



# Reconciliation Action Plan

2011–2012

Freehills

# Our vision for reconciliation



**Gavin Bell** (CEO, Freehills), **Waverley Stanley** (CEO, Yalari) and **Annette Bain** (Executive Director, Freehills Foundation)

Our vision for reconciliation is to create a culture of friendship between Freehills and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities. Freehills is a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture are welcome and respected.

This vision reflects our values as a firm:

- **Fulfilment:** We value relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations and the opportunity to work together in an environment of trust and mutual respect.
- **Teamwork:** We work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations with a shared vision to achieve important social and economic goals.
- **Excellence:** We encourage our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and friends to strive for excellence as they work towards their goals and we offer our skills and support to help along the way.
- **Commerciality:** We are willing to listen and learn in order to achieve the best outcomes for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and their businesses.

**Gavin Bell**  
CEO, Freehills



## Our Business



Freehills is an Australian based international law firm. We back up our commitment to providing innovative, commercial legal advice to clients around the world, with the resources and expertise of around 1000 lawyers, including more than 200 partners across offices in Australia and South-East Asia.

At Freehills we believe that all members of society should have equal access to justice and opportunity.

What we mean by access to justice is that everyone in our society should be able to access legal advice and representation to protect their rights and maximise their opportunities.

What we mean by access to opportunity is that everyone in our society should be able to access education and employment pathways and enjoy a sense of social inclusion and support.

We are committed to using the firm's expertise, resources and leadership to achieve these goals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

In NAIDOC Week 2010 Freehills made a Statement of Commitment to launch our RAP in 2011.

Gavin Bell, CEO chaired our RAP steering committee. We also had the benefit of the knowledge and expertise of Natalie Walker, CEO of the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council. Annette Bain, Executive Director, Freehills Foundation and Brooke Massender, Senior Associate, Freehills Foundation were the other two members of the steering committee. Annette and Brooke share responsibility for the development of the RAP at an operational level.

The content of the Freehills RAP has been shaped by our existing experience and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations as well as suggestions made at RAP forums to which all partners and staff were invited. Naturally we also sought and gratefully received guidance from our friends and colleagues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



**Brooke Massender** (Senior Associate, Freehills Foundation), **Natalie Walker** (CEO, AIMSC) and **Annette Bain** (Executive Director, Freehills Foundation)



# Reconciliation Action Plan

## Our approach

We approach reconciliation with an open mind and a positive vision for the future. We recognise the need to learn and be flexible and adaptable as we evolve along our reconciliation journey.

The Freehills Reconciliation Action Plan aims to encapsulate our whole of business approach to practical reconciliation – from the provision of legal services and business skills, developing educational and employment opportunities, building inclusive procurement practices and celebrating our shared history and culture.

In all of our RAP activities we will consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities and support them to achieve their aims and objectives.

Our RAP sets out Freehills core commitments in the following areas:

- Our relationships;
- Respect and cultural awareness;
- Access to opportunities; and
- Access to justice and legal services.

## Our relationships

Strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities are at the heart of every single one of the commitments and activities enshrined in this RAP.

Maintaining positive relationships with clients and colleagues is central to everything we do at Freehills. We work collaboratively with clients to ensure they achieve their legal and commercial goals. We aim to secure the best possible legal and commercial outcomes for all Freehills clients including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.

In our RAP activities we will seek guidance by consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that we have a strong existing relationship with such as: the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council, Clontarf Aboriginal College, the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, Jawun (Indigenous Corporate Partnerships) and Yalari. Through this process we hope to strengthen these relationships and maximise the impact of our RAP activities.

We also look forward to discovering and building new relationships and fostering a sense of inclusion through increased interaction between Freehills people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Building strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enables us to benefit from new perspectives and to better understand the needs of our clients and community.



## Respect and cultural awareness

Freehills is a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture are welcome and respected. A workplace built upon respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures is rich, culturally diverse and welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and clients.

<b>Showing respect</b>	Ensure our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients feel welcome and respected when they visit Freehills.	
<b>Measurable target 1</b>	All client reception areas to feature works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation, Client Services team, National Procurement Manager.	
<b>Measurable target 2</b>	All client reception areas to display a written acknowledgement of the local Traditional Owners of the land and history of the land.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation, Client Services team, Design team.	
<b>Measurable target 3</b>	All client meeting rooms to display a written acknowledgement of the local Traditional Owners of the land.	<b>Jan 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation, Client Services team, Design team.	
<b>Measurable target 4</b>	Make copies of the Koori Mail, National Indigenous Times and the Indigenous Business Council of Australia magazine available in all client reception areas and libraries.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Client Services team, Knowledge Management team.	
<b>Measurable target 5</b>	Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage to be considered and incorporated in the design of the new Sydney premises.	<b>June 2013</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Sydney premises committee.	
<b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>	Develop and implement a protocol for Acknowledgement of Country at key meetings and events.	
<b>Measurable target 6</b>	Publish protocol for Acknowledgement of Country on Equip.	<b>Jan 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation.	



<b>Celebrating diversity</b>	Celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture, land and history during NAIDOC Week.	
<b>Measurable target 7</b>	Arrange an office wide event in NAIDOC Week annually to celebrate local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation, RAP volunteers.	
<b>Promoting diversity</b>	Publish and promote a directory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers, products, venues, activities and cultural events.	
<b>Measurable target 8</b>	Publish electronically on Equip and review use of venues and suppliers for client and staff events at end of FY11/12.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation, National Procurement Manager, BD Managers, Events Managers.	
<b>Introduce cultural awareness training</b>	Introduce cultural awareness training.	
<b>Measurable target 9</b>	Identify an appropriate online cultural awareness training program accessible to all partners and staff.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation, People & Development.	



Freehills staff enjoy a guided Aboriginal heritage tour.



## Access to opportunities

Freehills is committed to creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities.

We recognise that our commitment to supplier diversity promotes a vibrant and prosperous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprise sector and helps create employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are best supported through building the capacity of well governed organisations to achieve important economic and social goals.

We are committed to increasing the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across the entire community, not just within the business community and at Freehills. We understand that an important starting point is to provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school and university students to increase the pipeline of qualified job seekers. We wish to provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that will support their own life choices.

<b>Supplier diversity</b>	Encourage supplier diversity and create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and their employees through procurement.	
<b>Measurable target 10</b>	Participate in AIMSC Supplier Development Program and build a Supplier Diversity framework.	
<b>Measurable target 11</b>	Ask Freehills suppliers about their supplier diversity and engagement practices.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	National Procurement Manager.	

*'Freehills' commitment to Indigenous engagement has changed lives. As a result of Freehills' staff Christmas gift order last year with family owned Aboriginal business Murra Wolka Creations, jobs for previously unemployed Aboriginal women were created. These jobs were created to help Murra Wolka deliver the order on time and to requirement. This was an early Christmas present for these women, many of whom are parents. This is the human face of Freehills' support for Indigenous business.'*

**Natalie Walker (CEO, Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council)**

<b>Building capacity</b>	Build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations by providing training opportunities.	
<b>Measurable target 12</b>	Ensure that at least 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations attend training, e.g. CLE training, business skills or media training.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation.	



<b>Transferring skills</b>	Build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to achieve social and economic goals through Jawun (Indigenous Corporate Partnerships) skills sharing secondments.	
<b>Measurable target 13</b>	Freehills to second 6-8 staff to the East Kimberley program in FY11/12.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation, People & Development.	
<b>Measurable target 14</b>	Review Jawun program at end of calendar 2011.	<b>Dec 2011</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation.	



**Jawun secondees** – Senior Associates Annie Mould and Anna Lyons with local children on induction trip (near Halls Creek, East Kimberley).

*‘Wunan is all about turning the tables for Aboriginal people. This means moving from having 80% of people in the East Kimberley dependent on Government for housing and income to having 80% of people independent of Government and in charge of their lives. The support that Freehills provides through the Jawun secondee program is invaluable and real in helping achieve this goal, by providing dedicated and skilled personnel to develop and implement the living change agenda.’*

**Ian Trust (Chairman, Wunan)**

<b>Recruitment and employment</b>	Recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members to our legal practice groups and business services teams.	
<b>Measurable target 15</b>	Develop recruitment diversity protocol to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment businesses are notified of Freehills vacancies.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	National Resourcing Manager, People & Development.	
<b>Measurable target 16</b>	Investigate opportunities and pilot program to employ and mentor at least 2 law and/or business students through the CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	National Resourcing Manager, People & Development, Freehills Foundation and RAP volunteers.	



<b>Supporting education</b>	Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander high school students to achieve their own goals and life choices.	
<b>Measurable target 17</b>	Develop our existing relationships with Clontarf Aboriginal College and Yalari students to include work placements, office orientation visits, student mentoring, legal education and work skills training.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Measurable target 18</b>	Explore opportunities to extend our relationships with Clontarf and Yalari to Melbourne and Sydney.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation.	



Freehills volunteers at the 2011 Yalari Gala Dinner.

*'Yalari's partnership with Freehills staff is about empowerment in the belief that one person, one company and one individual can make a difference.*

*Freehills is committed to the doing, being involved and contributing to our vision of empowering and educating Indigenous children today, tomorrow and in the future.*

*We are making a difference together as genuine partners.'*

**Waverley Stanley (CEO, Yalari)**



*'Our ongoing relationship with Freehills continues to be a very bright light for Clontarf Aboriginal College. The program has ever increasing breadth and depth, covering both boys and girls and activities ranging from recreational and Cultural events to mentoring and tutoring sessions.*

*The stand out point for me is that the partnership is "relational reconciliation" at its very best - from the image of a Freehills staff member "high five-ing" a student at the bowling alley after a strike to Freehills staff and students grappling over completing an essay at a tutoring session...the relationship is characterised by a personal working relationship with Freehills that continues to grow.'*

**Tony Chinnock (Principal, Clontarf Aboriginal College)**



**Clontarf students and Freehills volunteers enjoy a social excursion.**

*'The support of Freehills enables the Clontarf Girls Academy to deliver Mentoring Support, Sporting and Extracurricular Activities, Work Placements and Work Readiness Programs, and a range of programs that develop Leadership and Teamwork.'*

**Ricky Grace (CEO, Role Models and Leaders Australia)**

## Access to justice and legal services

<b>Pro Bono</b>	<p>Increase the provision of pro bono legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations seeking advice regarding governance and structure.</p> <p>Increase the provision of pro bono legal services to protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, including economic rights (e.g. unpaid wages), rights of artists and protection from domestic violence.</p>	
<b>Measurable target 19</b>	<p>Increase our total provision of pro bono legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals to 15% of our total pro bono budget.</p> <p>This represents an increase from 8% in FY10/11 which equated to 65 pro bono matters and 2750 pro bono hours at a value of \$854,000.</p>	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation.	
<b>Business law support</b>	Introduce a pro bono Indigenous Business Law Advice Service to assist businesses in the start up phase by providing legal and business planning advice and networking opportunities.	
<b>Measurable target 20</b>	Accept 4 new instructions through referrals from AIMSC, the IBCA and/or Jawun in the first year of operation.	
<b>Measurable target 21</b>	Review and refine scope and operation of the Indigenous Business Law Advice Service at end of FY11/12.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation.	
<b>Support for legal services</b>	Develop new relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services to share knowledge and expertise.	
<b>Measurable target 22</b>	Appoint 1 senior legal RAP volunteer in each Australian office.	
<b>Measurable target 23</b>	Meet with state based legal services and networks (local and remote).	
<b>Measurable target 24</b>	Investigate how best to support legal services and set goals for FY12/13.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation and 1 senior legal RAP volunteer in each Australian office.	
<b>Industry wide approach</b>	Promote a co-ordinated approach to reconciliation within the broader legal community.	
<b>Measurable target 25</b>	Meet with other law firms interested in investigating opportunities for collaboration in relation to providing legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or individuals.	
<b>Measurable target 26</b>	Meet and share experience with other law firms developing a RAP.	<b>June 2012</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation.	

## Tracking progress and reporting

### Reporting

<b>Measurable target</b>	RAP report approved by Freehills and endorsed by Reconciliation Australia and registered on both websites.
<b>Measurable target</b>	RAP refresh approved by Freehills and endorsed by Reconciliation Australia and registered on both websites.
<b>Measurable target</b>	RAP Champion (Freehills Foundation Senior Associate) to meet with specialist sub-groups to ensure ongoing progress in relation to all RAP commitments.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Freehills Foundation.

June 2012



Official opening of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence © Wayne Quilliam Photography

*'Since our opening in early 2010, Freehills has been an invaluable supporter of the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) in Redfern. Freehills' positive engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities across the country demonstrates true national leadership in the reconciliation space.*

*Freehills has excelled in developing mutually beneficial relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, organisations and communities in a culturally safe and respectful manner.*

*Freehills sets an example of excellence in its work with Indigenous Australians. The NCIE is proud to partner with Freehills and I congratulate you on the launch of your Reconciliation Action Plan.'*

**Jason Glanville (CEO, National Centre of Indigenous Excellence)**

# Freehills' reconciliation journey to date...



## Leadership

Over the course of the past decade or more Freehills has done the legal work to establish many leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations with a strategic reform agenda such as: Jawun (Indigenous Corporate Partnerships), Yalari, Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation, Clontarf Aboriginal College, Clontarf Girls Academy, Djarragun College Foundation, Cape York Institute, Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council, National Centre of Indigenous Excellence and the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

## Rights

Since 2004 Freehills has been advocating on a pro bono basis for the development of state based schemes committed to the repayment of unpaid Aboriginal wages held in trust by government agencies. Freehills has brought 70+ matters before the NSW Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme on behalf of 40+ clients including a group claim on behalf of gentlemen who attended the Kinchela Boys Home. Over \$350,000 in repayments has been secured for our clients to date.

## Arts


Freehills provides pro bono legal advice to protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists such as through the Arts Law Centre of Australia's *Artists in the Black* program and the Canning Stock Route project with FORM.

## Protection

Freehills supports organisations that are committed to reducing domestic violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Since 2004 Freehills has provided pro bono legal advice and secondees to the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service in Walgett (NSW) and Victoria.

## Skills sharing

In 2010 Jawun commenced working in the East Kimberley region and Freehills sent our first secondees to join others from corporate partners such as KPMG, Leightons, NAB and Wesfarmers. All Freehills staff members have the opportunity to undertake a business or legal skills sharing secondment with Jawun in the East Kimberley.



*‘Freehills -  
we love that mob.’*

**Jason Glanville  
(CEO, National Centre of Indigenous Excellence)**

# Freehills

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