



# **GEELONG CATS RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN**

MAY 2014 – MAY 2016



# OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

Photo: Colin Carter (Geelong Cats President),  
BJ O'Toole (Artist), Mathew Stokes (Geelong  
Cats Aboriginal Liaison Officer).

Geelong Cats is committed to contributing to Australia's reconciliation journey.

We recognise and value all cultural backgrounds but also understand the special place that Aboriginal people have in the history of our nation and our game.

We know that, through sport, we have a strong voice that can raise awareness and inform our staff, players, fans, sponsors and the wider community about reconciliation and what it means for each of us.

## Cover/Centre Spread

The painting represents "BUNJIL".

The Eagle spreading his wings to culturally protect the Aboriginal players and bring together the wider football community as One.

The five shields represent the Kulin Nations that Bunjil protects.

## Artist – BJ O'Toole

BJ O'Toole is a young Aboriginal man from Wathaurong Country in Geelong, Victoria, Australia.



## FOREWORD BY MATHEW STOKES

I am proud to be involved in the development of the club's second edition of its Reconciliation Action Plan and to see the commitment from all levels: players, staff, board and members in creating actions that will ultimately support the closing of the health gap.

Aboriginal Health issues are not something we experience often at our club – as players, we are, the majority of the time, in good health physically and mentally.

However, when we visit some Aboriginal communities we do witness some of these health issues. As individual players, we have the chance to highlight areas of need for our people, but with the support of our club and the commitment of a RAP, we have an even greater chance of affecting change.

Through the actions developed by the club's RAP working group, we will continue our work in community health education, take a leadership role on the issue of racial vilification and develop ongoing opportunities for employment and talent pathways within the club.

At the Geelong Cats, each of us – players and staff – is valued for not only what we can provide to our club, but also where we have come from – our story – the background that makes us the person who strives for excellence.

The RAP journey is young for our club, but I am proud of the path we are on and look forward to being part of this next edition in our story.

**MATHEW STOKES**  
Geelong Cats Aboriginal Liaison Officer

## MESSAGE FROM GEELONG CATS PRESIDENT & CEO

The Geelong Cats inaugural RAP 2013-2014 has seen many Club highlights. We take great pride in the milestones and history that is being created and that will continue into the future.

The RAP Working Group and the contribution of our seven Aboriginal players Mathew Stokes, Travis Varcoe, Allen Christensen, Steven Motlop, Joel Hamling, Brad Hartman and Zac Bates over this period and beyond is to be commended.

Our values are the strong beliefs, character traits and working relationships of people within our organisation. They are:

**RESPECTFUL** All people are treated with respect regardless of their position or background.

**PRECISION** We seek excellence in everything that we do and always look for ways to improve.

**ADVENTUROUS** We enjoy facing our industry's challenges and embrace progress with open arms.

**CONVICTION** Everyone involved with the Club is fully committed and gives 100 percent effort.

**UNITED** We are selfless, we support and care for each other and we collaborate across our Club.

**COMMERCIAL AND CONSIDERED** We drive for good commercial outcomes but always take the needs of our stakeholders into account.

**INTEGRITY** We uphold high standards of behaviour, have deep respect for honesty and always work within the rules.

The Geelong Cats RAP in 2014-2016 through our players, our programs and our people is seeking to strengthen our relationships with Aboriginal communities and provide leadership in the area of Reconciliation within our Industry.

It is also of great importance for us to provide a culturally welcoming workplace and Club for Aboriginal employees, community members and supporters as well as for players and their families. Through the Club's Respect for Diversity policy we will continue to promote respectful behaviours, understanding and acceptance of all people.

Our continuing RAP journey is not just aspirational but will be recognised and measured through our actions and known to our stakeholders as part of our core business.

We are proud to launch the second Geelong Cats RAP for 2014-2016.

**COLIN CARTER**  
Geelong Cats President

**BRIAN COOK**  
Geelong Cats CEO



Photo: 2012 Gove / Groote Eylandt trip

## RESPECT

Our Club value RESPECTFUL means that all people are treated with respect regardless of their background or position. Respectful behaviour has a powerful effect on those who are giving respect to others and those on the receiving end. Demonstrating respect to others is our starting point; it's not something that someone has to earn from us. We live our values and in return hope to influence others to do the same.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET
<p><b>Respect for Diversity</b> Promote available opportunities through targeted networks. Create an increased understanding and appreciation of diversity and the policy pillar of "Race".</p>	<p>GM P &amp; C</p>	<p>May 2014-2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review ongoing induction, training and development for staff in 2015</li> <li>• To develop further processes for recruitment with an Aboriginal specific target audience in 2016.</li> <li>• Develop an ongoing review and commitment for all staff to be undertaking cultural awareness training from May 2014.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Racial Vilification - Promoting respectful behaviours</b> Continue to provide Industry leadership of the Geelong Cats Respect for Diversity policy.</p>	<p>Club wide integrated strategy with the lead from GM P &amp; C/Aboriginal Liaison Officer/ Media/PR Coordinator</p>	<p>Oct 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalise existing process for all complaints and resolution of incidents relating to racial vilification in 2015.</li> <li>• Engage and train staff required to act in response to complaints and resolution relating to racial vilification in 2015.</li> <li>• Develop a clear communications strategy of the Respect for Diversity policy (Race pillar), Members Code Of Conduct and Anti social behaviour reporting for stakeholders of the Geelong Cats in 2015.</li> <li>• Review the opportunity to promote campaigns with resources such as "Racism Stops With Me" to encourage respectful and positive behaviours in 2015.</li> </ul>

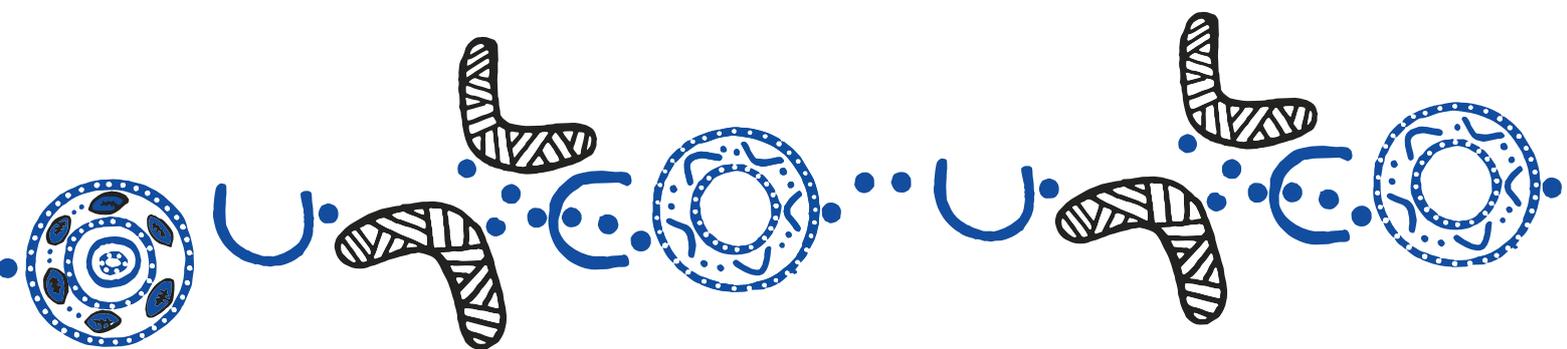




Photo: L-R (Top): James Podsiadly, James Kelly, Travis Varcoe, Joel Selwood. L-R (Bottom): Tom Lonergan, Steve Johnson, Graham "Polly" Farmer, Mathew Stokes.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET
<p><b>Supporting our players</b> Provide a welcoming environment for current players, their families and Community.</p>	<p>Player Development Manager/Football Operations Coordinator/Aboriginal Liaison Officer</p>	<p>May 2014-2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction for families into the Club</li> <li>• Invitation extended to the Aboriginal players families for significant events on the Aboriginal calendar such as AFL Indigenous Round from 2014.</li> <li>• Review opportunities to increase cultural awareness of the Football department within the AFL Players Association Indigenous Advisory Board Cultural Framework from 2015.</li> <li>• Review opportunities to acknowledge the contribution and leadership of senior Aboriginal players within their own Community in 2015. This could be at their former school, Club or at a significant local venue during AFL Indigenous Round and/or NAIDOC week from 2015.</li> <li>• Create a visual cultural awareness opportunity for the whole playing group of each Aboriginal players totem or reference to their Country during AFL Indigenous Round and/or NAIDOC week from 2015.</li> <li>• To provide external cultural mentoring from 2014 for each Aboriginal player.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural protocols</b> Incorporate Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country into match days, functions and major Club events.</p>	<p>Commercial Operations Manager</p>	<p>May 2014-2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledgement of Country TVC in function rooms and pre-game on the big screen at all home games.</li> <li>• Engage a traditional owner to provide a Welcome to Country at significant Club events</li> <li>• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags flown on home match day. Review opportunity to permanently fly flags within Simonds Stadium in 2015.</li> <li>• Develop a database of local Aboriginal key contacts for the Geelong Cats intranet</li> </ul>
<p><b>Honouring the past</b> Engage past Aboriginal players that have played for the Club.</p>	<p>Honoring the Past Committee reporting through GM Community Development</p>	<p>AFL Indigenous Round May/June 2014-2016 To otherwise coincide with key dates in the Aboriginal calendar where possible annually such as NAIDOC week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitation extended to the Aboriginal past players for significant events such as AFL Indigenous Round.</li> </ul>







Photo: 2012 Gove / Groote Eylandt trip

## RELATIONSHIPS

One of the Club's core values is UNITED in our support of each other. We pride ourselves on our relationships with key stakeholders across all departments within our organisation. Our relationship with Aboriginal Australians, our players, our co-workers, our members, our businesses, our community is central to our success as a Club and core to our commitment, through inclusion.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET
<b>RAP Working Group</b> Regular meetings of the RAP Working Group	GM People & Culture	May 2014-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To include Aboriginal consultation across our key program areas, including players and their families in a relevant ongoing forum and reporting into the RAP Working Group from 2014.</li> <li>Commit to four meetings per annum from 2014.</li> <li>Representative of all levels and departments of the Club.</li> <li>To ensure a RAP induction of new employees engaged in the RAP Working Group is provided by the Chair.</li> </ul>
<b>Aboriginal Liaison Officer</b> To continue the development of the current role and create future pathway opportunities for other players to this role.	GM Community Development/Player Development Manager/Football Operations Coordinator	May 2014-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing public leadership and advocacy for the Geelong Cats RAP and programs</li> <li>Currently represented on the Geelong Cats Players Leadership Group.</li> <li>2014 nomination as a representative on the AFL Players Association Indigenous Advisory Board.</li> <li>Providing mentoring to the Aboriginal playing group</li> <li>Providing consultation and advisory for the Geelong Cats RAP, Player and Community Development departments</li> </ul>
<b>National Reconciliation Week</b> To celebrate and promote National Reconciliation Week as a key event on the Aboriginal calendar.	GM People & Culture/Media/PR Coordinator	May 2014-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commit to raising awareness of National Reconciliation Week through promotional materials internally in May/June 2015 and 2016.</li> <li>To create social media awareness to promote the Geelong Cats RAP journey in May/June 2015 and 2016.</li> </ul>



ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET
<p><b>Closing the Health Gap Community program</b> To advocate the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal Australians and promote the health behaviours that will close the gap.</p>	<p>Club wide integrated strategy with the lead from GM Community Development/Media/PR Coordinator</p>	<p>To coincide with AFL Indigenous Round and/or with key dates in the Aboriginal calendar where possible annually such as NAIDOC week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To utilise AFL Indigenous round and/or Club home game to highlight Closing the Health Gap as a message.</li> <li>• To promote relevant information about the Round and the Club programs through external and internal communications annually.</li> <li>• To continue the promotion of the Geelong Cats Indigenous guernsey "story".</li> <li>• Using key dates on the Aboriginal calendar to host local Barwon/ South West Aboriginal community members to engage in a range of events/programs/activities with Geelong Cats through the Deakin Cats Community Centre and the Geelong Cats community framework.</li> <li>• To continue providing a community program targeting Aboriginal youth with health promoting messages to prevent smoking and chronic disease through preventative education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gove and Groote Eylandt Partnership program</b> The Geelong Cats will continue this long standing partnership providing football development, supporting educational opportunities and promoting healthy lifestyles. Importantly the partnership provides a cultural learning experience for players and staff.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Liaison Officer/Player Development Manager</p>	<p>July and November annually 2014-2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalise partnerships and establish an ongoing Planning Group to plan and implement this activity</li> <li>• Planning Group to consult with the local community a minimum of three times per annum</li> <li>• Two trips per annum for players and Football Department staff</li> <li>• To work together with local elders/land council to align or promote a common purpose.</li> <li>• Football development/program targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 x Junior School Visits (per annum)</li> <li>• 4 x Football Clinics (per annum)</li> <li>• 1 x Coaching Education (per annum)</li> <li>• 2 x Senior Training Session (per annum)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>The Gathering</b> To promote Healthy Lifestyle Choices and Leadership to empower Aboriginal Youth of the local Barwon South West Region in partnership at an annual camp.</p>	<p>GM Community Development/Aboriginal Liaison Officer</p>	<p>To coincide with key dates in the Aboriginal calendar where possible annually such as NAIDOC week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide facilitation for the Closing the Health Gap Advisory Group consulting with local Aboriginal representatives a minimum of three times per annum.</li> <li>• To formalise the pilot program from 2014 for ongoing delivery.</li> <li>• To engage 50 youth per annum</li> <li>• To commence a formal impact evaluation in 2016</li> </ul>
<p><b>RAP Leadership</b> To communicate and share our RAP journey with Geelong Cats external stakeholders and provide opportunities for engagement in RAP activities</p>	<p>Club wide integrated strategy with the lead from Commercial Operations Manager/ Merchandise Manager</p>	<p>Reconciliation Week May/June 2014-2016 and AFL Indigenous Round 2014-2016 To otherwise coincide with key dates in the Aboriginal calendar where possible annually such as NAIDOC week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consult local Aboriginal representatives twice per annum through the Closing the Health Gap Advisory Group.</li> <li>• To promote relevant information through external communications at least once annually.</li> <li>• To continue the promotion of the Geelong Cats Indigenous guernsey "story".</li> <li>• To develop opportunities for new local artists in the guernsey design from 2015.</li> <li>• To develop and provide leadership in 2015 for a RAP networking forum of relevant sponsors and local organisations to share knowledge.</li> <li>• To review in 2015 the opportunity to share cultural training for stakeholders such as the cheer squad, sponsors and program partners.</li> <li>• To develop a tool to measure Geelong Cats RAP stakeholder knowledge from 2016.</li> </ul>
<p><b>RAP Growth</b> To communicate and share our RAP journey with Geelong Cats staff and provide opportunities for engagement in RAP activities</p>	<p>RAP Growth To communicate and share our RAP journey with Geelong Cats staff and provide</p>	<p>Reconciliation Week May/June 2014-2016 and AFL Indigenous Round 2014-2016 To otherwise coincide with key dates in the Aboriginal calendar where possible annually such as NAIDOC week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide formal and informal staff educational and cultural awareness opportunities through celebrations at least once annually from 2014.</li> <li>• A minimum of one representative provided for opportunities promoted by the AFL and other Clubs for RAP networking.</li> <li>• To host on one occasion other AFL Clubs to share RAP knowledge from 2015-2016.</li> <li>• To measure a raised awareness of staff of the RAP and it's programs through staff engagement surveys in 2015-2016.</li> </ul>

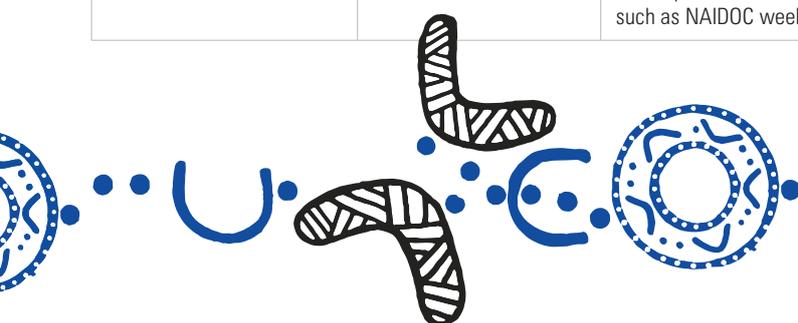




Photo: 2012 Gove / Groote Eylandt trip

## OPPORTUNITIES

An AFL Club is often in a unique position to “make things happen” in the community. We can open doors, create networks, lead change initiatives, advocate for progress, and leverage partnerships across industries and agencies. As highly visible members of the community, the Geelong Cats players, coaches and staff understand their unique public role and aspire to make a positive contribution to the community.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET
<b>Supporting talent</b> Provide a welcoming environment for local Aboriginal Football talent to experience an elite sporting environment.	Club wide integrated strategy with the lead from Football Operations Coordinator/ Aboriginal Liaison Officer	Annually 2015 & 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To work with AFL Barwon/AFL Indigenous Kickstart and other programs to host pathway opportunities where practical from 2015.</li> <li>Sessions and mentoring coordinated with current Aboriginal players.</li> </ul>
<b>Employment and training</b> Provide a welcoming environment for Aboriginal trainees to experience the AFL Industry, promoting training pathways and higher educational attainment.	GM P & C	Oct/Nov 2014 for season 2015 Oct/Nov 2015 for season 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To work with relevant partners to provide two trainee ships (a total of four) for local Aboriginal people in 2015 and 2016.</li> <li>To refine the supports for Aboriginal trainees as piloted in 2014.</li> <li>To refine supports for Geelong Cats managers and staff as piloted in 2014.</li> </ul>
<b>Supplier and business diversity</b> To review current suppliers and procurement to be inclusive of Aboriginal business and industry.	Commercial Operations Manager/GM Hospitality, Gaming & Venues	Oct 2015  Feb 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the opportunity to support local and national Aboriginal businesses and agencies in 2015.</li> <li>Implement any changes from the review to procurement in 2016.</li> </ul>

## TRACKING PROGRESS AND REPORTING

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET
Report achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia for inclusion in the Annual Impact Measurement Report.	GM P & C	2015-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually.</li> </ul>



## OUR BUSINESS

Photo L-R: Mathew Stokes, Allen Christensen, Travis Varcoe, Joel Hamling, Steven Motlop, Brad Hartman, Zac Bates.

Geelong Cats is a 153 year old sporting organisation of the Australian Football League. Geelong Cats employ over 100 staff working in its administration area and 47 players on its list. As of June 2014 the Club has 42,103 members.

Currently, the Club has seven Aboriginal players on its list including Mathew Stokes, Travis Varcoe, Allen Christensen, Steven Motlop, Joel Hamling, Brad Hartman and Zac Bates. Geelong Cats has a proud history and has recently enjoyed success with three premierships in the past ten AFL seasons.

## OUR FOCUS AREAS

2014 – 2016

There are numerous advocates for Reconciliation at the Geelong Cats beyond the RAP Working Group and the Aboriginal players. To ensure the continued and healthy growth of the RAP and it's programs the Club has reflected on its strengths, acknowledged its weaknesses and recognised new opportunities. The Geelong Cats brand is known to be particularly loved in the Aboriginal Communities of Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory. The Club will focus it's 2014-2016 efforts in the following areas:

To assist in Closing the Health Gap by raising awareness of the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle.

To measure impact that our programs and partnerships are recognised as meeting the needs of the communities in which they are delivered.

Supporting our players, their families and communities to be connected with their Aboriginal culture.

# OUR RAP

The Geelong Cats RAP journey stemmed from the work the Club has done in recent years to establish a Respect for Diversity Policy. This policy seeks to build on current respectful behaviours within the Club whilst seeking to improve our culture, understanding and acceptance and appreciation for diverse people, where possible.

As the policy states:

“The Geelong Football Club is a welcoming place where we seek to engage respectfully with people with diverse experiences and backgrounds. We believe that this will deepen our understanding and appreciation of others, motivate us to embrace our differences and make us richer for the experience. As a result our Club will strengthen and grow.”

The Geelong Cats understand the importance and value diversity in all its forms and therefore, we seek to appreciate and embrace everyone who wants to be part of the Geelong Cats experience, we are proud of the learning and achievement from the Club’s Inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan 2013-2014.

# OUR WORKING PARTY

GM People & Culture (Chair)  
Aboriginal Liaison Officer  
GM Community Development  
GM Hospitality, Gaming and Venues  
Commercial Operations Manager  
Merchandise Manager  
Player Development Manager  
Media/PR Coordinator  
Facilities/IT Coordinator  
Football Operations Coordinator  
and external experts from time to time.



Geelong Cats, Simonds Stadium  
PO Box 461, Geelong VIC 3220 | [geelongcats.com.au](http://geelongcats.com.au)

Please note: Throughout this document, the term Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.