

Media Release
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Opera Australia launches inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan and endorses Indigenous Voice to Parliament



Barabi 2023 by Jasmine Sarin

Opera Australia (OA) today launched its inaugural *Reflect* Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) signalling the Company's deep commitment to engage with Australia's journey of reconciliation with its First Nations peoples.

OA CEO Fiona Allan said "Over the past 18 months we've introduced a greater focus on Diversity and Inclusion across OA and, while it's an early milestone, launching our first *Reflect* RAP is a significant achievement that has led us to determine many of the foundational principals that will underpin our reconciliation initiatives and has defined our vision.

"As the country's largest performing arts company, and one of its most visible, we have a responsibility to use this privileged position to be responsible contributors to the national conversation, to grow cultural understanding and engagement, to support truth-telling, celebration and honour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples," said Ms Allan.

OA's vision is to advance reconciliation through continual cultural learning and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and communities, creating opportunities for artists, art practitioners, administrators and leaders to work in a culturally safe environment and nurture First Nations performance, production, and storytelling.

Formally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, OA's RAP represents the Company's desire to better understand the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and seeks to build stronger creative relationships in order to connect, engage and provide appropriate support.

- Providing opportunities for continual cultural learning for everyone at OA – the Board, the Executive and all employees.
- Developing authentic relationships with First Nations artists and creatives and providing them with opportunities to develop new works and supporting the training of First Nations classical singers.
- Engaging with First Nations communities across urban, regional and remote Australia, to gain a greater understanding of their culture and heritage, at the same time, inviting them to understand our artform.

- Giving First Nations people the agency and forum to tell their stories and to perform them for both their communities and non-indigenous communities.
- Using our national platform to further advance the conversation around reconciliation.
- Providing a safe and supportive workplace for First Nations employees.

Reconciliation Australia CEO Karen Mundine said “Opera Australia joins a network of more than 2,450 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program, which constitutes nearly three million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

“The RAP program’s strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation such as Opera Australia to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes,” said Ms Mundine.

Further demonstrating its commitment to reconciliation, OA Chair Rod Sims AO, the Board and Executive team have issued a statement in support of the ‘Yes’ campaign for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, reinforcing the belief that First Nations people must have a direct voice in the laws and policies that impact them.

Indigenous Voice to Parliament Statement:

Opera Australia is proud to work, and perform, on the lands of the Gadigal people in Sydney and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurring people in Melbourne. We are also privileged to perform around Australia on the lands of many First Nations people and recognise and thank the custodians of the unceded lands on which we create, perform and work.

The lands across Australia have been a gathering place for storytelling, community and culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for over 60,000 years. A place where the long history of our country is preserved and kept alive for future generations.

We honour this history and wisdom and are grateful to be able to contribute to the tradition of telling stories on these lands through music and song.

Opera Australia is committed to acknowledging and respecting First Nations cultures, and to using our national platform to advance the conversation towards reconciliation. We will continue to take active steps in our own company to provide support for First Nations creatives, artists and performers to share their stories.

While respectful of any alternate opinions amongst our employees, audience and supporters, the Board and Executive of Opera Australia accept the invitation to walk with First Nations people and to support a First Nations Voice to Parliament by voting ‘Yes’ in the upcoming referendum.

Enshrining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recognition and the Voice in the Constitution will allow First Nations people to have a say in matters that relate to them creating a more inclusive and equitable Australia.

Opera Australia Board and Executive

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