



First Nations Engagement Plan 2023–2026

Acknowledgement of Country

Allens acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the country. We respect their lore which for 60,000 years has been shared by generations, passed down through stories, dance and ceremonies.

This First Nations Engagement Plan includes names of deceased persons.

Artwork Credit

Illustration for Allens by Bundjalung artist Amelia Rose.

‘This artwork is the marriage between my own personal experiences with community and the place where they intersect with Allens and its communities. The large circle’s different layers represent the diverse communities to which I, and Allens belong to. I belong to my Indigenous community, my legal community, my artist community, my community as a woman and so many more. These layers reflect the communities which exist within Allens, in turn being representative of a global community.



Reconciliation in Australia is reliant on the support of people from all walks of life, all gender identities, sexualities and ethnic backgrounds. This is represented by the six people that surround and protect their communities. Instead of using the traditional symbols for ‘man’ and ‘woman’, I have used my own to represent the diverse peoples which Allens represents. This artwork shows that together, we are stronger. If our communities can come together, if we can overlook our differences, we have a chance to achieving meaningful and practical reconciliation in Australia.’



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Message from Chair **Fiona Crosbie** and Managing Partner **Richard Spurio**

We are proud to launch Allens' new First Nations Engagement Plan. While we are Australia's oldest law firm, we acknowledge that our 200 year history is in the shadow of a culture that has existed for more than 60,000 years.

Allens, and the entire Australian legal profession, have a profound obligation and opportunity to contribute to reconciliation. Our First Nations Engagement Plan outlines how we will continue to do so.

In 2009, we launched our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Since then, we have developed partnerships with key organisations that are making a difference and driving change for First Nations people, such as Jawun and the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation. We continue to learn from First Nations people - from secondary and tertiary students, from guest speakers from community, and of course from our own people. We are grateful to our reconciliation committees who have worked to

build awareness and engage our people, clients and communities in important conversations. We have contributed to those conversations through our five RAPs over the last 13 years and look forward to building on this work through this new First Nations Engagement Plan.

We developed this plan at a unique moment in time, where our profession undoubtedly has a key role to play, and a responsibility to use our skills and knowledge to support First Nations communities and causes through pro bono legal work. In this First Nations Engagement Plan, we set out our commitments against three key pathways that best leverage our skills and expertise as a law firm: pathways to justice; pathways to understanding; and pathways to economic engagement. We will continue to work to amplify the voices of First Nations people and progress towards reconciliation.



Pathways

Our First Nations Engagement Plan

2023 – 2026



Pathways to justice

- Pro bono
- Recognition/treaty
- Building legal capacity
- Advocacy and leadership



Pathways to economic engagement

- Education and employment pathways – internship, mentoring programs, secondary/tertiary
- Supplier diversity/procurement



Pathways to understanding

- Cultural awareness building – training, immersion, Jawun secondments, committee activities
- Acknowledgement of Country



Governance and reporting



Pathways to justice

Providing pro bono support for First Nations organisations, communities and causes; increasing opportunities for our staff to engage with this work; and building relationships with Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: As the cornerstone of this plan, continue to support First Nations clients and relevant public interest organisations through pro bono legal advice and representation		
Maintain our commitment of at least 15% of all pro bono hours per year to be completed for First Nations clients and relevant public interest organisations, and track on an annual basis.	July each year of Plan	Head of Community Engagement Pro bono coordinators
Work proactively to understand the legal needs of First Nations individuals, organisations and communities. This includes partnering with local Aboriginal Legal Services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, the Indigenous Justice Project at PIAC and forging new relationships including with the University of Melbourne Law School's Law and Justice Hub.	Ongoing	Head of Community Engagement Reconciliation Committees
Lessons from these activities to be shared with Reconciliation Committees, pro bono coordinators and others engaged in this work, to build the capacity of our people and support continued improvement of our pro bono legal service delivery	Ongoing	Pro bono coordinators
Collaborate across the legal sector to support initiatives that respond to needs of First Nations communities, such as supporting the Voice to Parliament, including with pro bono legal support as needed and build awareness and education on the Voice to Parliament.	Ongoing	Head of Community Engagement Pro bono team Reconciliation Committees Subject matter experts Head of Communications & Brand
Continue to support Treaty development across Australian jurisdictions – including ongoing legal support to the First Peoples Assembly.	Ongoing	Head of Community Engagement Pro bono team Reconciliation Committees Subject matter experts



Pathways to justice

Providing pro bono support for First Nations organisations, communities and causes; increasing opportunities for our staff to engage with this work; and building relationships with Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Form or strengthen relationships with local Traditional Owners of the lands on which the firm's offices are located		
Identify relevant community groups and seek to initiate contact where not yet established.	July each year of plan	Head of Community Engagement
Work to understand the needs and priorities of each community and identify if there are ways Allens can engage and provide support.	Ongoing	Community Engagement Manager Reconciliation Committees
Goal: Increase opportunities for partners and staff to contribute to the firm's pro bono commitment		
Continue partnership with Jawun, offering at least five secondment opportunities each year for our people to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations; and at least two opportunities each year for our senior leaders to attend an executive visit with Jawun, to increase their understanding of reconciliation and advocate for Jawun participation.	Ongoing	Community Engagement Manager
▪ investigate expanding commitment to provide opportunities for more lawyers to participate in secondments in community; and	Ongoing	Talent & Engagement Manager Community Engagement Manager
▪ participate in virtual secondments through Jawun's virtual platform, with at least one secondee per year.	Ongoing	Community Engagement Manager



Pathways to economic engagement

Contributing to the education, employment and mentoring of First Nations students, and maintaining our commitment to supporting First Nations-owned businesses.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Build First Nations employment to 1%		
Review our employment strategies to design a more nuanced approach for First Nations candidates and staff across all levels of seniority and at key points in their employment: from recruitment through to ongoing development, support and retention. Draw on a range of inputs, including external and internal research, insights from First Nations staff and/or First Nations partner organisations and consultants.	November 2023	Head of Talent Acquisition P&D Managers Community Engagement Manager
Refine policies and processes depending on outcomes of this work.	June 2024	Head of Talent Acquisition P&D Managers
Evaluate effectiveness of new policies and processes.	October 2026	Head of Talent Acquisition P&D Managers Community Engagement Manager



Pathways to economic engagement

Contributing to the education, employment and mentoring of First Nations students, and maintaining our commitment to supporting First Nations-owned businesses.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Evaluate and re-design our education to employment pathways		
<p>Review and update First Nations Legal Internship program continuing to engage at least 10 First Nations law students per year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pilot an increase in the length of the internship program, to deepen experience of interns in preparation for future career opportunities.▪ Improve communication of guidelines to those working with First Nations interns, clerkship candidates and employees, to ensure they bring the appropriate level of focus to development and guidance.▪ Develop a focus group to workshop updates to the internship program, in addition to post-internship feedback surveys. Invite Allens staff and First Nations internship alumni to participate and engage with an appropriate First Nations consultant to guide this process.▪ Develop a clearer pathway from internship to employment, including through paralegal roles and clerkships, for appropriate individuals.	<p>February 2023 and each year of the Plan</p> <p>February 2023</p> <p>February 2023</p> <p>September 2023</p> <p>December 2023</p>	<p>Head of Talent Acquisition Early Careers Team Community Engagement Manager</p>
<p>Maintain relationships with internship alumni through activities such as ad hoc training programs, invitations to seminars, and inclusion in early careers events. Review these activities and ensure consistency across all offices.</p>	<p>April 2023 and ongoing</p>	<p>Early Careers Team</p>



Pathways to economic engagement

Contributing to the education, employment and mentoring of First Nations students, and maintaining our commitment to supporting First Nations-owned businesses.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Evaluate and re-design our education to employment pathways		
<p>Review and re-design Corporate Services internship to offer at least one opportunity per year for First Nations tertiary and further education students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Launch the Corporate Services internship, to run alongside the First Nations Legal Internship.	<p>April 2023</p> <p>February 2024</p>	<p>Head of Talent Acquisition Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager Community Engagement Manager</p>
<p>Continue to engage with First Nations secondary students through secondary schools and NGOs to support pathways into the legal profession and/or corporate Australia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Maintain partnership with the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF), providing pro bono support, participating in mentoring and work readiness programs and other initiatives to support AIEF scholarship students.Work with Allens Spark secondary schools to identify best ways to involve First Nations students in the Spark program.	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>December 2023</p>	<p>Early Careers team Community Engagement Manager</p> <p>Community Engagement Manager</p> <p>Head of Community Engagement Community Engagement Manager Spark team</p>
<p>Engage with at least one external First Nations-focused recruiter in each office location and promote firmwide opportunities to First Nations-specific jobs boards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Research and select relevant jobs boards & recruiters.Promote opportunities via jobs boards.	<p>April 2023</p> <p>July 2023 and ongoing</p>	<p>Head of Talent Acquisition P&D Managers</p>



Pathways to economic engagement

Contributing to the education, employment and mentoring of First Nations students, and maintaining our commitment to supporting First Nations-owned businesses.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Evaluate and re-design our education to employment pathways		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify, and engage our people in, further opportunities to connect with First Nations students, including through:<ul style="list-style-type: none">sponsorship of, and attendance at, the National Indigenous Legal Conference;sponsorship of the Indigenous units within university law student societies;corporate partnerships with Indigenous law student societies in each state such as Ngalaya (NSW) and Tarwirri (VIC); contribution to scholarships such as the WA Indigenous Legal Scholarship;contribution to scholarships such as the WA Indigenous Legal Scholarship; andfacilitating mentorship where relevant.	July 2023 and each year of the Plan	Early Careers team Community Engagement Manager Reconciliation Committees
Goal: Maintain a commitment to building supplier diversity through supporting First Nations-owned businesses		
<p>Continue founding membership of Supply Nation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Allens representative to attend Connect conference annually to network, seek new opportunities and build knowledge on current best practice.	August 2023 and each year of Plan	Community Engagement Manager



Pathways to economic engagement

Contributing to the education, employment and mentoring of First Nations students, and maintaining our commitment to supporting First Nations-owned businesses.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Maintain a commitment to building supplier diversity through supporting First Nations-owned businesses		
<p>Continue to support First Nations-owned businesses through the firm's responsible sourcing policy and through mentoring and training opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Promote the firm's responsible sourcing policy to all staff annually.Deliver training to procurement decision makers to build awareness of opportunities in the market to expand supplier diversity through engaging with First Nations-owned businesses.Engage with at least four First Nations-owned businesses each year across all areas of the firm.At least one office each year to offer the social and Indigenous enterprise Boot Camp or similar initiative to support growth of First Nations businesses at start-up phase.	<p>July each year of plan</p> <p>September 2023 and each year of Plan</p> <p>June each year of Plan</p> <p>September 2023 and each year of Plan</p>	<p>Community Engagement team</p> <p>Community Engagement team</p> <p>Community Engagement team Reconciliation Committee</p> <p>Accelerate team Pro bono coordinators Reconciliation Committees</p>
<p>Investigate opportunities for Allens people to participate in Supply Nation's Jump Start initiative with a view to having a group of Allens staff who can volunteer to assist with a range of business needs.</p>	<p>March 2023</p>	<p>Reconciliation Committees Community Engagement Manager</p>



Pathways to understanding

Embedding cultural safety in our workplaces and supporting internal Reconciliation Committees to maximise their impact.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Embed understanding and respect for First Nations cultures through policies, programs and practices		
Maintain Reconciliation Committees in each of our Australian offices, meeting regularly to drive engagement of our people in reconciliation initiatives.	Ongoing	Reconciliation Committees
Continue to deliver face to face cultural capacity training to all graduates within their first year at the firm.	October 2023 and each year of Plan	Learning & Development Manager P&D Consultant Community Engagement Manager
Expand delivery of cultural capacity training opportunities across the firm. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Source and pilot compulsory digital cultural capacity training for all new starts other than law graduates.Within each two-year period deliver at least one cultural capacity in-person training session in each Australian office, open to all partners and staff.All partners and directors to attend tailored cultural capacity training within the four-year period of the Plan.Include cultural capacity training sessions in either the Senior Associate Success Program or Managing Associate Pathways Program.Ensure any partners and staff undertaking pro bono work for First Nations clients participate in cultural capacity training relevant to the specific work.	March 2024 December 2024, December 2026 September 2024 Ongoing Ongoing	Learning & Development Manager Community Engagement Manager Learning & Development Manager Community Engagement Manager Chief People Officer Head of Talent, Capability & Reward Community Engagement Manager Head of Talent, Capability & Reward Learning & Development Manager Community Engagement Manager Head of Community Engagement Pro Bono coordinators



Pathways to understanding

Embedding cultural safety in our workplaces and supporting internal Reconciliation Committees to maximise their impact.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Embed understanding and respect for First Nations cultures through policies, programs and practices		
Include a First Nations-led charity in the firm's workplace giving program.	May 2023	Head of Community Engagement Community Engagement Manager
Continue work to embed Acknowledgement of Country within the firm and invite Elders to deliver a Welcome to Country for at least one firm event per year.	Ongoing	Reconciliation Partner Reconciliation Committees Community Engagement Manager Head of Communications & Brand



Pathways to understanding

Embedding cultural safety in our workplaces and supporting internal Reconciliation Committees to maximise their impact.

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Reconciliation Committees in each Allens office actively engage in the development, promotion and implementation of our First Nations Plan		
Rename all Reconciliation Committees to acknowledge Aboriginal city name, eg [<i>Boorloo/Warrane/Naaarm/Meenjin</i>] Reconciliation Committee. Update internal and external references to reflect this change.	March 2023	Reconciliation Committees Community Engagement Manager
Develop new committee Terms of Reference in line with the goals and actions in this new Plan.	December 2023	Reconciliation Committees Community Engagement Manager
Host at least one event in each Australian office, or one national event, annually to mark each of National Reconciliation Week (NRW) and NAIDOC Week, to celebrate First Nations culture and community and to strengthen relationships between First Nations staff and other staff.	May, July each year of Plan	Reconciliation Committees
Representation from each office to attend at least one external NRW or NAIDOC Week event per year.	By July each year of Plan	Reconciliation Committees
Each year, host at least one external event (attended by clients and/or community) in each Australian office, or one national event, either to celebrate First Nations culture or lead reconciliation-related discussions.	November each year of Plan	Reconciliation Committees



Governance and reporting

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Institute strong governance process to support strategy delivery of First Nations Plan		
Formalise relationships with external First Nations advisors to provide guidance and support the delivery of the new Plan.	May 2023	Head of Community Engagement Reconciliation Committees Community Engagement Manager
Maintain dashboard document to track activities against the Plan over the four year period.	Ongoing	Community Engagement Manager
Report on progress against the Plan to each meeting of the Community Engagement Board and to the Allens board annually.	Ongoing	Head of Community Engagement Reconciliation Committees Community Engagement Manager
Implement best practice process for First Nations involvement in the governance of First Nations strategy formulation and delivery.	October 2023	Inclusion & Wellbeing Manager Head of Community Engagement Community Engagement Manager



Governance and reporting

Actions	Target completion date	Responsibility
Goal: Institute strong governance process to support strategy delivery of First Nations Plan		
Formally review and update Plan goals and actions following two-year review of progress and share externally.	February 2025	Reconciliation Committees
Convene quarterly national Reconciliation Committee meetings with the Reconciliation chair and committee key contacts from each office location to discuss current topics, upcoming events and opportunities, and to share key updates.	February, May, August, November each year of Plan	Reconciliation Partner Community Engagement Manager
Review and update budget tracking processes for Reconciliation committees to ensure budgets are well utilised across the year.	July 2023 and annually	Community Engagement Manager Reconciliation Committees
Share stories and reports on progress with Allens staff and externally through: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Promoting the launch of our new Plan and progress reports to staff, clients and key contacts in our reconciliation network;▪ Sharing highlights of our work in reconciliation to LinkedIn and other external channels;▪ Regular intranet, community site and Yammer updates to all staff; and▪ Profiling at significant staff meetings and events.	March 2023 and annually	Head of Communications & Brand Reconciliation Committees



Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks to the large number of our people, as well as external supporters, with whom we worked over many months to bring together the ideas and goals that make up this Plan. We are grateful for the contributions each of them has made and give particular thanks to the following:

Jason Timor, Two Point Co.

Kate Sinclair

Shane Webster

Barry Winmar

Reconciliation Committees in Allens' local offices

Plan Working Group

For queries relating to this Plan, please contact: [Jodie Symes](#), Community Engagement Manager