



# Performing Lines | Reconciliation Action Plan

## REFLECT

January 2019 – January 2020

Performing Lines is based in Sydney, on the land of the *Gadigal* people of the Eora Nation  
Performing Lines WA is based in Perth, on the land of the *Whadjuk* people of the Noongar Nation  
Tasmania Performs is based in Hobart, on the land of the *Muwinina* people

We offer our respect to their peoples and all First Nations peoples of the countries  
in which we work and travel in Australia and internationally

*NOTE: For the purposes of this document:*

- *the term First Nations incorporates Indigenous, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*
- *the name Performing Lines will incorporate Performing Lines, Performing Lines WA and Tasmania Performs*

## Our Organisation

Performing Lines incubates, produces and tours new and transformative performance, creating pathways for innovative artists whose work pushes boundaries and sparks new conversations.

For more than 30 years, Performing Lines has collaborated with arts companies, producers, presenters and funders to bring about creative and strategic opportunities for some of this country's most exciting and diverse contemporary artists and performances.

Working with our teams in Hobart (Tasmania Performs), Perth (Performing Lines WA) and Sydney (Performing Lines), we are committed to giving voice to the diversity of stories from the Australian experience – the First Nations experience is central to this commitment and making artists central in all that we do.

Performing Lines currently employs 15 staff across our three offices. While currently we do not employ any First Nations staff, we are striving to rectify this, as seen in our RAP actions and deliverables below.

Performing Lines has consistently created opportunities for contemporary First Nations performing arts to be developed, presented and experienced nationally and internationally. Our work with First Nations artists began with the tour of Robert Merritt's *The Cakeman* to the World Theatre Festival in Denver, Colorado in 1982, and continues today with a range of creative developments, showcases, platforms, initiatives, residencies, tours and presentations each year.

A significant strategy over the past six years has been our management of the Australia Council funded Blak Lines national touring initiative, which concluded at the end of 2017. This initiative has focused on supporting the touring of contemporary First Nations theatre and dance to regional, remote and metropolitan areas across Australia. For a complete history of our involvement in First Nations projects, refer to our Performing Lines History with First Nation Works ([link](#)).

Performing Lines is committed to working with First Nations artists, arts companies, producers, cultural leaders and communities to build the capacity and impact of the First Nations performing arts sector, particularly through our commitment to:

- implement cultural protocols and culturally safe practices;
- co-produce and tour contemporary works;
- broker and facilitate the transition of expertise, programs and initiatives to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander producers and First Nations-managed entities; and
- provide infrastructure and professional support for the development of new First Nations-led initiatives and companies

## Our RAP

For more than three decades, Performing Lines has fostered relationships with local First Nations artists, arts companies and industry professionals. These relationships have led to a deeper understanding of First Nations needs as a minority sector in the performing arts industry, and we are committed to enhancing the representation of First Nations performing arts in Australia's cultural landscape.

While many Performing Lines team members have broad experience working within First Nations cultures, it is important that knowledge and understanding of First Nations cultural practices and processes are embedded within the company.

Reconciliation is about unity and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. It is about acknowledging and understanding our First Nations heritage and valuing justice and equity for all Australians.

First Nations storytelling in Australia exists within the continuum of more than 60,000 years, and is a highly sophisticated system of ancient knowledge, law and governance, and in the context of modern historical atrocities resulting from colonisation.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is a framework for how we as a company can contribute to reconciliation. It is a plan that documents what we are doing and what we will commit to doing.

At the outset, it is important to acknowledge that the term 'reconciliation' needs to be considered within a much broader cultural, social and political context. As one of our First Nations' colleagues noted when providing feedback on our draft RAP:

*We acknowledge that reconciliation is a term being used here to express a much deeper sentiment, that goes beyond the trope of reconciliation. That is about a framework for institutional change, the 'redistribution of wealth and power' (Gregory Phillips) and the need for us to continue to engage in the deeply psychological conversations that unpack fear of the other.*

*The term 'reconciliation' is part of a long legacy of government policy, from assimilation, to integration, to self-determination, to reconciliation, to shared responsibility, closing the gap and Recognise. Last decade, we saw, in the spirit of reconciliation, the Rudd apology. But how reconciled are we if the government can apologise in one breath, whilst continue to maintain the racially discriminative laws of the Northern Territory Intervention in the next?*

*Reconciliation came about as a government policy in response to the call for treaty, back in the 80's. For reconciliation to be more than rhetoric, it needs to be about valuing First Nations cultures, languages and custodianship.*

Our RAP reflects our commitment to take steps towards implementing and measuring practical actions that will build respectful relationships with, and create opportunities for, First Nations Peoples through our work in the performing arts.

This plan will evolve through regular and ongoing consultation with external and internal stakeholders<sup>1</sup> to improve our individual and collective understanding and knowledge of First Nations Peoples and cultures, and our role in responding to current challenges and opportunities with First Nations Peoples in Australia.

With this Plan, we acknowledge:

- Colonialism as a framework, not a one-off event;
- Whiteness as a construct, which white people benefit from and are located within;
- The First Nations peoples as the Traditional Custodians and original inhabitants of Australia, and their continuing and ongoing sovereignty of First Nations peoples;
- Their sovereignty has never been ceded, no formal agreements were made and to this day no formal treaty has ever been negotiated;
- Their loss of land, children, health and kin, the erosion of their languages, cultures and lore, and the manifold impacts of colonisation;
- In better understanding the past and the present for First Nations Peoples, we can work towards a future based on the recognition of their aspirations and rights.
- While the RAP will be reviewed annually, it is critically important that responsibility for evolving and implementing the framework for a ten-year plan is imbedded across Performing Lines, through our board, our team and our programming to ensure that the RAP constantly aligns with our mission and values, as well as with our HR, operational and programming processes and procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> We sincerely thank the many team members and First Nations colleagues who provided advice and feedback on our draft RAP, including Ms Liza-Mare Syron/PL Board Member and Co-Director, Moogahlin Performing Arts; Mr Gheran Steel/CEO Boon Wurrung Foundation; Ms Lee-Ann Buckskin/Lee-Ann Buckskin & Associates; and Ms Merindah Donnelly/Executive Producer, BlakDance.

The initial development of this RAP was done by previous CEO Karilyn Brown, and Administrator Sarah Mott, in consultation with external First Nations industry colleagues (mentioned above) and feedback from an internal working group, which included:

Narelle Lewis (Producer)

Denise Wilson (Community Engagement Coordinator)

Liz Young (Production Manager)

Pippa Bailey (Senior Producer)

Fenn Gordon (Senior Producer)

It is now being championed by Executive team Marion Potts (Executive Producer) and Megan Roberts (General Manager), with enthusiastic endorsement from the Performing Lines Board.

### **Partnerships And Current Activities:**

1) **The Indigenous Community Engagement Coordinator initiative:** through this position, we strengthen knowledge of and access to First Nations artists and performance by assisting presenters to build locally-specific programs of engagement with their First Nations communities, as well as strategies to engage with their broader audiences. We are also evaluating the outcomes, learnings and recommendations of the initiative, and the reports/cased studies from 2015 (Head Full of Love) and 2016 (Sugarland) are available on our website. The case study for 2017 (Saltbush) will be published later in the year.

2) **Long-term support and mentoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led performing arts companies:** in recent years Performing Lines has worked closely with ILBIJERRI Theatre Company and BlakDance in strategic development, international and national engagements, partnership initiatives and team planning.

3) **The Blak Lines New Work Platform:** this was a sector development project piloted in 2017. It was devised in consultation with First Nations performing arts colleagues and produced and managed by Performing Lines. The Blak Lines New Work Platform was held in May 2017, in association with the YIRRAMBOI First Nations Arts Festival in Melbourne. The Platform built on the model of Dana Waranara presented in partnership with BlakDance in 2015. The Platform brought together 16 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists with 36

presenters, producers and programmers from around Australia and overseas. A three-day immersive gathering designed to encourage a deep understanding of the artist's practice and work, the New Work Platform was extremely successful and has already resulted in a number of potential future presentations and collaborations. A second iteration will be held at the 2019 YIRRAMBOI Festival.

4) **Performing Country:** Performing Country is a partnership between BlakDance, Blackfulla Performing Arts Alliance, Performing Lines, and Performing Arts Connections (PAC) Australia. The initiative will be led and managed by BlakDance, in consultation with a national Indigenous Advisory Group, and with initiative partners and stakeholders. It is a shared framework between First Nations communities and performing arts centres that will drive the transformation of community driven artistic outcomes, engagement and programming approaches in performing arts centres through cultural safety programs, the implementation of First Nations cultural protocols, and meaningful connection with First Nations communities. Funding is currently being source from foundations, donors and government agencies.

5) **Tasmania Performs Mentorships:** Senior Producer Annette Downs is mentoring two emerging First Nations artists Jordy Gregg (performer/writer/film maker) and Denni Proctor (performer/song writer) with support from the Arts Tasmania Aboriginal Arts Grant.



## Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish a RAP Working Group	- Form a RAP Working Group that is operational to support the implementation of our RAP, comprising of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and decision-making staff from across our organisation.	January 2019	General Manager
2. Build internal and external relationships	- Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.	January 2019	Administrator
	- Develop a list of RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.	January 2019	Administrator
3. Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	- Encourage our staff to attend a NRW event.	May 2019	General Manager
	- Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2019	Administrator
	- Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May 2019	General Manager
4. Raise internal awareness of our RAP	- Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness amongst all staff across the organisation about our RAP commitments.	January 2019	General Manager, Administrator
	- Develop and implement a plan to engage and inform key internal stakeholders of their responsibilities within our RAP.	March 2019	General Manager



# Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning and development	- Conduct a review of cultural awareness training needs within our organisation.	January 2019	Administrator
	- Appoint and support meetings of a First Nations consultation/advisory group to provide cultural advice and guidance on Performing Lines' practices, processes and programming	February 2019	Executive Producer
	- Develop a business case for increasing awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements within our organisation.	July 2019	General Manager
	- Capture data measure our staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.	April 2019	Administrator
	- Use both external learning tools and in-house opportunities to implement cultural awareness training and cultural safety/competency development for board members and staff.	November 2019	General Manager
6. Recognise and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates of significance	- Collect and evaluate feedback and use to inform future learning strategies	November 2019	General Manager
	- Ensure that significant First Nations dates and community events are recognised and acknowledged in our annual calendar of events	January 2019	Administrator
	- Replace organisational leave on Australia Day public holiday on January 26th with a staff holiday on a more culturally sensitive day (to be determined)	January 2019	General Manager
7. Participate in and celebrate NAIDOC Week	- Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week which includes information about the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.	July 2019	Administrator Marketing Manager
	- Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting community events in our local area.	July 2019	Administrator
	- Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2019	General Manager



8. Utilise tours and presentations to increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and cultures	- Ensure that First Nations protocols are observed during presentations and tours, and that all stakeholders involved in the tour are aware of the appropriate protocols for each location of each tour	June 2019	Executive Producer, Production Manager
	- facilitate First Nations community engagement activities around tours and presentations, including the participation of Elders and community members as audience members	June 2019	Executive Producer, Production Manager
9. Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols	- Develop a Performing Lines <i>First Nations Cultural Safety and Protocol Guide</i> that will articulate principles and practices to be implemented in all aspects of the company's operations, procedures, activities and tours, and ensure that the values and behaviours expected of all employees (artists, staff, cast, crew) reflect a culturally informed, safe and inclusive company	January 2019	General Manager, Executive Producer
	- Scope and develop a list of local Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisations sphere of influence. This includes tours, events and conferences that PL is involved in.	January 2019	General Manager
	- Include an Acknowledgment of Country at the commencement of Board meetings and PL events	February 2019	General Manager
	- Place an Acknowledgement of Country plaque at the entrance to the PL offices	January 2019	Administrator
	- Explore who the Traditional Owners are of the lands and waters in our local area	January 2019	Administrator
	- Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness and understanding of the meaning and significance behind Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols (including any local protocols)	March 2019	Administrator

We will be proactive in creating an organisational culture that is open and conscious of the inequity between First Nations communities and the dominant white culture; we will acknowledge and show respect for the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and travel; and we will recognise the cultural practices of First Nations communities.

We will continue to foster opportunities for showcasing creative developments, and the presentation of tour-ready works.



## Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment	- Identify current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment and development opportunities	January 2019	Administrator
	- Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation	January 2019	General Manager
	- Employ a First Nations Producer, Associate Producer and Community Engagement Coordinator on full-time and/or part-time basis (potentially in partnership with First Nations companies through a Performing Lines Indigenous Fellowship initiative)	January 2019	Executive Producer
	- Ensure that at least one First Nations representative is appointed to the board of Performing Lines, with adequate support and mentoring available to them as required	January 2019	Board Chair
	- Proactively seek First Nations candidates for employment opportunities with Performing Lines, including for key decision-making roles	January 2019	General Manager
	- Explore professional development and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff	January 2019	Administrator
11. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity	- Develop an understanding of the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses	January 2019	Administrator
	- Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	January 2019	General Manager
	- Source, and where possible, contract First Nations individuals, companies and businesses to Performing Lines projects – production, stage management, marketing and publicity, photography, design, catering and other procurement services	December , 2019	Administrator
12. Maintain and strengthen current partnerships and initiatives that develop First Nations	- Evaluate the value and impact of the Blak Lines national touring initiative in consultation with Blak Lines consortium members, Community Cultural Connections Group members and stakeholders, and document findings, learnings and achievements	April 2019	General Manager

artists, arts companies, producers and cultural leaders, as well as building the capacity and impact of the First Nations performing arts sector	- Identify potential future avenues for the development and presentation/touring of First Nations work (including the New Work Platform model), in consultation with the First Nations performing arts sector, the current Blak Lines consortium members and other key stakeholders possibly through a re-envisioned national Blak Lines initiative	April 2019	Executive Producer
	- Collaborate with First Nations-led performing arts companies to facilitate the transition of expertise, skills, programs and initiatives to the First Nations performing arts sector	December 2019	Executive Producer
	- Support the development and implementation of the Indigenous cultural safety/Performing Country initiative, in partnership with BlakDance, Performing Arts Connections and the Blakfulla Performing Arts Alliance	January 2019	Executive Producer
	- Maintain strong connections with a number of First Nations artists and projects, including mentoring, creative developments, showcases, presentations and tours.	December 2019	Executive Producer
	- Facilitate opportunities, where funding is secured, that will connect new work by First Nations artists with producers and presenters (such as the Blak Lines New Works Platform)	December 2019	Executive Producer

Performing Lines has provided employment and mentoring opportunities for First Nations team members (Associate Producers, Indigenous Community Engagement Coordinator), and is committed to developing the skills, capacity and expertise of First Nations arts workers.

It is a critical moment in First Nations performing arts when understanding and knowledge, and cultural and presenting contexts, will converge to create a powerful momentum for a new era of First Nations-led dance and theatre practice. We are committed and passionate about creating opportunities and longer-term outcomes for First Nations performing artists.

Performing Lines is committed to working with First Nations artists, arts companies, producers and cultural leaders in building the capacity and impact of the First Nations performing arts sector.



## Governance and Tracking Progress

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Build support for the RAP	- Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation.	January 2019	General Manager
	- Define systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP activities.	January 2019	Administrator
	- Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2019	Administrator
14. Review and Refresh RAP	- Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements.	May 2019	Administrator
	- Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review	June 2019	Administrator
	- Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement	September 2019	Administrator
15. Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally	- Share progress, challenges and opportunities of RAP deliverables at annual company-wide staff planning days	November 2019, 2020	General Manager
	- Seek feedback from First Nations artists, arts companies and colleagues on our RAP approach, behaviours and outcomes	October 2019	General Manager
	- Annually report to the Board on progress made against RAP deliverables, and develop recommendations as required	June 2019	General Manager
	- Ensure RAP progress, achievements and opportunities are communicated to the wider community via our website	January 2019	Marketing Manager

The company is committed to reaching and transparently reviewing deliverables included in this Reconciliation Action Plan.

Everyone's engagement and cooperation is critical to achieving our commitment to reconciliation with First Nations peoples.

### For Public Enquiries About Our RAP:

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