Southern Queensland Landscapes

Reconciliation Action Plan



July 2021 – July 2023







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Acknowledgements

Condamine Alliance, Queensland Murray Darling Committee (QMDC) and South West NRM have worked closely with Traditional Custodians for over 15 years. While these entities are no longer active, Southern Queensland NRM (Trading as Southern Queensland Landscapes) builds on the many relationships, initiatives and on-ground outcomes achieved during their years of operation. Southern Queensland (SQ) Landscapes highlights the work by QMDC particularly in developing its Reconciliation Action Plan, one of the first in Queensland for a natural resource management group.

SQ Landscapes recognises the enduring contributions of the First Nations Peoples of southern Queensland. The Auburn Hawkwood, Badjiri, Barunggam, Bidjara, Bigambul, Boonthamurra/Bunthamarra, Budjiti, Djakunde/Jangerie Jangerie, Euahlayi/Yuwaalaraay,Gamilaraay/Gamilaroi, Giabul, Githabul, Gunggari, Kooma, Iman, Jarowair, Kullilli, Kungardutyi Punthamara, Kunja, Mandandanji, Mardigan, Morrawarri/Murrawarri, Palpamudramudra Yandrawandra, Wakka Wakka, Wangkumarra/Wongkumara, Western Bundjalung, and Western Wakka Wakka Nations have taken care of the natural assets of southern Queensland for well over 40,000 years. As a company dedicated to the sustainable use of our natural assets, we hold the knowledge and work of these nations inthe highest regard and respect.

SQ Landscapes would also like to thank the First Peoples Board Advisory Committee for their support and advice during the development of this RAP.

Terminology

As a result of a series of gatherings with First Nations Peoples held in Cunnamulla, Charleville, Roma, St George, Dalby, Toowoomba, Warwick, and Goondiwindi, feedback from First Peoples across southern Queensland indicated a preference not to be referred to as *Indigenous* as it was not felt to recognise their unique cultural identities. We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' preferences for the use of the terms Aboriginal people, First Nations people or First Peoples depending on context. The following terminology has been applied throughout this document:

- First Nations people or Traditional Owners are used in reference to the Custodians of specific Country when speaking of these people in relation to that Country.
- Aboriginal people is used as a collective term where specific Country is not the focus and Torres Strait Islander peoples are known to not be involved.
- First Peoples is used as a collective term inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples similar to the common usage of the term Indigenous.

The term *Landscapes* is used in line with the organisational intent for its inclusion in the SQLandscapes trading name and Strategic Plan. Landscapes is used as an inclusive term thatencapsulates the complex system interactions of people, environment and economy.





Our Vision for Reconciliation

Southern Queensland Natural Resources Management Limited trading as Southern Queensland (SQ) Landscapes acknowledges and embraces traditional First Nations history, custodianship, culture and relationships with mutual respect and understanding and strives to deliver the promise of reconciliation for our region's future.

Our vision for reconciliation is to have First Peoples cultures and knowledge and western cultures and knowledge weaved together to ensure flourishing landscapes in southern Queensland.

Our Region



Figure 1: Southern Queensland Landscapes Region

Our region (illustrated in Figure 1) includes the local government areas of Bulloo, Paroo, Quilpie, Murweh, Goondiwindi and Balonne Shire Councils, Maranoa, Western Downs, Southern Downs, and Toowoomba Regional Councils. The region covers 314,384 km² and contains the Queensland Murray-Darling and Bulloo catchments. The country is comprised of rich deep volcanic soils in the east (Darling Downs) through to the iconic red soil mulga country in the west.

The main land uses include irrigated and dryland cropping, grazing and viticulture around the Stanthorpe area. The region is also home to over 236,000 people.





Our Business

SQ Landscapes is a small start-up not for profit company formed by three former natural resource management groups in southern Queensland: Condamine Alliance, QMDC Inc and South West NRM. The company has 20 full time, 9 part time and 4 casual people with two identifying as Aboriginal. The company has offices in Toowoomba, Roma and Charleville and a presence in Goondiwindi.

It is dedicated to ensuring the region's natural assets are sustainably managed through balancing the impacts of people and practice on place. Our approach involves respecting and including western scientific and First Peoples traditional knowledge and assessing the planning and management of our natural resources at a whole-of-catchment level.

The company works with the Australian, Queensland and local governments, corporate and industry investors and others to deliver on-ground projects, landscape level improvements and practice change. SQ Landscapes works with landholders, academia and First Nations peoples to ensure the best knowledge and understanding of landscapes in the region is available. The organisation prides itself on being an independent, evidence-based entity assisting the region to be productive and sustainable while taking care of nature and biodiversity.

SQ Landscapes is committed to the seven "Pearls of Wisdom for working in partnership with Indigenous people, research institutes, conservation groups and restoration practitioners" as illustrated in Figure 2. Our research indicates this framework to be one of the best to contextualise the relationship SQ Landscapes wishes to pursue to achieve its vision. These principles guide our relationships with First Nations Peoples and our project teams and Board members strive to abide by them. Given the framework is designed for ecological restoration and management which is the main work to deliver flourishing landscapes, the First Peoples Board Committee felt it was appropriate guidance.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Recent research indicates the Australian continent may have been occupied by human beings for up to 120,000 years. Strong evidence supports human occupation for up to 65,000 years and in southern Queensland, evidence shows Aboriginal occupation for at least 42,000 years. Given the length of occupation by Traditional Custodians, the many and varied climatic conditions, the length and breadth of the evidence of occupation, First Nations Peoples have sustainably and successfully cared for our country for more than 1680 generations compared to no more than seven generations of European occupation.

SQ Landscapes assumes that 1680 generations of knowledge and existence in harmony with our landscapes demonstrates clearly why the company must take strong and clear steps toward reconciling with our First Peoples. In the seven generations since European thinking and practice has dominated our landscapes, the measurable condition and trend of most of our country's natural assets has declined substantially. The company believes that to ensure our country is put back onto a sustainable footing, we must listen to and stand beside our First Peoples to learn together to again manage productive and sustainable landscapes.

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¹ McLeod, Ian & Gillies, Chris & Creighton, Colin & Schmider, Joann. (2018). Seven pearls of wisdom:Advice from Traditional Owners to improve engagement of local Indigenous people in shellfish ecosystem restoration. *Ecological Management & Restoration*. 19: 98-101. 10.1111/emr.12318.





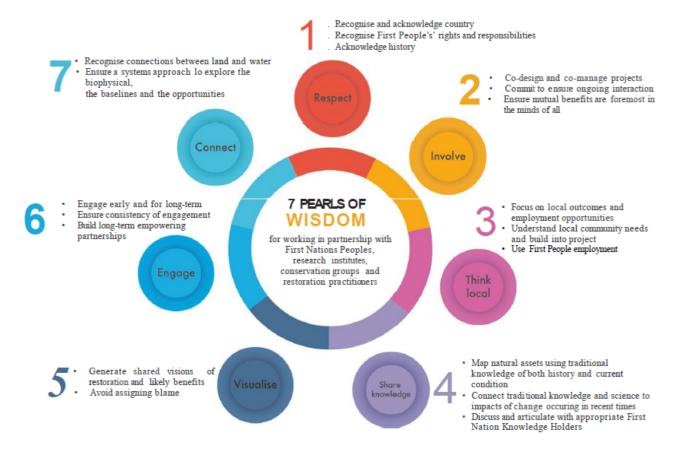


Figure 2: The Seven Pearls of Wisdom¹

SQ Landscapes is actively striving to listen to and walk with the First Peoples and broader community of southern Queensland towards a better future. SQ Landscapes is taking several steps to work more closely with our Traditional Custodians. The first step has been to establish a formal Board Advisory Committee and the second step will be to work with the 28 First Nations individually, and with official structures such as Queensland South Native Title Services and the Northern Basin Aboriginal Network to agree on how best to help traditional knowledge and science to better inform landholder practice and production.

The company recognises that there was a thriving agricultural practice prior to European occupation. Learning about and understanding this practice and ensuring Traditional Custodians benefit from reestablishing agricultural practices that served our country for over 1680 generations are long-term aims.

The role of the First Peoples Board Committee is to:

- 1. Provide strategic advice to the board about SQ Landscapes' relationships with First Nations Peoples.
- Provide strategic advice to the board about SQ Landscapes' planning as it relates to First Nations in southern Queensland including any reconciliation actions and deliverables, NAIDOC Week activities and the like.
- Provide guidance on how best to weave First Nations cultures and approaches with western culture and approaches in a mutually respectful manner for better community and landscape outcomes.





- 4. Provide advice and support to the CEO in operationalising strategic initiatives. The committee also acts as an optional referral point for the CEO in developing programs that advance the interests of First Peoples as they relate to SQ Landscapes' business and governance.
- 5. Provide advice to the Board on delivery of its Australian Government commitments to ensure at least 4% of the Services Agreement revenue is spent on First Nations procurement or salaries in the non-remote areas and up to 20% in remote areas.

The people of southern Queensland region are by nature very conservative and many do not recognise the legacy First Nations Peoples have provided our country. SQ Landscapes understands the enormous task ahead if it is to truly reconcile with First Peoples and welcomes the challenge.

Through our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), we will begin to explore how we can strengthen internal processes and build the cultural competency of all staff. A workinggroup comprised of the CEO, general managers of the organisation, and the First Peoples Committee of the Board, have jointly developed this RAP and will oversee its progress and provide updates to the Board of Directors. Annual reviews of the Plan and its progress will assist in advancing towards innovative reconciliation and ensuring adequate resourcing for effective implementation. The RAP is driven internally by our Chief Executive Officer (CEO).





Relationships

The three former regional natural resource management groups have many years of working with First Nations. QMDC for example, had a Murri Ranger Program and developed an approved Reconciliation Action Plan. SQ Landscapes builds on these former relationships and networks to better identify, understand and connect with First Nations, communities and organisations on our reconciliation journey.

Respect

The first step in the 7 Pearls of Wisdom is all about respect. SQ Landscapes is committed to delivering its promise of respecting the legacy and contribution of First Nations Peoples. The need to reflect the doctrine of *Terra Nullius* created many issues for First Peoples, many of which persist. Many Elders have informed the company that one of the biggest steps forward in reconciliation is to allow Traditional Custodians access to country again. We respect and honour the culture, knowledge and custodianship of the First Peoples of our region.

Opportunities

Our company's two biggest investors have a strong desire to ensure First Peoples have access to opportunities as part of the outcomes they are purchasing. Much of the company's project work can be organised to gain more opportunities for First Peoples through direct involvement, partnerships, knowledge sharing and business development. Given that much of our land is in a degraded state, Traditional Custodians have a major role to play in ensuring our country is on a sustainable path again.

The challenge for our company lies around the fact that it is a strongly technically based entity with undergraduate qualifications required for much of its work, while the current education system struggles to attract and assist First Peoples to join the science, technology and/or mathematical (STEM) professions. We will work with relevant people and entities to find ways of including First Peoples in the company's work.

Governance and Reporting

SQ Landscapes is committed to ensuring strong governance in all aspects of its work. Thiscommitment is demonstrated in many ways including constituting a First Peoples Board Committee (Board Committee). The Board Committee is comprised of eight respected Aboriginal people (four men and four women) from across our region plus two Board Directors. As the company develops its business, it will increasingly involve the various First Nation Peoples' networks and community. It will work with the Board Committee and community networks to measure the efficacy and progress of the implementation of the RAP.

The Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group will advise the Board and the CEO of the necessary action and performance needs of the RAP to oversee delivery, monitor implementation progress and ensure the necessary reporting is undertaken with Reconciliation Australia.





Actions to Implement Our RAP

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Relationships

SQ Landscapes has a strong desire to work with the people in southern Queensland to ensure healthy landscapes with a focus on bringing together nature and people, recognising that we live in a cultural landscape in which people have lived and died and imbued with their spirit—both First Nations Peoples and settler societies. This necessitates strong, robust and mutually respectful relationships.

Understanding the organisation's contributions to the environmental, economic and social outcomes for First Nations Peoples will assist SQ Landscapes to better work with Traditional Custodians for a sustainable future. We will do this by striving to eliminate systemic barriers to fullparticipation for First Peoples in our shared future. Our mutual love of the land is the basis for a strong relationship while we acknowledge and address those barriers that hinder us.

Focus area: SQ Landscapes Strategic Plan Goal 1: Communities, industries, governments, academia, and First Nations Peoples are connected and working together to improve southern Queensland's landscapes.

Action		Deliverable	Timeline Responsi	
1.	mutually beneficial relationships with First	Develop memoranda of understand with five First Nations and hold discussion with 23 First Nations.	July 2022	Chief Executive
	Nations Peoples and organisations.	Update and implement an engagement plan (First Peoples Participate Plan) to work with First Nations Peoples stakeholders and organisations.	July 2021	GM Govt Delivery
2.	through celebrating National Reconciliation	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2022, 2023	GM Services
	Week (NRW).	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	May 2022, 2023	Company Secretary
		Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May 2022, 2023	Chief Executive
		Organise at least one NRW event each year.	May 2022, 2023	GM Services
		Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	May 2022, 2023	GM Services
3.	Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Develop an overall reconciliation induction process and induct company people in the RAP content and their roles in its delivery.	September 2021	GM Services
		Publish the RAP on the company website and ensure members and others are linked.	July 2021	GM Services
		Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	July 2021	GM Services





	Collaborate with other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation.	February 2022	Chief Executive
Promote positive race relations through antidiscrimination strategies.	 Conduct a review of policies and procedures to identify existing anti- discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	June 2022	Chief Executive
	Develop, implement and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	December 2021	GM Services
	Engage with First Peoples to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	July 2021	GM Services
	Ensure the Board and people in the company understand the effects of racism	May 2023	Chief Executive

Respect

A minimum of 1680 generations of knowledge in landscape ecology has been passed down across all areas of southern Queensland. This knowledge is held by knowledge holders within First Nations. SQ Landscapes understands this knowledge is only shared when the emerging knowledge holder demonstrates appropriate respect for their Elder's knowledge and position. If SQ Landscapes is to effectively support the region to look after country properly, demonstrating respect for First Nations Peoples and their knowledge is critical.

The company will continue to build its understanding of the concepts around institutional and personal racism, formal legal implication of Native Title and Cultural Heritage, cultural Lore and practice and First Peoples understanding of country. As our company exists to get "Flourishing Landscapes" in southern Queensland, we must develop our understanding of the sustainable approaches First Nation Peoples use/d to take care of people and country practiced for over 65,000 years.

In demonstrating this respect, ensuring the protection of First Nations Peoples' intellectual property rights, as well as assisting them to gain commercial advantage, is important. SQ Landscapes will learn with First Nations Peoples how best to achieve these outcomes to improve health, wellbeing and opportunities.

Focus area: Aligned with Strategic Plan Goals 1: Communities, industries, governments, academia and First Nations Peoples are connected and working together to improve southern Queensland landscapes and 5: Southern Queensland Landscapes is a leader in natural systems knowledge, connections, actions and on-ground outcomes.

	Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5.	understanding, value and recognition of First Nations Peoples	Identify and work with traditional knowledge holders as well as formal Native Title and Cultural Heritage prescribed bodies for all project work.	May 2023	Chief Executive
	cultures, histories, knowledge and rights	Implement a cultural understanding program with the Board and company people.	February 2023	2023 GMs
		Continue the lecture series around Native Title and other legal requirements to better inform outcomes on Country.	February 2023	
		Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	December 2021	GM Services





ECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN	Reconciliation Action Plan July 2021 to	July 2023	LANDSC
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	In consultation with First Nations Peoples, develop, implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our staff.	December 2021	GM Services
	Invite First People to run awareness sessions across all offices and develop and distribute cultural awareness factsheets to all people in the company and others as requested.	December 2021	GM Services
	Continue to place culturally appropriate artwork, messaging, plaques and nomenclature around the company's offices to remind people of our aspirations for reconciliation.	March 2022	Chief Executive
	Investigate options to measure Cultural Heritage and First Peoples' involvement in natural resource management.	July 2022	GMs
	Advocate for better understanding of Native Title and First Nations land and sea management including the social, cultural and spiritual aspects.	July 2023	GM Govt delivery
	Ensure the company's website content is culturally appropriate and continue the blog series on First People to improve understanding and relationships between the company and First Peoples.	May 2022	GM Services
6. Demonstrate respec		May 2023	Chief Executive

6.	Demonstrate respect to
	First Nations Peoples
	by observing cultural
	protocols.

- Review and communicate the company's cultural protocols, including protocols for Welcome to and/or Acknowledgement of Country which ensures the local First Nation provides a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events and at the commencement of important meetings.
- Identify and use appropriate traditional language and nomenclature wherever possible and display an Acknowledgement of Country sign in each office.
- Ensure all project design and on Country work by the company respects cultural protocols, cultural heritage and involves the relevant First Nation regardless of delivery agency.
- Continue to ensure company's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.

7. Build respect forFirst Nations Peoples

 Work with interested First Nations to host a NAIDOC Week event.
 June 2022, 2023
 Chief Executive 2023

May 2023

May 2023

May 2022

Chief Executive

GM Services

GM Govt Delivery





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cultures and histories including by celebrating NAIDOC Week.

•	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events through our company networks.	July 2022, 2023	Chief Executive
	RAP Working Group and relevant company people participate in an external NAIDOC Week event	July 2021, 2022	GMs

Opportunities

Southern Queensland is full of opportunities for First Nations Peoples given the many special places in the region. Reintroducing Aboriginal agriculture and expanding the tourism market are some of many such opportunities for applying valuable Traditional Knowledge and skills. SQ Landscapes is committed to working with First Nations Peoples to assist landholders improve landscape management, to share knowledge and to promote access to country.

SQ Landscapes will learn with First Nations Peoples to analyse and develop value chains and business opportunities that respect culture and sacred traditions and assist in weaving First Nations Peoples' culture and traditions with European enterprise. This knowledge will also be used to assist landholders to ensure land use practices are sustainable and in addressing the longer-term issues around the region's changing climate and growing conditions.

Focus area: Aligns with Strategic Plan Goals 2: Land managers and their networks better understand their landscapes, value chains, dependencies, opportunities and alternatives to facilitate a productive, balanced, ethical and sustainable future for southern Queensland; and 4: Southern Queensland townships, communities and industries are vibrant, resilient, valued and leading innovation in agricultural and environmental outcomes.

	Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8.	Improve employment outcomes by increasing First Nations	Appoint a First Nations person with the Constitutionally required skills and background to the Board.	May 2023	Chair
	Peoples recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Develop an aspirations document with all First Nations in southern Queensland as per the First Peoples Board Committee request.	May 2023	Chair Chief Executive Chief Executive
		Build understanding of current First Nations employees to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	July 2021	
		Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to ensure there are no barriers to First People employees and future applicants participating in our workplace, including opportunities to advertise in First Peoples' media	May 2022	GM Services
		Involve First Peoples in developing a recruitment and professional development program.	December 2021	GM Services
		Investigate scholarships for First Nations youth to undertake appropriate Country management courses.	May 2022	GM Services





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INOVALE	Investigate training opportunities for First Peoples in data and knowledge capture and management, and towards Cultural consultancy (e.g., burning and water management)	May 2022	Chief Executive
	Increase the percentage of First Nations Peoples staff employed in our workforce.	May 2023	GMs
	 Identify opportunities and strategies to encourage First Peoples to participate in STEM professions. 	May 2023	Chief Executive
9. Increase First Nations Peoples supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop and implement First Nations Peoples procurement strategy and procedural manual embracing the Australian Government's 2015 Procurement Policy and the Queensland Government's Indigenous Procurement Policy.	May 2022	GMs
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	July 2021	GM Services
	Promote landholder awareness and connections with First Nations businesses and facilitate access to Country where no Native Title or other mechanisms exist for practicing culture on Country.	May 2022	GMs
	Review and update existing procurement practices to remove barriers and develop commercial relationships for procuring goods and services from First Nations Peoples businesses.	May 2022	GM Services
	Identify non-natural resource management and First People advancement funding opportunities to assist First Nations Peoples with capacity building and business involvement.	May 2022	GM Services
	Assist First Nation partners (for example, Southwest Indigenous Corporation, QMDCL Rangers, Bunya Peoples Aboriginal Rangers, and Githabul Rangers) to enter new markets for their work and where contractually possible, build them into project delivery.	May 2023	Chief Executive
Govern	ance and Reporting		
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain	Launch the SQ Landscapes RAP.	July 2021	Board
an effective RAP Working group (RWG)	Board to meet with the RWG twice per vear.	May 2023	Company Secretary

year.

Chief Executive.

The RWG is comprised of at least eight

First People representatives appointed by the Board plus two Board Directors and the

to drive governance of

the RAP.

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Secretary

Company

Secretary

May 2023





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	Meet at least four times per year as per Board meeting requirements and drive and monitor RAP implementation.	December 2021, 2022,	Company Secretary
11. Provide appropriate support for effective	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2021	Chief Executive
implementation of RAP commitments.	Engage the leadership team and people in the company in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2021	Chief Executive
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	December 2021	GM Services Chief Executive GM Services
	Ensure the RAP is a standard agenda item on Leadership Team meetings and appoint a RAP implementation coordinator.	July 2021	Chief Executive
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2021, 2022	GM Services
achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	July 2021,2022 October 2021, 2022, January 2022, 2023, April 2022, 2023	GM Services
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings annually.	December 2021, 2022	GM Services
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	May 2022	GM Services
	Ensure the processes for updating the Southern Queensland Natural Resource Management Plan, Strategic Plan and Business Plan, account for the RAP and its intentions for reconciliation.	May 2023	GM Services
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's <u>website</u> to begin developing our next RAP based on lessons, community feedback and achievements.	December 2022	GM Services

Contact Details

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