

Swinburne Commons

Transcript

Swinburne 2020-2023 Elevate RAP Launch

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ANDREW PETERS: Welcome, everybody, to the launch of our latest Reconciliation Action Plan at Swinburne University. My name is Andrew Peters. I'm a proud Woiwurrung-Yorta Yorta-Ngarai illum Wurrung man, and it's a real great pleasure to be here today on a very special occasion for us and our family.

And it's really, really wonderful to have the dancers to perform for us very, very shortly. I just want to open by asking everybody to ensure that you follow their COVID protocols-- protocols, sorry. Please check in by the QR code, and if you haven't done your hands, please do so. We're just having a chat now about how well we're doing in Australia compared to overseas, and I'd hate for this to be the thing that stuffs that up because it's on camera and there's evidence that it was my fault.

So Wominjeka, welcome. Again, I've been at Swinburne for over 20 years. I started my undergraduate degree here 26 years ago, I think. I'm still waiting to complete that. Boom boom.

But no, I absolutely love working here, and particularly for events like this, I've been lucky to be an integral part of development of our Reconciliation Action Plans and our Indigenous education. And it's today sort of, for me, in a sense, it's a culmination of a lot of years of learning and sharing that learning and connecting with people. And so I'm really, really proud to be your MC for today as well.

Before I do anything else, it gives me really great pleasure to invite to the microphone to do our Welcome to Country Stacie Piper from the Djirri Djirri dancers. And I'll leave the rest to her.

STACIE PIPER: Thank you, Andrew. [SPEAKING WOIWURRUNG] So in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri people, I just introduced myself.

My name is Stacie Piper. I'm a proud Wurundjeri, Dja Dja Wurrung and Ngurai-Illam Wurrung woman from the Kulin Nation of Victoria. We're the Djirri Djirri dance group, and we're all related through Annie Borate, who is William-- was or is William Barak's sister. So I'm sure you all know who William Barak is.

Every Wurundjeri person comes from Annie Borate, his sister. And we acknowledge her. I also acknowledged our ancestors.

I acknowledged the Birrarung, which is the Yarra River. I acknowledged the [WOIWURRUNG], which is our friends. That's all of you. That's our community.

I acknowledged the [WOIWURRUNG] and [WOIWURRUNG] which are the children and the young ones, who are the future of our community. And I acknowledge all guests, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who are here today. So I'm a Djirri Djirri dancer, but I'm also the chairperson of the Victorian NAIDOC Committee.

And I'm not an Elder. So usually, we have an Elder doing a Welcome to Country. But at the moment, people like myself and Mandy and our other cousin Sue Ann, who's part of the Djirri Djirris. We still think we're pretty young girls, you know? But we're getting up there.

So we're not really young ones anymore. We're kind of moving into our next stage of becoming those leaders and those voices to represent our young ones and to role model for the younger generation so they feel confident in our culture and they feel confident in how to share and in song and dance. So it's a real honour for us today to share a Welcome and Acknowledgment, a smoking and our song and dance with you together.

There's usually around 15 of us, but obviously during the week, it's a little bit hard. There's kids at school. My daughter should be at school, but she was gammin. She had a sore ankle this morning, and it turns out she's fine.

But it's good that she gets to be here as well, you know? I would never turn down an opportunity for her to come and catch up with her cousins and be in, you know, good company and celebrate our culture. And so today, I acknowledge Swinburne University of Technology on what is your third Reconciliation Action Plan launch. Congratulations.

Reconciliation Week is approaching, and I'm still getting my head around it. There's so much going on, and we've always got so much to do. I'm sure every First Nations person can understand how that is.

We get pulled in different directions, and we're not experts on everything. But Reconciliation Week this year, the theme is more than a word. And so I'm still going to read up a bit more on that and understand what that means to me personally and how I talk about that through Reconciliation Week.

But I think it's a really good theme this year because a lot of people, a lot of community, have talked about the fact that reconciliation, the definition of that is around two parties coming together and reconciling or sorting out their differences. And I think a lot of First Nations people feel there's nothing that we need to reconcile. It's sort of the other-- well, not really the other way around.

That's why I need to really understand and get my head around how I feel about it. And it is more than a word. It's an action. So obviously, being your third Reconciliation Action Plan launched, that's showing that you've got momentum, continuity. You're committed to the actions that you put into those plans. And yeah, you can see the benefits of those actions coming through.

I can see the MITS there out the back there. Woo! Welcome.

So in our Woiwurrung language, Wominjeka is our word for welcome. But you probably know that language translates a little bit differently across different parts of the world, and for us, Wominjeka translates to come with purpose. So yeah, I think that's really fitting for today. We're all here with a purpose.

Reconciliation is something that we each need to think about in terms of where we work, where we live, but also within ourselves. Just be comfortable with that uncomfortableness. One of my-- my general manager, actually, where I work, I was on a Zoom on Sunday night with Uncle Bruce Pascoe and Jonathan Jones, and we were talking with Indonesia and the Netherlands about colonisation and genocide, land destruction. And it's a very heavy topic.

And our general manager was sitting in on that discussion, and I saw him on the Monday. And he was very awkward, and he said, I just feel really guilty. And yeah, that's probably a good thing.

But guilt isn't a good thing. I found myself having a conversation with him. It's like, we were just going to move through the awkwardness, move through the uncomfortable feelings. And guilt, maybe that's not a healthy thing for anybody.

So we just need to face it, work through it, and move forward together. So on that note, I'll move straight into the Wominijeka Ngarra dance. Oh, actually, we're going to do the smoking first. Sorry.

So the smoking ceremony, if you-- how would you like to do it, Andrew? Would you like people to come up and smoke, or would you like us to take it? Yeah, sorry, Kaka.

Last time, she burnt her hair. So don't put your head forward. So while they're walking the smoke around, I'll talk about it.

So you probably know. It's so great to see that society are pretty across a lot of our cultural practises, and a smoking ceremony is a way for us to clean our [WOIWURRUNG], to clean our spirit and yours so that you have safe passage on Country. In the mixture of native flora, I've popped some-- oh, yep.

Bring it away, Mika. Thank you. And [INAUDIBLE].

OK. Yeah, I picked them from up on mountain Country. And Sam, do you want to keep that handy for them?

Just [INAUDIBLE]. Let's see. So they're from a blackwood gum tree, and I picked some cherry ballard. So that's in there as well.

And the cherry ballard is actually a cleansing nettle plant that we use traditionally to clean our spirit and to Welcome people into Country. And the gum leaves also represent that cleaning of our spirit. I think they're all good now.

Do you want to just walk up a little bit the side and then back? Yes? Yeah, OK.

So we'll leave the fire there. If at any stage you'd like to walk over and smoke yourself, we invite you to do so. And we have more gum leaves here as well. If you wanted to not smoke yourself, you could pick a gum leaf and take that home with you as a symbol of reconciliation.

So the girls are going to dance over on this side. As part of my stepping up, so Mandy Nicholson-- oh, OK. So I can probably stand over on that microphone. I'll stay here.

So our dance group, we've been going for about five, six years now but obviously longer with Mandy, Kyra, and Dana, who started from when they could walk. We were always dancing as kids as well, but the Djirri Djirri, which Mandy started, and then bought a woke up, a ceremony, which was a women's or girls coming of age ceremony and a ceremony for women, that started around seven years ago. So these dancers all come from that. I'll do the Welcome dance, and then I'll explain a little bit more in between. So this is our Wominjeka Ngarrga.

PRE-RECORDED TRACK: [SINGING IN WOIWURRUNG]

STACIE PIPER: So yeah, what I was going to start saying before, which I'll explain now, is that we usually have Mandy Nicholson here, the deadly Mandy Nicholson, who's our lead Djirri Djirri, and our singer. So she's normally singing live, and it's a lot louder. It travels across country.

So I don't know if we can get the audio up a little louder, but it'd be great if somehow-- yeah, we could, that'd be really good. We love hearing Mandy's voice travelling Country, and the next dance sort of talks about that a little bit. So The Six Layers of Country, that's a dance that we do to honour-- a dance and song that we do to honour the layers of Country. There's more than six, but we acknowledge six of them for this dance.

We have the [WOIWURRUNG] which is the Country above the clouds, which is [WOIWURRUNG] home and where our ancestors are in what people call the Dreaming. Then we have the [WOIWURRUNG], which is the sky Country. And that's where [WOIWURRUNG] and [WOIWURRUNG] fly and watch over us and keep us protected, keep Country safe.

Then we have the [WOIWURRUNG], which is the wind Country. So it kicked up a little bit before. So that's our air. That's where our voices travel.

That's where the smoke from the smoking ceremony travels. It's a conduit for many things. And when I'm talking to school groups, I like to tell them that you need to be careful about what you say and put out into the world because the wind will take it, and it touches everything. And it comes back too.

And then we have the [WOIWURRUNG]. [INAUDIBLE] I love when it kicks up when you talk about it. Then there's the [WOIWURRUNG], which is the water Country. So obviously, that's our rivers and creeks, the Birrarung, the Merry Creek-- very significant gathering places for our families or for our mobs around Victoria for business or for celebrations and catching eels and fish.

And they actually were river mussels, which even I only just found out recently. So I need to taste one one day. And then we have the [WOIWURRUNG], which is the on Country where we conduct our business.

And what Mandy talks about is even though we have concrete and buildings, that's a modern way of conducting our business, and we still look through those buildings and through the concrete. There's still Country there, and that's where we ground ourselves. And we're always aware of where we're stepping on Country and whose Country we're on.

So when we're in other spaces, we're very respectful of where we're walking and how we conduct ourselves. We went up to Kyra, and, I, Mandy, and Donna and a couple of other little cousins in [WOIWURRUNG]. We went up to Uluru, up to Darwin. We drove over December and went through all the borders, the border controls.

But yeah, we got to meet mob at Alice Springs, and we got smoked properly, and we asked permission before we spoke our language. And that's created a really beautiful relationship. So it's nice when we get to do that as well.

And then we have the big [WOIWURRUNG], which is the below Country. So that's Country we recognise obviously the roots of the trees, where dig for ochre, where our [WOIWURRUNG] grows. And there's underground rivers as well, which is pretty amazing. So this is our six layers of Country.

##PRE-RECORDED TRACK: [SINGING IN WOIWURRUNG]

STACIE PIPER: Yeah. Is that as loud as it can go? Yeah.

That's OK. So yeah, just bring my clap sticks because I thought, you know, with modern technology, we bring Mandy to you, which is pretty cool. But I do sometimes sing over the top with the clap sticks so that that's me learning.

So we're trying to be multitasking and still passing on cultural knowledge in that way. So yeah, but maybe I won't. I might deafen you guys with the clap sticks.

So yeah, with the ceremony, so the Djirri Djirri dancers, we have a Murrum Turrukuruk ceremony, which I briefly mentioned. And that's a ceremony which has-- we've woken up. It wasn't practised for over 180 years up on Coranderrk Mission.

And having our ceremony each year, it's been a way -- it's a space for us. All to come together and talk about the old people. I mean, we do it every day, but we come together with a different sort of purpose.

It's more passing on the cultural knowledge to the younger generations. So Azalea, who's dancing, she did her ceremony when she was a baby, and she's just turned four. So she was properly Welcomed to Country, received her totem from the Elders.

Well, it's a spirit protector. We don't really call it totem here in Australia. We all receive our totems.

People like myself and Mandy, we went through a little bit-- and my sister, we went through when we were older. But you can tell it's getting back to where it should be now when babies are receiving it. And they don't remember when they learned their culture or got their totem. It's just something that was there from the beginning.

So it's really special. The little girls where the [WOIWURRUNG], which is the eighty feather skirts, which we make during these gatherings and ceremonies, we stay up on Coranderrk for a weekend. And the older girls have a coming of age ceremony where they make their possum skin skirt.

And if the girls muck up in any way-- you've got to be pretty naughty to muck up and have you be disciplined, but you'll have your skirt taken off you, and you need to earn it back. So that's part of

our values that we instil in the young girls when we're coming together. Mandy's the one that enforces that, though. I don't have that in me yet.

So I'll see if McKayla's ready for our next dance. The next one we'll do is the Djirri Djirri. OK.

DANCER: [INAUDIBLE]

STACIE PIPER: OK. Yeah, we're at the mercy at times of modern technology. So yeah, one day, I'll be up there singing just like Mandy does.

But for now, I'm not quite there. So that's my challenge. So the next dance, which will start soon, it's the Djirri Djirri.

It's our namesake. It's-- the Djirri Djirri is the Woiwurrung word for a little bird that's known to dance and sing all the time. And it's the willy wagtail.

So we're inspired by the willy wagtail. We know him as the keeper of dance and song, and he's passed that on to us. And we're passing it on to the next generations.

So that's what this dance represents. And we have two girls doing the front, and then one will be doing the tail with Azalea. Yeah, so the title represents the learning, and the front represents the teaching.

So is it ready, McKayla? I think the audience can hear it. But you guys can't.

DANCER: [INAUDIBLE]

STACIE PIPER: OK. You want to sing it? She knows how to sing it.

Actually, Kaya composed this one when she was 15, and she's 18 now. That's pretty cool. And she's actually-- I think you're singing on this one.

I like to talk about it because she's always saying, oh, I can't believe that you guys play that. It's horrible. I don't like hearing myself.

That's like anybody, isn't it? But it's so beautiful. It's actually one of my favourites, and I wish that she would believe me.

But hopefully, we can get it playing soon. What else can-- does anyone have any questions while we're waiting? No?

When we do school groups, it's just hands everywhere, you know? But obviously, kids are very, very inquisitive.

PRE-RECORDED TRACK: [SINGING IN WOIWURRUNG]

STACIE PIPER: Great, so that was great. Yeah, lyrebird. So our final dance, which is our farewell dance-- so the girls will dance away, and I'll pack up while they dance off into the building.

But our final dance, it's around the lyrebird. And that's the [WOIWURRUNG]. So the [WOIWURRUNG] is a very special bird, which I'm sure plenty of you would know, be familiar with.

And up in the mountain Country, there's a lot of lyrebird habitat. And you know, because I'm the chairperson of the Victoria NAIDOC Committee, it can't go without saying that this year's theme is Heal Country. And it's really important that we advocate to heal Country.

That's part of reconciliation, which is more than a word. It's about us coming together to care for it as if it was your own because Country is sick at the moment. I don't like saying that. I like to be more positive.

But with everything that's been going on, logging, [INAUDIBLE] logging is still happening. We still have the water ways which are at risk and habitats which are being destroyed and obviously the wildfires. It just goes on and on, and it's crazy to think, can we handle any more?

I just-- yeah, I feel like part of reconciliation really needs to have that protecting and caring for Country value instilled in that because we believe healthy Country means healthy people. So yeah, this lyrebird habitat is really important. So when we're dancing, we're honouring him and her.

This dance particularly, it's about two male lyrebirds pursuing a female lyrebird. And it's about which lyrebird can make the loudest noise. So you know, they make lots of noises.

These days, it's chainsaws and car horns. They've adapted to the new world. But it's about the two male lyrebirds pursuing the female, and the female picks the loudest and proudest.

So it's about not settling for second best. So thank you for sharing and listening with us today. And yeah, congratulations on your Reconciliation Action Plan.

PRE-RECORDED TRACK: [SINGING IN WOIWURRUNG]

STACIE PIPER: Thank you.

ANDREW PETERS: Thank you very much, Stacie and girls. I was watching the dancing. I'm not going to talk for much longer because obviously, we've got a little to get through, and I know how warm it's getting in the sun, and poor Andrew Gunstone is not doing the best over here in the sun. Kids, your dad's fine.

But one thing that really struck me is the story behind the dancing and it's really important I tell my students about that-- that we talk about decolonising education in today's day and age. And that's exactly what we're talking about. It doesn't matter what I say in a classroom, using Canvas, using all the technology that we've got.

The technology that we've just seen there is a real example of how we learned on this land. I think it's important for all of us to understand that. I'm rapt to see everybody standing on the grass too. I often talk about that. This is the only grassed area, natural grass on the campus. And yet people keep walking on the concrete. So feel the Earth beneath you. Lie down. Good on you MITS kids.

And thank you so much, girls, for that performance. Stacie, I've just got something for you. Yeah, I'm just going to mention too. If anyone would like to, the smoke that's over there in the [WOIWURRUNG] that Stacie's got, come over and just cover yourselves in the smoke. It's symbolic of the spirits of the land and everything contained in the land Welcoming you when we go through a smoking ceremony.

And so rather than thinking, oh my God, my clothes are getting covered in smoke, it's actually a good thing. [INAUDIBLE] thank you. So just while we're moving on, Stacie is just going to leave the [WOIWURRUNG] over there with the smoke for those that would like to walk over and feel part of it.

Next, I'd like to introduce our Vice Chancellor, Professor Pascale Quester to speak. Professor Quester joined Swinburne from the University of Adelaide where she was Deputy Vice Chancellor and President Academic from 2011 to 2020 and previously, sorry, had various roles at the University of Adelaide. Professor Quester is an active, respected and global researcher in the areas of consumer behaviour and marketing communications.

Her qualifications include a Bachelor of Business Administration from her native France, a Master of Arts in marketing from Ohio State University in the United States, and a PhD from Massey University in New Zealand-- pre-COVID, of course. Professor Quester has received a number of prestigious awards, including Chevalier de L'ordre National du Mérite, the national order of merit, one of France's highest honours in recognition of her contribution to higher education in both France, and Australia. She's also-- she might not be aware of this, aware of this, but our newest devoted member of the famous Richmond Football Club Tiger Army. Please welcome Professor Pascale Quester.

PASCALE QUESTER: The secret is out. Welcome, everyone. It is such a thrill and such a privilege.

Thank you so much for that wonderful performance and for this very strong sense that we have that we are indeed on Wurundjeri land. Let me start the proceeding or continue the proceedings by acknowledging that this is very much Wurundjeri Country. The Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation are the custodian of the land on which the campuses of Swinburne's are built here at Hawthorn, but also at Croydon and Wantirna.

And after seeing today's performance, I think we all feel a connection which is more than just a word, as Stacie said. I'm honoured to recognise a connection to Wurundjeri Country, to its history, culture, and spirituality through those [INAUDIBLE] And we will strive to ensure that we operate in a manner that respects and honours the Elders and Ancestors of these lands, acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of lands across Australia, their Elders, Ancestors, cultures, and heritage, and recognise the continuing sovereignties of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

I'd like to extend a warm-- actually, very warm welcome to our esteemed guest Karen Mundine, the CEO of Reconciliation Australia, who has travelled from Sydney to be with us today. And we're so thrilled that you could be with us. Stacie Piper, Djirri Djirri woman who brought her mob to delight and educate us, which is what universities are all about.

Our local member and great supporter, John Kennedy MP, member for Hawthorn-- all the members of the Peters family that are joining us today in person and online as well. It is my privilege to welcome you to this special occasion as we launch Swinburne's third Reconciliation Action Plan known as a RAP that will run to 2023.

And how auspicious is it that this is one of our first formal together meeting for such an important event. This is actually our second RAP that achieved the Elevate status, and when we achieved

Elevate status, we were the first university in the country to do so. I think we're now one of three, and it's a good thing.

We don't want to be the only one on that. This is one where we want more people to be involved. And we are immensely proud of the fact that we have another Elevate RAP to look forward to.

Since then, of course, Swinburne has further embedded and strengthened reconciliation throughout the university, provided national leadership, and achieved significant outcomes for our students, our staff, and our communities. Much has been achieved over the last three years. We have established the Moondani Toombadool Centre. We have hosted an inaugural national RAP conference, and we've joined 13 other Elevate RAP organisations to support the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which has been one of the guiding documents behind the 20 to 23 RAP.

Our latest RAP has four key priorities. The first one is about embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. The second is entrenching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges. The third is ensuring that Swinburne is a culturally safe place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, alumni, and partners and finally ensuring that reconciliation, just like Stacie said, is not just a word. It is embedded in all parts of the organisation, and it becomes the way we are not-- just the way we do things but the way we are.

Our RAP national reconciliation leadership piece and one that I'm very excited about is the establishment of a National Centre for Reconciliation Practise. The National Centre for Reconciliation Practise will be the first of its kind, specifically dedicated to developing our national understanding of reconciliation. It will have a significant focus on industry, community, and technology because we are Swinburne, and we will contribute to national systemic change through broad engagement and analysis.

It will engage with a range of technology-based projects, such as, for instance, bridging the digital divide to ensure the success of Indigenous learners in a tech-rich future. The multidisciplinary Centre will continue to expand our national academic and industry leadership in reconciliation while also increasing the critical importance of Swinburne and other organisations towards self-determination.

We really want to thank a number of people for making this possible, and first, I would like to congratulate our Executive Director of Reconciliation Strategy and Leadership, Professor Andrew Gunstone, who is there cooking gently in the sun, for leading this critical work.

Next time, Andrew, don't forget a hat. We are a safe community. We don't want sun burn.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of the Moondani Toombadool Centre, the RAP Steering Group and Working Group, and the many people from our Swinburne and external communities who have been involved in developing such an ambitious and important plan. We now have the opportunity to bring this plan to life. I encourage all of our Swinburne community to consider how you can embed reconciliation in every aspect of your work across teaching, research, engagement, and more.

Reconciliation is a journey that we are all on together, one that we share across our Swinburne community, and something that we must all work to succeed in implementing. Today is but a

significant step in that journey, and I am hugely grateful to be taking it with you all. Thank you very much.

ANDREW PETERS: Thank you very much, Pascale. Just be thought of. Just after you sit down, I've just got a gift for you as well.

Next, it's my great pleasure to welcome to the microphone Karen Mundine, who's the Chief Executive Officer of Reconciliation Australia, the peak body of reconciliation action plans throughout the country. Karen is from the Bundalong Nation of northern New South Wales and brings to the role of CEO at Reconciliation Australia more than 20 years' experience in leading community engagement, public advocacy, communications, and social marketing campaigns. Over the course of her career, she's been instrumental in some of Australia's watershed national events, including the apology to the Stolen Generations, Centenary of Federation Commemorations, Corroboree 2000, and 1997 Reconciliation Convention.

Karen holds a Bachelor of Arts in communications from the University of Technology in Sydney and is also a director of the Gondwana Choirs and the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre. And I thought I was busy. Please welcome to the microphone Karen Mundine.

KAREN MUNDINE: Thank you, Andrew. It is very warm down at the front here. And this, I have to say, is my first in-person Reconciliation Action Plan.

Sorry. Let me take my glasses off. Reconciliation Action Plan or RAP event in 18 months. And I have to admit, I'm a little bit out of practise, and I'm also not well prepared in terms of the weather because it was Melbourne and I thought it might be a little bit cooler. But it is beautiful Country, and it is beautiful weather.

And thank you, Stacie and the girls, for that absolutely beautiful Welcome to Country. I pay my respects to her, her Ancestors, and all the Elders that are here today, the Ancestors of the past. I have always felt safe and welcomed when I've been on this Country. It's far from my own Country, but it's a place that I hold very dear.

I also acknowledge that this Country and the sovereign ownership of this land has been held for millennia. And indeed, it is shared the distinction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples from right across the Country. Vice Chancellor, all of the honoured guests I won't run through again, I am absolutely proud to be standing here today with you on your seventh year of your RAP journey and to launch your third Reconciliation Action Plan, your second Elevate RAP.

You've been on this journey with us since 2014, and in 2017, as has already been said, you were the first University to be recognised at the Elevate level. And now you are the first university to retain that level. We've come a long way since 2006, when there were eight trailblazer organisations who signed on to build reconciliation in their respective spheres of influence through a Reconciliation Action Plan.

And 15 years later, it's now a community of more than 1,100 organisations right across Australia. In 2021, it's already been a big year for us. Just two days ago, we launched our annual Reconciliation Action Plan, or RAP, impact measurement report, and it tells a really powerful story-- the tangible

and positive sustained effect that the RAP programme has had on events in reconciliation in the past year.

The report describes the substantial and cumulative impact of the RAP programme's activities across all walks of Australian life during the 2019-2020 financial year. It shows that our partners are changing the playing fields, consistently supporting and investing in First Nations' innovation, entrepreneurship, and success. During the reporting period, RAP partners procured over \$2 billion worth of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and provided a further \$50 million worth of program support, and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, organisations, or communities. But as impressive as those figures are, the impact of RAPs is not just about big figures.

The RAP programme is making a difference and markedly changing the way that people think, feel, and act when they think about colonisation, reconciliation, and the relationship between non-Indigenous and First Australians. Close to 3 million Australians now work or study within an organisation that has an active RAP, and close to another 3 million are members of organisations that have RAPs, such as sporting clubs or faith communities. The strength of the programme is that under the pillars of relationships, respect, and opportunities, it allows an organisation to set out their own reconciliation objectives and actions in line with their own business objectives and, as we remind people, within their spheres of influence.

And when it comes to what is working, the report tells us that visibility matters. Leadership matters. Participation matters. Cultural learning matters, and relationships matter because at the heart of reconciliation are relationships.

Now while we have a lot to be proud of what a RAP can do, it's important to remember that RAPs are not the sole solution to 250 years of colonisation. Rather, they are a useful and accessible starting point for organisations and individuals within them to consider and address systemic inequalities and leverage their collective influence for a more just and equitable society. And while we all have a part to play in this, universities occupy a particularly critical sphere of influence that presents a huge opportunity and also a responsibility to advance reconciliation.

Universities provide study opportunities. They increase employment prospects and create brighter futures for all students, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous. Universities develop new knowledge and encourage innovative thinking which are necessary to create a society that is more inclusive, participatory, and equal.

And universities play a pivotal role in advancing social change by fostering alternate visions of what a society can be and by bringing those visions into being. Through your core business, you are, as a university, perfectly placed to enact both individual and systemic change. As I said, 2021 has been a big year for us at Reconciliation Australia. It marks the 20th year as the national body for leading reconciliation in this country.

And in marking this milestone, we launched our landmark second State of the Nation Reconciliation Australia Report-- too many reconciliations. The report assesses the current status of reconciliation in this country, and it shows us that support for us and for reconciliation is growing and that more Australians now understand the impact of colonialism and the modern Australian state on First

Nations families and communities. But the evidence in the report suggests that reconciliation movement in Australia is at a tipping point.

When it comes to issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we need to move from safe spaces into brave spaces. We want to see the kind of change that will improve or in some cases save the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We need to make bolder actions.

It will come as no surprise to anyone here that the role of education is a driving force when it comes to reconciliation. Our State report speaks directly to what educators and educational institutions can do to move from safe to brave. Includes things like supporting racism and unconscious bias learnings and education, integrating First Nations cultures and ways of doing and being into curricula, supporting initiatives that educate on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and achievement, and working with First Nations people to improve the teaching of our histories and cultures.

And I'm pleased to say that this is the kind of work that Swinburne is undertaking. The story that Swinburne's RAP tells is one of a significant commitment, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision making. Your leadership project, Australia's first National Centre for Reconciliation, to rigorously investigate opportunities and challenges on the road to reconciliation, stands as a testament to the seriousness and dedication to which Swinburne approaches its commitments.

Your RAPs show that you are continuously looking for ways to strategically use your expertise and your sphere of influence to truly create change. So on behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend Swinburne University of Technology on this ambitious, innovative, and considered second Elevate RAP, and I look forward to following your success as you join us in this reconciliation journey. Thank you.

ANDREW PETERS: Just got a little something for you.

KAREN MUNDINE: [INAUDIBLE]

ANDREW PETERS: Thank you very much. Thank you, Karen. I should also, to point out from a personal point of view, what a great job Reconciliation Australia is doing in helping organisations like ours get better at what we need to get better at. So thank you.

I'd now like to introduce Professor Andrew Gunstone, who is the Executive Director of the Moondani Toombadool Centre and the Executive Director of Reconciliation Strategy and Leadership at Swinburne University. Andrew sent me his bio this morning, and it reads as this.

Professor Gunstone is a mad bloke and a good Hawthorn supporter. I might have got that mixed up, mate. Sorry. Please welcome Professor Andrew Gunstone.

ANDREW GUNSTONE: Thanks, Andrew. Good afternoon to everyone both here and online. Thank you, Stacie, for your wonderful and generous Welcome to Country, and thank you also to the amazing Djirri Djirri dancers.

I respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on where we meeting today and pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. I also pay my respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are here today, and acknowledge the continuing and unseeded sovereignties of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

Wominjeka

As Stacie mentioned, Wominjeka means welcome, come with purpose, in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri peoples. Often, the meaning of Wominjeka is shortened to Welcome. But the full meaning is very powerful and very engaging.

Welcome-- come with purpose. What is our purpose? What are our intentions as a university with reconciliation? What are we going to be doing on our reconciliation journey?

The safe answer to this question is to focus on improving relationships. And that's an important focus. As Karen mentioned, relationships are the key to reconciliation. But as important as improving relationships is, reconciliation is far broader than this.

Our 2020-23 RAP recognises the critical elements of reconciliation-- Indigenous rights, including self-determination, Indigenous knowledges, cultural safety, decolonizing and Indigenising, reparative justice, history and truth telling, relationships, and addressing racism and white privilege. As we work on implementing our 2020-23 RAP, our actions, and our targets, we need to acknowledge all of these critical elements of reconciliation in all of our work. By doing this, we will be answering Reconciliation Australia's call to move from safe to brave and address their theme for National Reconciliation Week 2021. More than a word, reconciliation takes action.

The 1st of July, 1992 is an important date for both Swinburne and the reconciliation movement across the country. On this date, Swinburne gained university status. Also on this date, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, the forerunner to Reconciliation Australia, launched their very first strategic plan.

In our first two decades as a University, while we developed strong educational relationships with communities, particularly in the TAFE space, we could have engaged more with reconciliation. In the past decade, though, we've made much greater steps in our reconciliation journey. Including:

In 2014, under the leadership of Dr. Andrew Peters, Lee Jones, and Sharon Rice, we implemented our first RAP.

In 2015, Swinburne created a university-wide position of Executive Director for reconciliation.

In 2017, we developed our second RAP, which is-- it's been said several times, but I'm happy to say it again-- was the first university to receive an Elevate RAP.

In 2018, we created the Moondani Toombadool Centre to provide institutional leadership for all Indigenous matters at Swinburne. Moondani Toombadool means embracing teaching and learning in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri peoples.

Also in 2018, we partnered with Reconciliation Australia and the Korin Gamadji Institute at the Richmond Football Club to organise the inaugural National RAP Conference.

In 2019, we appointed Aunty Dr Jackie Huggins AM as a Vice Chancellor Fellow in Indigenous leadership. I would like to thank Jackie for her wonderful contributions to Swinburne and to give her a shout out because Jackie's live streaming today from Queensland.

Also in 2019, along with Reconciliation Australia and 13 Elevate RAP partners, we developed a joint declaration of support for the Uluru Statement From the Heart. The Uluru Statement from the Heart is now one of the most important guiding documents we have in our RAP journey at Swinburne, and I urge people to read. The statement is a beautiful, evocative statement that calls upon all Australians to engage with critical areas-- voice, treaty, and truth.

And last year, we developed our third RAP, again recognised as an Elevate RAP, which we are launching today.

And as the Vice Chancellor's mentioned, our 2020-23 RAP has four key priorities-- self-determination, which is critical, Indigenous knowledges to be embedded across the university, to ensure Swinburne is a culturally safe place for all Indigenous peoples, and to continue to embed Indigenous matters, reconciliation, and the RAP throughout all areas of the University.

Our RAP's national reconciliation leadership piece is to establish and resource a National Centre for Reconciliation Practice. This multidisciplinary national Centre will build on our national academic, industry, and community leadership in reconciliation and will increase our national understandings of reconciliation in all the key elements in this area.

The Centre will work closely with Indigenous organisations, Reconciliation Australia, industry, governments, other universities to deliver on these important goals. The 2020-23 RAP lists a range of innovative and significant projects for the Centre, and we're delighted to also be including in these projects a range of technology-based ideas. I'm very much looking forward to leading this Centre in November when we establish it, and I'm really calling on people to approach me, and we're really keen to develop a big network of people who are interested in working in the Centre.

The 2020-23 RAP has 120 targets across seven broad themes-- governance and leadership, culture, Indigenous staff, Indigenous students, engagement, teaching and learning, and research. Some of the key targets in our RAP are to appoint an inaugural Pro Vice Chancellor Indigenous. And this is one of the most exciting targets of the RAP, and we're really keen to appoint an Indigenous PVC by the end of the year; to recognise the Moondani Toombadool Centre's leadership in all Indigenous matters; to continue to increase the number of Indigenous academics and professional staff at the university, as well as the number of Indigenous higher education and vocational education students; to Indigenize and decolonize teaching, research, and other areas; to continue to increase the cultural competency of Swinburne's staff and students; to foster reciprocal and respectful relationships externally and internally; and to continue to organise a range of cultural and educational events, including in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

We're strongly encouraging Swinburne staff to engage with the 2020-23 RAP in a number of ways, including:

to encourage staff to explore the RAP and to see where they fit into the RAP, where their teams fit into the RAP; to join the RAP supporters network; to support decolonising and Indigenising truth-telling and antiracist initiatives and campaigns; to continue to attend events such as the annual Reconciliation Lecture and the annual Barak Wonga Oration; to enrol in Indigenous cultural competency training [this is hard to compete]; to connect with the Moondani Toombadool Centre through our internal wiki page to seek advice and discuss ideas; and to contact me if interested in being involved with the National Centre.

I would like to acknowledge a number of people who have contributed to the development of our third RAP:

the guidance and wisdom of Elders and community organisations;

Reconciliation Australia, particularly Karen Mundine, who I'm delighted is here today with us, and Peter Morris. Reconciliation Australia has been incredibly helpful in guiding us, coming back and saying, this target needs to be a bit more finessed, and just really helping us keep on track and to help the document be shaped into what it is today. So thank you so much, Karen.;

the Vice Chancellor, Pascale Quester, Professor Pascale Quester, and her executive group team. Pascale, you've only been here for a few months, but you've hit the ground running. I think you enrolled and completed the culture competency training at the Koorie Heritage Trust in record time, and we are delighted of your support. And thank you so much.;

all of our external community and RAP partners, many of whom are also at the launch today;

Arbup Ash Peters for his wonderful painting Gathering Knowledge, which is our official artwork. A version of it is on the front page of the RAP, and the actual painting is in the foyer of the SPS building;

the RAP Steering Group, particularly chair Ian Hamm, for his wonderful contributions over many years to Swinburne and the RAP Working Group;

but most importantly, most importantly, I would like to acknowledge and thank my Indigenous colleagues at Swinburne, who are extraordinarily generous and patient in the guidance, teaching, advice, and direction to me and many other non-Indigenous colleagues, and who make an extraordinary contribution to Swinburne's ongoing journey of reconciliation. I want to thank particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Finally, I would like to thank the Moondani Toombadool Centre team for their great work in facilitating today's launch and particularly Simone Hamlin, who is superbly coordinated today. Even put on the weather for us.

Thank you, and I hope you have a wonderful time at today's launch at Swinburne's 2020-23 Reconciliation Action Plan.

Sorry. You've got me for a bit longer.

We now come to a very exciting part of today's programme-- the opening of the Aunty Dot Peters AM Flowering Grasslands.

The grasslands have been created at Hawthorn, Croydon, and Wantirna campuses. Designed by Wemba Wemba Man Dean Stewart and organised by the Moondani Toombadool Centre, the grasslands have been named after Yarra Yarra Elder Aunty Dot Peters AM. Aunty Dot was born in 1930 and grew up in and around Healesville and Coranderrk, spending most of her life learning and teaching about culture in the community. She was dedicated to progressing reconciliation in Victoria, working within the community to build understanding and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider society.

Aunty Dot had a decades long association with Swinburne and helped develop our Reconciliation Action Plans. She was generous with her time and very aware of the importance Swinburne places on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and engagement. Aunty Dot's legacy at Swinburne continues through her son, Dr. Andrew Peters, and two nieces, Lea Jones and Vicky Peters, who all work at Swinburne. On a personal note, Dr. Sadie Heckenberg and I interviewed Aunty Dot on Indigenous stolen wages. It was an immense privilege to listen and learn from Aunty Dot, and we're deeply honoured that Aunty Dot wrote the foreword to our book.

I would like to acknowledge a number of people regarding the Aunty Dot Peters AM Flowering Grasslands:

most importantly to acknowledge all the members of the Peters family who are here today and watching online;

Dean Stewart's wonderful design of the flowering grasslands;

two Indigenous businesses, Indigi Print and Dreamtime Designs, for the great work with the signage; and I want to thank members of the Moondani Toombadool Centre and also the Operations team who helped put this project together over the last couple of years.

Can I please invite the Peters family to come up to the flowering grasslands sign and for Andrew to address us.

Thank you.

ANDREW PETERS: Thanks, Andrew. So if we get the family just to come out and stand in front of the sign, please. So mum was one of six siblings.

Unfortunately, she lost an older brother when he was quite young in a shooting accident. But the remaining five siblings are all represented here today and via livestream as well. So we're just waiting now for my uncle Eric, mum's brother, to make his way to the front.

Of course, he's a North Melbourne supporter. So this could take a while. My cousin Vicky here, Uncle Harry, mum's brother's daughter, cousin Vinn, mum's brother Glenn Picolo, his son, my wife Alissa and my son Jackson-- I'm not going to talk for long because obviously, I've talked for enough.

But I just want to address. There's a bit of yelling in the background before. That's exactly why we need education and reconciliation in Australia and point out to that I think they were Hawthorn supporters, Andrew.

So mum was very passionate about Indigenous education. When I was young growing up in Healesville, I knew we were Aboriginal, but it wasn't something that mum forced on me. I saw a lot of other Aboriginal kids be teased at school, and it was something I didn't want to be a part of.

As I got older and learned a bit more and listened to mum a bit more, I guess, too, I developed a pride in who I am as an Aboriginal person and particularly being proud of being Aunty Dot's son, essentially. And so something like this is obviously a very important thing for us as an organisation. But particularly for me, it's really heart-warming to see the influence that mum had in her life.

She left school in year right, I think. She struggled financially all her life. We didn't have an easy life. But mum was never short of being happy and making herself happy and finding ways for that to happen. And often, that was through culture. And I hope that I can spend the rest of my life teaching my boys the importance of that and finding their own path and how to do this and certainly finding ways that I can learn more about my culture and bring it into my work.

One of the things that Karen mentioned before is about relationships. It's something I simply love about working here at Swinburne-- that the connections that we all have, a lot of people who are here I don't work with every day, but we've found ways to connect with each other. And I'm really grateful for that, and I hope that continues well into the future.

So it's my great pleasure now to pass these on to my son Jackson, who's going to cut the-- not a traditional ribbon. It's a gum leaf ribbon. Mum was really a fan of gum leaves. So I'll just get Jackson to cut the ribbon for us and open the gardens.

Thank you, everyone. Please join us now for afternoon tea in the shade behind you, thankfully for a lot of us. Thank you very, very much for coming.

It's a very special occasion, obviously, for Aboriginal staff at the university but also for the university itself and just shows what great steps we're taking. And hopefully this is just, again, the first step in our next journey. Thanks very much. Enjoy.

[APPLAUSE]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]