



Wildlife Health Australia acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters, and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Friday 26 May 2023**

### **Celebration: Wildlife Health Australia embraces National Reconciliation Week 2023**

Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) is celebrating National Reconciliation Week in 2023 by acknowledging the tens of millennia of stewardship and conservation of Australia's wildlife by First Nations peoples.

National Reconciliation Week (27 May to 3 June) is a time for all Australians to learn about shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and to explore how everyone can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia.

The theme in 2023 is 'Be a Voice for Generations', encouraging all Australians to be a voice for reconciliation in tangible ways in their everyday lives. Organisers from Reconciliation Australia said: "For the work of generations past, and the benefit of generations future, let's choose to create a more just, equitable and reconciled country for all."

In preparing for National Reconciliation Week, Wildlife Health Australia's Chair Peter Bridgewater said: "In focussing on our future, one of our most important goals is to create and sustain two-way trusted partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and peoples through our developing Reconciliation Action Plan, listening to their insights and advice.

"We see the process of reconciliation as a journey, whereby we as an organisation work together with our key stakeholders to instil a culturally safe workplace. We want to explore how WHA can bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to all areas of our work on wildlife health.

"With this year's theme of being a voice for generations, we acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for their ongoing stewardship and conservation of Australia's wildlife over time, and look forward to working together to promote and protect wildlife health now and in the future," Professor Bridgewater said.

National Reconciliation Week resources: [posters and resources](#).

Note: Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) is the coordinating body for wildlife health in Australia. We work to protect and enhance the natural environment. We link, inform and support people and organisations who work with or have an interest in wildlife health and provide leadership, coordination, technical advice, facilitation, communications, and professional support.



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Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) has recently convened its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Committee, who have shared some of their aspirations:

Clare Death

Senior Project Officer, Surveillance Team

“My aspiration for WHA’s RAP is for it to increase our knowledge and solidify our ability to be an organisation that engages appropriately and effectively with First Nations people.”

Arlene Rutherford

Senior Project Manager

“I hope WHA’s RAP will further inform and support WHA’s inclusivity values – particularly with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose close links with our ecosystems, will benefit all.”

Joanne Walker

Capacity Building Program Manager/ Reconciliation Action Plan Committee Chairperson

“I hope that WHA’s RAP will lead to WHA being known as a culturally competent and culturally safe organisation to do business with and that WHA will be a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders will not only want to work but would be proud to.”

Keren Cox-Witton

Program Manager - Surveillance

“I’m very excited to be involved in WHA’s RAP, and I hope it will be our first step to working alongside First Nations peoples for the protection of Australian wildlife.”

Simone Vitali

Program Manager - Emergencies

“I hope the Plan will be a springboard to more, and better, inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and people in our networks and organisation.”

Julien Grosmaire

Board Member

“I hope WHA’s RAP will help the organisation to inwardly and outwardly engage in Truth-telling and become leaders in decolonising science, particularly when it comes to wildlife health matters.”

Silvia Ban

Project Officer - Surveillance/ WHA Cultural Awareness Sub-Committee

“By consistently strengthening the connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-indigenous peoples, impactful and lasting transformations are achieved not only contributing to wildlife health, but enhancing biodiversity, the environment, and benefiting communities, animals and peoples’ health.”