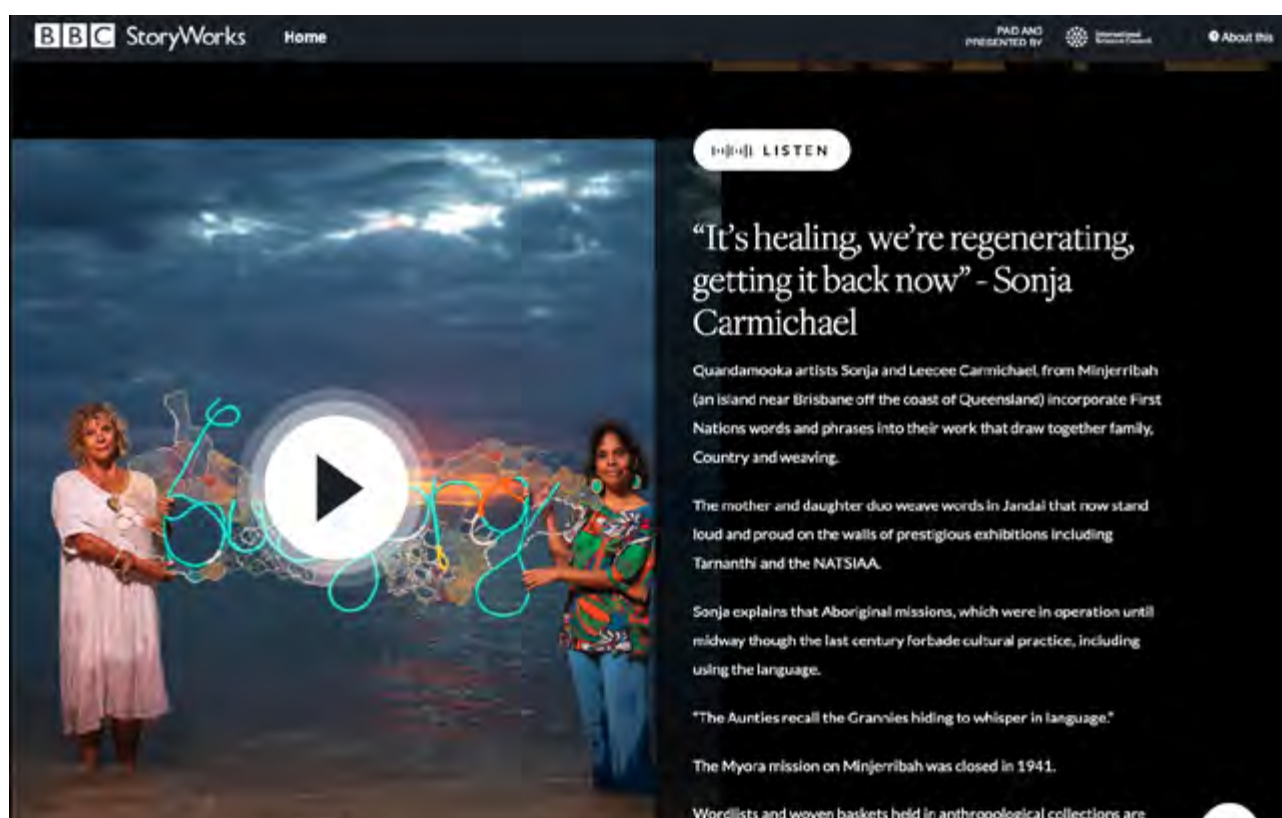
This report outlines our progress against the 53 actions and specific achievements over the last two years. In our first RAP the Academy set out ambitious targets to raise the bar on our impact and performance and we are proud of our achievements since we commenced our reconciliation journey.

We have learnt lessons along the way. A key learning for the Academy has been about capacity, both our own capacity to deliver ambitious targets and the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fellows and researchers who often face overwhelming demands to participate and advise on RAP actions and activities.

We will be drawing from the insights and lessons learnt in developing our Innovate RAP, due for release during 2024. This includes prioritising collaborations with other Learned Academies and like-minded organisations to streamline requests for First Nations academics. The one incomplete action to conduct a review of our HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs will be incorporated into our Innovate RAP.

STORIES OF SUCCESS

Respect.



In 2021, the Academy partnered with the International Science Council and BBC Storyworks to produce a dynamic article 'Giving new life to old languages in Australia'.

How Australia's Indigenous languages are being reawakened: An international partnership

A key focus for the Academy RAP has been to leverage our platform and audience to promote the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fellows and increase visibility of key issues for First Nations people locally and internationally.

Through a collaboration between the Academy, the International Science Council (ISC) and the BBC, we facilitated the development of a dynamic, audio-rich story on the renewal of First Languages in Australia, featuring Academy Fellow and proud Ewaleyai / Gamillaroi woman Professor Larissa Behrendt AO.

This important piece of work was released as part of the UNESCO International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

The story was part of the ISC's Unlocking Science initiative and was chosen from dozens of research-focused stories submitted by Academies and other ISC members around the world.

Audiences were highly engaged with this story, reading the full article and spending the second highest average time on page of all articles in the Unlocking Sciences series. The accompanying video was viewed by over 100,000 people in the first 12 months.

Relationships.

Developing reconciliation content for the classroom

The Academy's program collaboration taking the social sciences into schools was established in May 2022 and launched with two modules:

- Uluru Statement from the Heart, featuring Academy Fellow Professor Megan Davis
- Racism, featuring Academy Fellow Professor Fethi Mansouri (developed in partnership with the Museum of Australian Democracy)

Using our Seriously Social podcast and videos as the basis of our evidence-based content, we have developed our engaging, professionally-produced resources for Australian secondary schools to teach the social sciences.

Each themed module contains:

- A professionally produced podcast episode (20-25 mins)
- An engaging video (2-4 mins)
- A provocation worksheet for students to use—this can be used with either resource.

Opportunities.



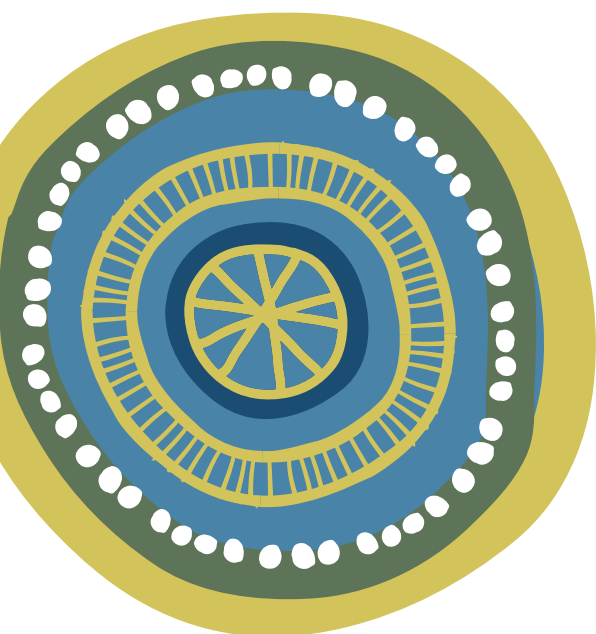
The Hon Dr Anne Aly MP and grant recipient Dr Josephine Bourne with Marie Ahwang and Solanima Mareko.

Supporting the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers

In 2022, the Academy received a donation from the estate of the late Rev Dr Wilhelm Rechnitz to promote and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in the social sciences, and to support knowledge and understanding of the society, languages and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Dr Rechnitz was a German Jew and classics scholar transported from England to Australia during World War II and interned as an 'enemy alien'. He was subsequently a school teacher and principal in Victoria and New South Wales before being ordained as a priest in the Church of England and spending almost two decades from the late 1940s living and working in the Torres Strait Islands; learning the languages and documenting language and culture in collections that are preserved to this day in the State Library of Queensland.

Through the generous bequest, facilitated by former Academy President Professor Leon Mann AO, the Academy will support and encourage the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander





researchers in the social sciences, and celebrate the groundbreaking scholarship that has been undertaken to better understand and advance reconciliation within our fields. Grants of up to \$20,000 will support early- and mid-career First Nations scholars working

in any field of the social sciences, and an annual award will be made to outstanding leaders who have contributed significantly to advancement of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society, culture and language.

Opportunities.



The Academy's State of the Social Sciences report was launched in November 2021.

Building blocks for reconciliation in the social sciences

The State of the Social Sciences Report describes the current trends, challenges and opportunities for Australian social science, to facilitate system-wide planning for a stronger social science ecosystem. One of the central focuses of the report was an examination of the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the ecosystem and exploring strategies for reconciling social science disciplines with the perspectives of First Nations peoples.

Research and face-to-face discussions with First Nations academics confirmed the need to improve the representation and involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at all levels of education, research and leadership in the social sciences. There are a small number of First Nations people in the social sciences and the few in senior and leadership positions are often faced with overwhelming demands. Coupled with a lack of capacity of traditional institutions to effectively incorporate First Nations knowledge and practices this has led to a profound and continuing impact on equity of opportunity and

involvement in the social sciences including deficit-focused research, lack of recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise in non-Indigenous matters and colonial institutions and curricula.

The report aimed to galvanise the sector behind six priorities for action and provide a starting point for future conversations about what it could mean to genuinely and respectfully incorporate First Nations peoples and knowledges in Australian social science.

Governance.



RAP Working Group members Dr Jacob Prehn and Natalie Bryant.

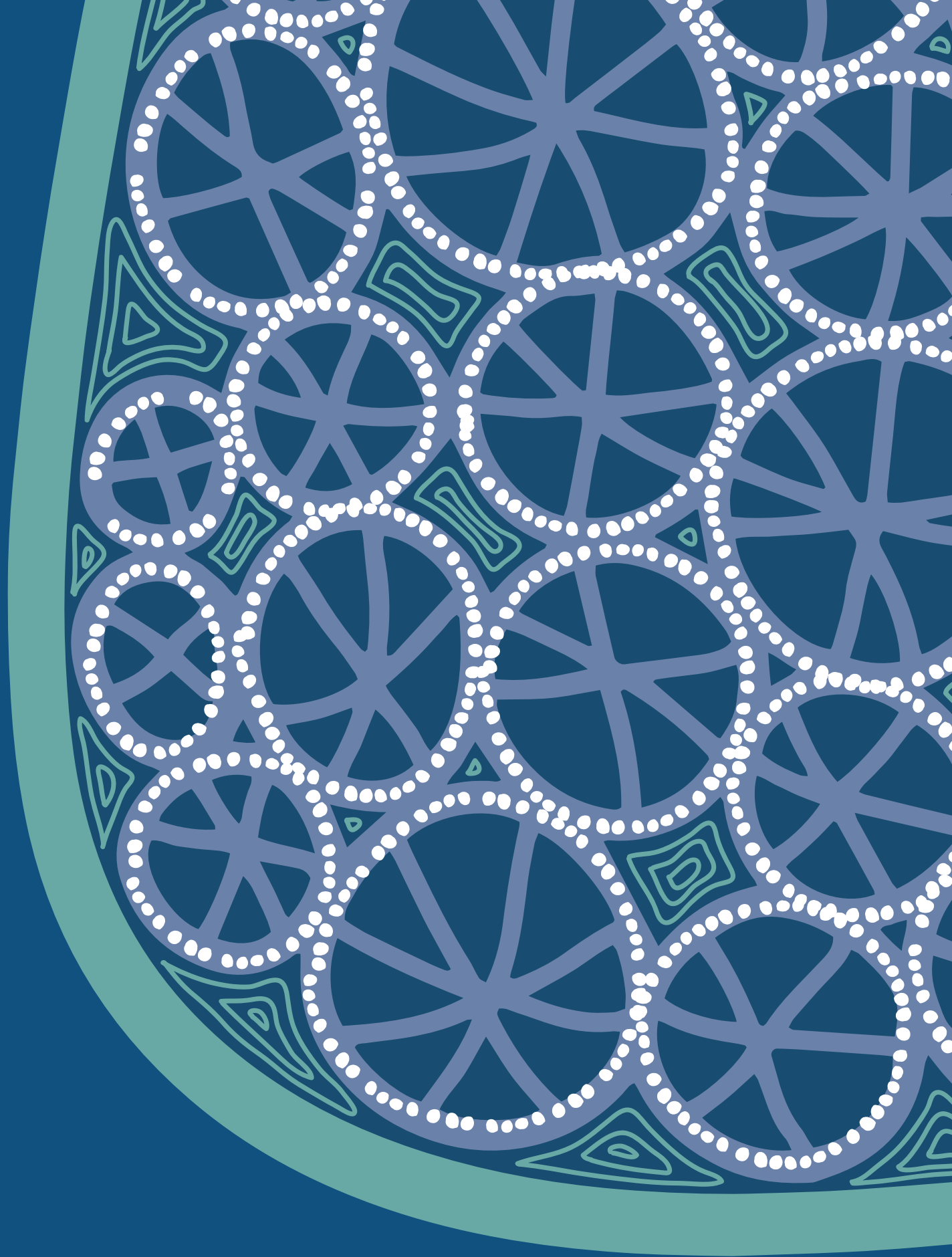
Ensuring decision making is guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives.

A highlight for our first year was the appointment of two Aboriginal members to our RAP Working Group.

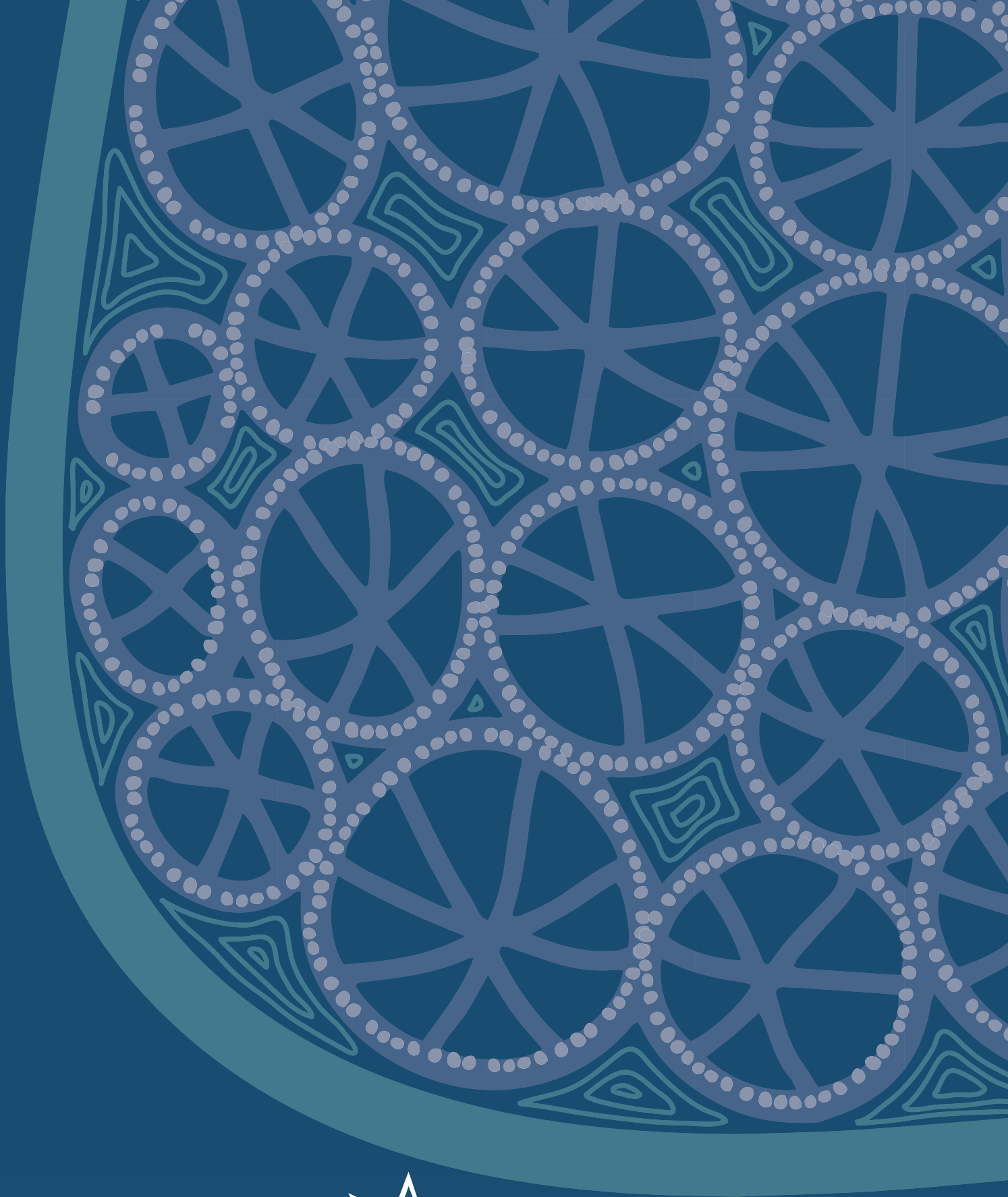
Dr Jacob Prehn (Worimi) is trained as a mixed methods sociologist and social work academic. He currently serves as the Associate Dean Indigenous for the College of Arts, Law and Education (CALE) at the University of Tasmania. Jacob is an executive member of Maiam nayri Wingara, the Australian Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDSov) Collective, and a member of the Global Indigenous Data Alliance (GIDA).

He has multiple funded projects and publications on the topic of IDSov, and co-chaired the recently published Federal Government's Governance of Indigenous Data Framework (2024). Jacob's other research areas include the social and cultural determinants of health and Indigenous children growing up strong. He is also a qualified Social Worker and Aboriginal Health Worker.

Natalie Bryant is an Aboriginal woman from the Yuin Nation and a public servant with more than 10 years experience. Natalie has held a variety of roles across the Commonwealth and NSW public service working predominately in public hospital funding policy and implementation. She has a strong interest in health and leadership, and is passionate about the development and implementation of system reforms that address institutional racism within the Australian state. In February 2022, Natalie commenced her research as a Sir Roland Wilson Pat Turner PhD scholar at the ANUs Centre for Indigenous Policy Research. Her research investigates the ways in which Indigenous perspectives are considered in the development of public policy.



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