



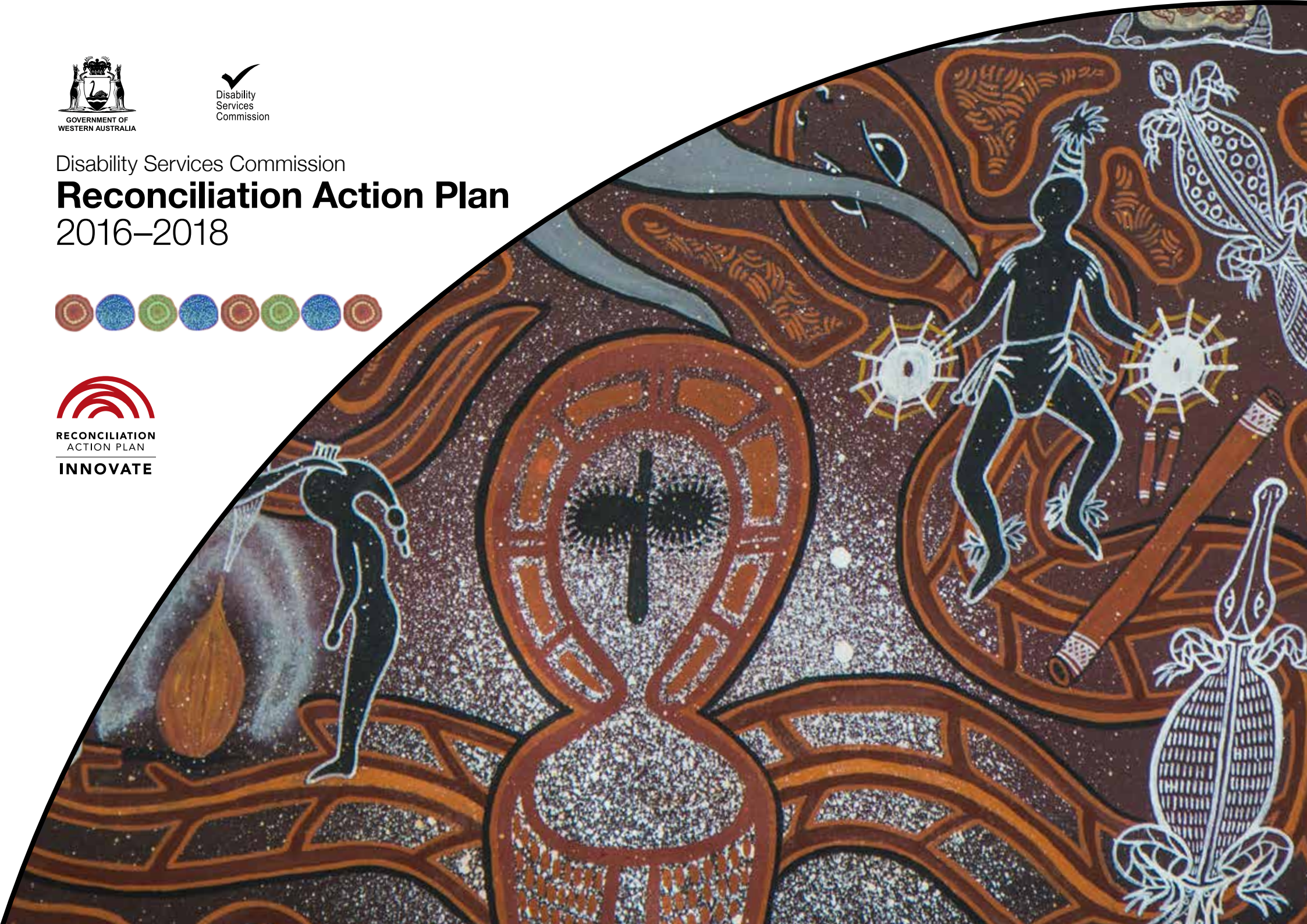
Disability Services Commission

Reconciliation Action Plan 2016–2018



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

INNOVATE



Acknowledgment of Country

The Disability Services Commission acknowledges Aboriginal peoples as the First Peoples of Western Australia and traditional custodians of the land. We value and recognise Aboriginal people's continuing connection to land and their cultures. We pay our respects to Elders both past and present.

Language used in this document

The word 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and is used in accordance with the West Australian Government standard. However, the words 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' are used where they are part of a report, program or quotation. Aboriginal 'peoples' rather than Aboriginal 'people' is used to reflect the plurality and diversity of Western Australia's Aboriginal communities.

Message from the Director General

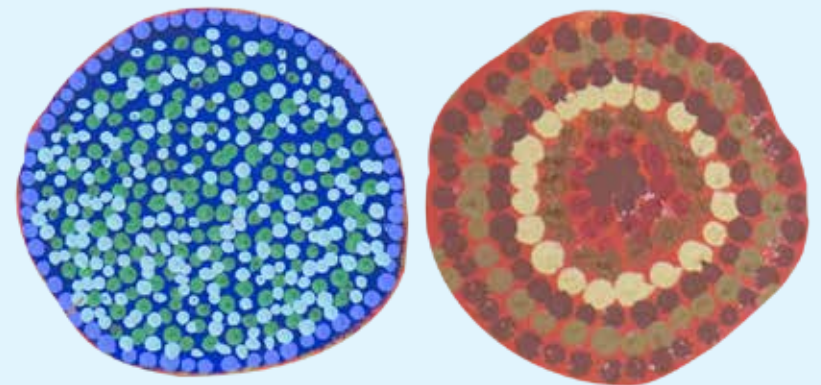
Our vision is that all people live in welcoming communities that facilitate citizenship, friendship, mutual support and a fair go for everyone. Supporting people with disability to participate and be included in community life is an important way to support this vision. The Commission recognises that inclusion encompasses recognising and respecting a person's history and culture.

This Reconciliation Action Plan 2016–2018 reflects our commitment to improve the inclusion of Aboriginal peoples in community life. To achieve reconciliation requires working together to recognise and address the cultural, social and economic needs of Aboriginal Australians.

The Reconciliation Action Plan has been developed by staff and the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and endorsed by the Corporate Executive, the Disability Services Commission Board and Reconciliation Australia.

The Commission is committed to reconciliation and I am pleased to present our Reconciliation Action Plan 2016–2018.

Dr Ron Chalmers
Director General
Disability Services Commission





Front cover artist: Kirsty Burgu

Title: Reconciliation

Kirsty is a Ngarinyin Worrora woman born at Mowanjum, near Derby, and has lived most of her life there (except for time studying). She is a deep-thinking artist who always endeavours to pass on a message to her audience.

Kirsty remains engaged in the traditional stories she heard as a child but is one of a new generation of painters at Mowanjum Aboriginal Art and Culture Centre who interprets the old stories in new ways. Kirsty uses a wide range of traditional and contemporary materials, including ochre on bark, ochre and acrylic on canvas, ink on paper and woodcut printing. “There are so many stories and they all have so much to teach us about life,” she said.

Kirsty’s artwork has featured in four group exhibitions in Broome, Perth and the Kimberley and she was the overall winner of the Kimberley Art Prize in 2010.

“This painting is my thought on reconciliation,” she said. “Firstly, I am an Aboriginal woman and I think that before I can be reconciled with others I need to be reconciled to my Aboriginal heritage and history. Which includes my stories, songs, language, dance, country, land, fresh waters, sea and my ancestors,” she said.

“The boab tree, which is seen all around the Kimberley, represents me. I am like that boab tree with its roots deep in my culture.

“The Wandjina is my people’s spiritual being, that helped in the creation of the world with its animal, water and lands. The Wandjina gave us all our Dreamtime stories, our country/lands to look after and care for, our Ungud/ spiritual animals and our songs and dances.”



Inside back cover artist: Denver Chadd

Title: Sense of Belonging

Denver is a Minang/Bibbulmun-Noongar man, who has spent most of his life in Perth and Albany.

“This artwork reflects the power of the land on a person’s sense of belonging,” Denver said. “All people are from the same mother and father, we are all from the land. By understanding each person’s relationship with the land and respecting nature’s law, everyone can learn to respect each other and build trust.”

Denver finds peace, stability, focus and passion in expressing his love for country and life through his art, which highlights a deep love for nature and pride in his Noongar culture. He works with pastels and watercolours on canvas or board to produce abstract landscapes which display his unique creative style.

The tranquillity of his rural property allows Denver to immerse himself in bushwalking, trapping gilgies and yabbies, tending his garden and working on art and artefacts in his studio space.



Back cover artist: David Carnamah

Title: Reconciliation

David is a Wadjarri man with intellectual disability who lives in Mullewa, near Geraldton, with his parents and siblings. With limited verbal communication, he finds painting is a way to express his thoughts and feelings.

David enjoys painting animals and the nature surrounding them on canvas. This artwork portrays Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people coming together to celebrate their reconciliation at a waterhole near the Murchison River. Tracks lead to the waterhole with people sitting around the pool.

As well as painting, David enjoys camping along the Murchison River and kangaroo hunting with his family during the Christmas holidays. He also travels to Yalgoo to participate in Aboriginal art activities. David is well-known in his community and spends most of his time in Mullewa where he has a strong network of family and friends.

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Introduction

The Disability Services Commission (the Commission) is the lead State Government agency that provides services and supports to all Western Australians with disability.

The Commission recognises that culture is a key element in enabling community participation and enhancing quality of life for all individuals, including Aboriginal peoples. The Commission is taking steps towards reconciliation to improve outcomes for Aboriginal peoples with disability in Western Australia.

The Reconciliation Action Plan 2016–2018 (the Plan) sets out the reconciliation action and strategies the Commission will undertake to improve the inclusion and participation of Aboriginal peoples in community life.

Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia is the peak body for reconciliation in Australia. One of Reconciliation Australia's key activities is the Reconciliation Action Plan program, which provides a framework for organisations to realise their vision for reconciliation under three themes: relationships, respect and opportunities.

Since 2008, Reconciliation Australia has guided the Commission in the development and implementation of a series of Reconciliation Action Plans.

The new Plan for 2016–2018 reflects the Commission's ongoing commitment for advancing reconciliation to achieve an equitable and united Australia.



The Commission took part in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' city banner project, during Reconciliation Week 2016.

Background

It is acknowledged that many Aboriginal peoples are achieving in their lives and are making valued contributions to the community. However, there are also Aboriginal peoples who are among the most disadvantaged in Australia.

Disability in Aboriginal peoples

The life expectancy of Aboriginal men in Western Australia is 15.1 years less than for non-Aboriginal men. Similarly, the life expectancy for Aboriginal women is 13.5 years less than for non-Aboriginal women.

Aboriginal peoples are also over-represented in rates of unemployment, are more likely to engage with the justice system and are more likely to suffer chronic disease. Aboriginal peoples experience higher rates of homelessness and are less likely to complete secondary education.

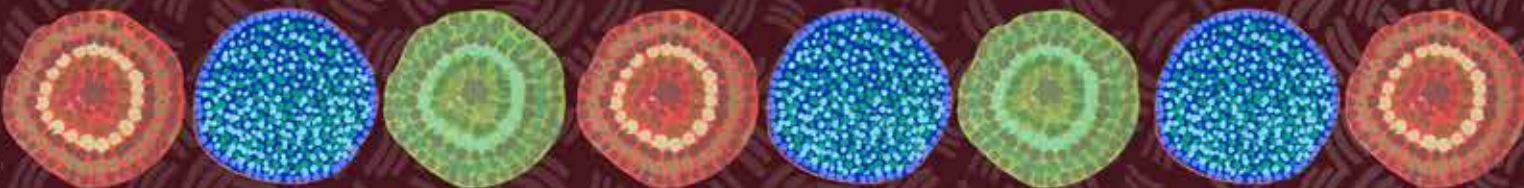
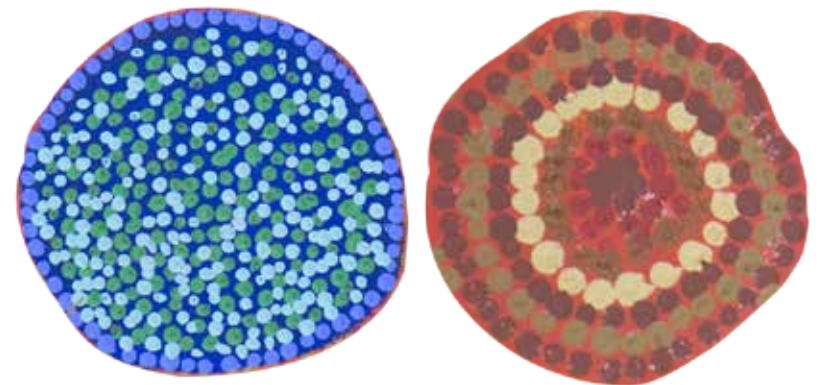
These factors increase the likelihood of an Aboriginal person having a disability. Research also shows that Aboriginal peoples in Western Australia are twice as likely to experience disability as non-Aboriginal people.

The available data referencing Indigenous Australians indicates:

- the rate of disability is considerably higher for Indigenous Australians than non-Indigenous Australians
- Indigenous Australians face greater barriers to accessing disability supports than non-Indigenous Australians.

Protective factors

Strong families, connection to culture and access to traditional lands have been identified as factors that mitigate the health and wellbeing challenges that some Aboriginal peoples face. Strong cultural identity can also assist to build resilience and enable individuals to see themselves as contributors and achievers in the community.



Challenges

It is recognised that a range of issues can represent barriers for Aboriginal peoples in accessing services:

- cultural differences in the perception of disability
- lack of knowledge about how to access services
- negative past experiences with government agencies
- services and information not delivered in a culturally appropriate manner
- relatively low levels of education and associated low levels of literacy and numeracy
- limited trust in mainstream services
- fear or perception of racism
- relatively low levels of fluency in English.

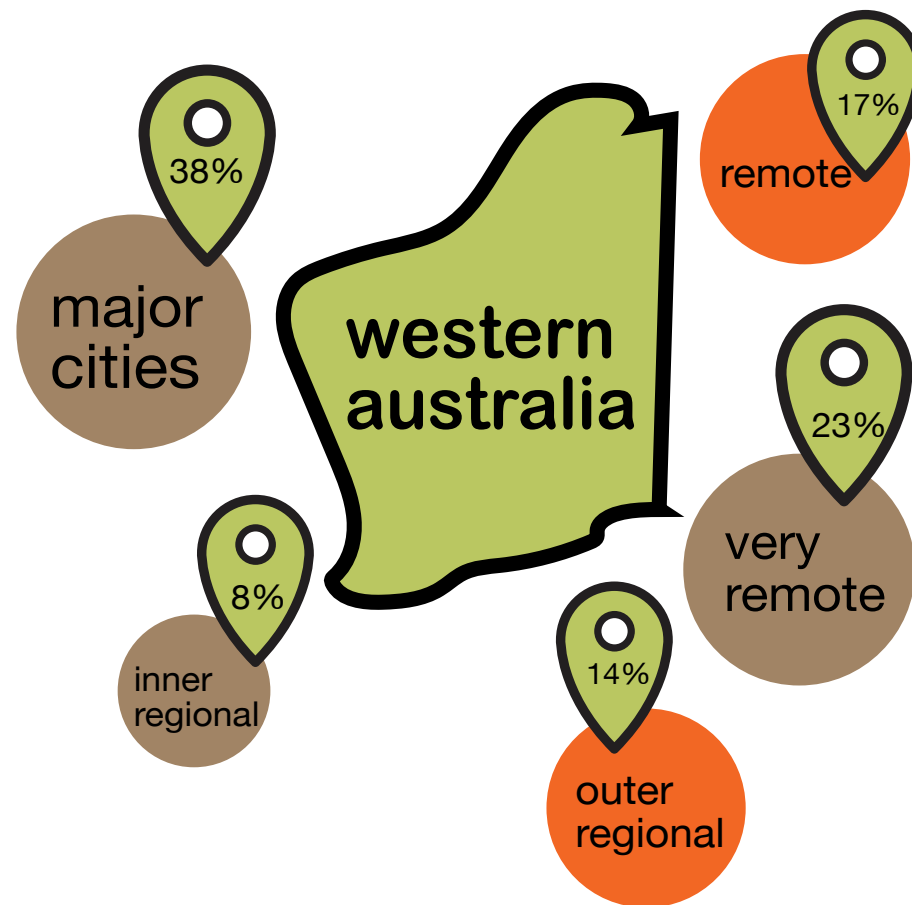
Furthermore, Aboriginal peoples are more likely to live in remote or very remote areas than non-Aboriginal peoples.

Many Aboriginal peoples in Western Australia live in remote or very remote areas, as shown in Figure 1.

Individuals in remote areas may experience additional challenges accessing services, which include:

- cost of services
- no services or not enough services in the area
- distance and lack of transport
- lengthy waiting times for services.

Figure 1



Effective service delivery

Staff delivering disability-related services and supports report that Aboriginal peoples express a broad range of views about what disability means in their culture. The terms 'normal' and 'part of living' is often used to describe how Aboriginal communities see disability.

Many Aboriginal peoples also hold a strong belief that people with disability should be cared for within their extended family group as family, kinship systems and community are of key importance to many Aboriginal peoples. Disability service providers may achieve more positive outcomes by providing services that are holistic and culturally appropriate.

The Commission has taken steps towards this goal through the provision of training to employees to raise awareness of Aboriginal culture and support the delivery of services and supports to Aboriginal peoples. The Commission also promotes supplier diversity through business practices that encourage the procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal business, wherever possible.

Under its well-established Remote Area Strategy, the Commission works in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and organisations to improve services in remote communities. For example, the Meekatharra and Mount Magnet Disability Support Project funds the employment of a local Aboriginal officer to deliver advocacy and support to the communities of Meekatharra and Mount Magnet in collaboration with Local Coordinators. Similarly, Pilbara Joblink in Port Hedland is funded to support to people with disability in the community.

The team works with Local Coordinators to ensure local Aboriginal peoples have improved access and engagement with disability services.

A future focus

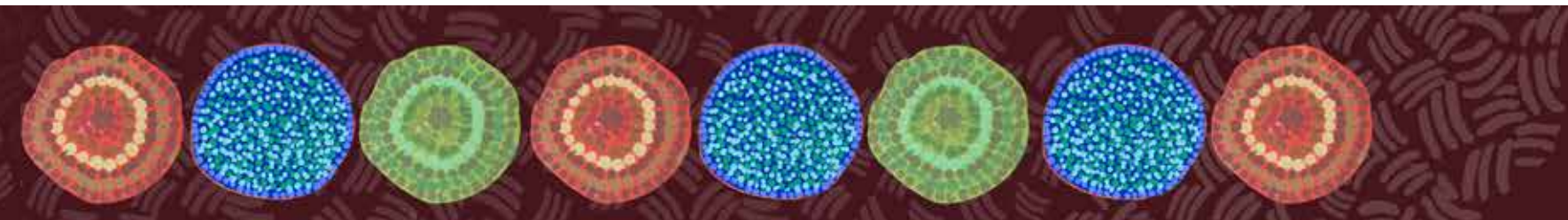
The rollout of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) during the period of this Plan represents a transformational change that will benefit Aboriginal peoples with disability and their families.

The WA NDIS is a highly personalised, local, relationship-based model of service delivery, which is focused on enabling individuals to identify and meet their current and future needs.

Local Coordinators take time getting to know the individual to support them in creating a WA NDIS plan that is tailored to their unique needs and goals, and reflects their culture.

Key features of the WA NDIS include:

- user-friendly and easy to navigate
- provides genuine choice and control
- people-based, with a strong focus on relationships
- provides each person with a locally based coordinator
- early engagement in the individualised planning process
- decision-making within the local community
- a strong focus on informal networks and community supports, such as family and kinship groups
- sustainability for regional and remote areas.



Reconciliation Action Plan

Vision

Our services and supports are culturally responsive and inclusive of Aboriginal peoples.

Purpose

The Plan identifies actions and targets that will enable the Commission to improve the participation of Aboriginal peoples in community life through strong relationships, and cultural awareness and respect for Aboriginal peoples.

Reconciliation working group

The Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (the Working Group) oversees the development, implementation, monitoring and reporting of the Plan.

Membership of the Working Group includes a range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees from across the Commission, including staff that regularly interact with Aboriginal peoples with disability.

The role of Working Group Chair is rotated among senior managers and employees to reflect the collegiate approach to reconciliation.

Working Group meetings are also attended by Aboriginal representatives from disability sector organisations.

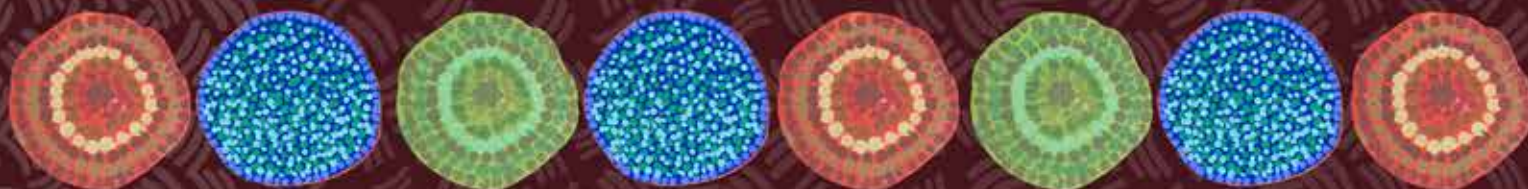
The meetings provide a forum to share information from across the Commission and within the disability services sector to identify strengths and areas for development in the Commission's reconciliation journey.

Plan development

The Commission's Working Group held a series of 'Conversations' about reconciliation with key stakeholders, including Commission employees, the Disability Services Commission Board, the Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability and Count Me In Ambassadors. An online survey was also circulated to all employees.

Feedback from more than 30 'Conversations' and more than 100 survey responses was analysed to identify the key goals of the Plan:

- promote a shared understanding of the meaning of reconciliation, and raise awareness of the Commission's commitment to reconciliation
- continue to build a culturally responsive workforce
- create a visibly welcoming place for Aboriginal employees, service users and visitors in all Commission offices
- continue to build trusting relationships with Aboriginal peoples and organisations
- work collaboratively with Aboriginal peoples and organisations while new approaches to service delivery are developed.



The Working Group also considered outcomes achieved under previous Reconciliation Action Plans, which include:

- implementation of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country protocols
- celebration of Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week
- ongoing delivery of Aboriginal cultural awareness training to employees.

This Plan was then developed with focus areas and strategies set at Reconciliation Australia's 'Innovate' level, incorporating actions carried over from previous Plans, minimum elements required by Reconciliation Australia and new actions.

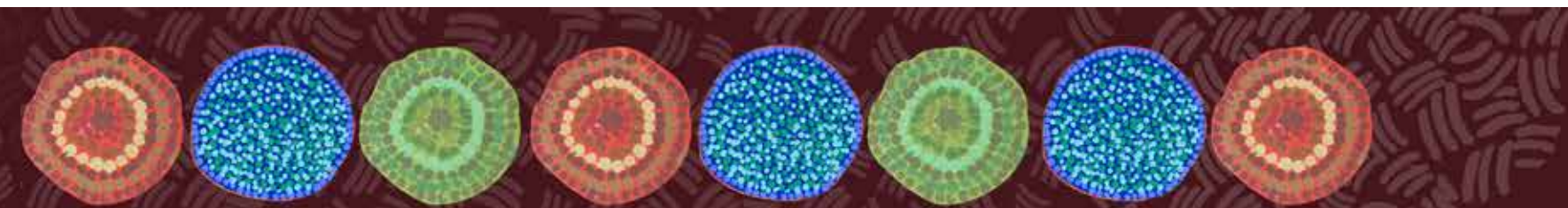
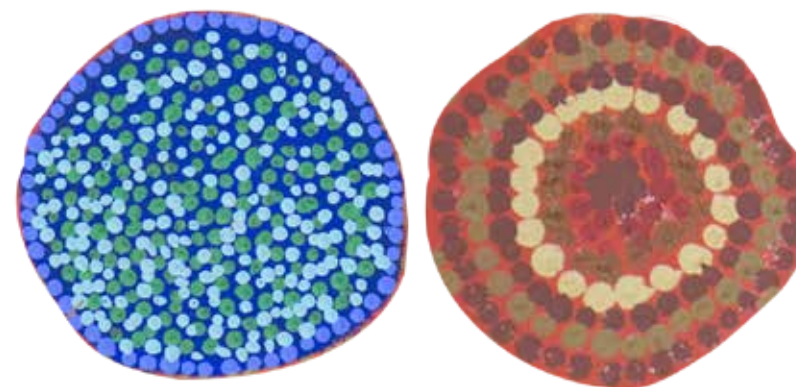
Reconciliation themes

In accordance with the framework set out by Reconciliation Australia, the Plan has three themes: relationships, respect and opportunities.

Under each of the themes are a range of related focus areas, which provide a framework for the actions that outline the planned outcomes, timeframes and the business area responsible for delivery.

Reconciliation champions

The development and implementation of the Plan is supported by the Commission's Director General, Executive Directors and senior managers, who continue to promote the Commission's vision for reconciliation.





Relationships

Build strong and positive relationships with Aboriginal peoples to increase trust, improve communications and provide more culturally appropriate disability services and supports.

Focus area: Engagement between Aboriginal peoples

Action 1.1: Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal peoples, organisations, stakeholders and communities to ensure good practice in the way employees engage and work

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Work with Aboriginal stakeholders to implement an engagement plan to improve the Commission's working relationships with Aboriginal peoples.	June 2017	Local Operations
Maintain and strengthen the Commission's partnership with Reconciliation WA through renewal of annual membership.	August each year	Office of the Director General
Strengthen contracting mechanisms that encourage disability sector organisations to provide culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal clients.	May 2018	Sector Engagement and Development

Action 1.2: Continue engaging and building local relationships with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Provide six-monthly reports on activities undertaken to engage with local Aboriginal peoples and organisations in relation to disability services and supports.	June and December each year	Local Operations
Identify opportunities to expand Aboriginal partnership initiatives under the Remote Area Strategy.	June 2017	Local Operations

Focus area: Engagement between Aboriginal peoples

Action 1.3: Celebrate and actively promote participation in events during National Reconciliation Week (NRW)

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Promote and celebrate NRW throughout the Commission by organising at least one annual internal event for Commission staff.	May - June each year	Rotate hosting responsibility between Directorates
Enable participation by Local Coordinators and Working Group members in local community NRW events.	May - June each year	Local Operations
Support an external NRW event, such as the Banner Street Project, led by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.	May - June each year	Office of the Director General
Register the Commission's NRW event on Reconciliation Australia's website.	May - June each year	Office of the Director General

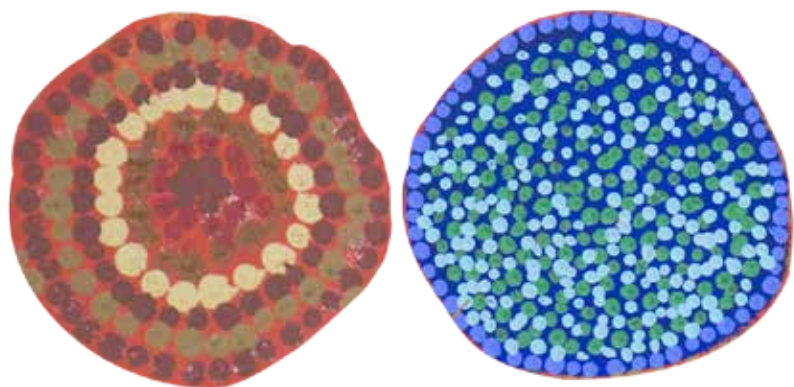
Action 1.4: Raise internal and external awareness of the Plan to promote a shared understanding of reconciliation by staff

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Review the content and position of the intranet page on the Plan to improve information and resources available to Commission staff.	December 2016	Office of the Director General
Publish at least four items per annum on the Commission's communication channels that raise awareness and understanding of Aboriginal cultures, histories and achievements, as well as reconciliation.	July 2016 to May 2018	Office of the Director General
Include information about the Plan in all relevant existing internal and external communications channels.	May 2018	Office of the Director General
Register the Plan on Reconciliation Australia's website.	July 2016	Office of the Director General
Electronically distribute the Plan to all employees and key stakeholders, and publish the Plan on the Commission's website.	July 2016	Office of the Director General

Focus area: Engagement between Aboriginal peoples

Action 1.5: The RAP Working Group (RWG) continues to actively monitor RAP development, including implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure Aboriginal peoples are represented on the Working Group throughout the life of the Plan.	May 2018	Office of the Director General with Working Group
Review the terms of reference for the Working Group on an annual basis.	May 2018	Office of the Director General with Working Group
Meet at least twice a year to monitor and report on Plan implementation.	March and September each year	Office of the Director General with Working Group





Respect

Recognise Aboriginal peoples as the First West Australians and the richness and diversity of their cultures.

Focus area: Cultural awareness and recognition

Action 2.1: Demonstrate respect for Aboriginal peoples and communities by embedding cultural protocols in the Commission's practices

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Review and communicate the Commission's cultural protocols across the organisation.	September 2018	Office of the Director General
Develop and publish on the intranet a list of Aboriginal contacts for organising a Welcome to Country.	September 2018	Office of the Director General
Display an Acknowledgment of Country statement in English and, where possible, in local Aboriginal language in all Commission building entrances.	April 2017	Office of the Director General with Business and Funding
Include an Acknowledgment of Country at the start of important internal and external meetings.	May 2018	All Directorates
Invite a traditional custodian to provide a Welcome to Country at significant events.	May 2018	All Directorates
Include an Acknowledgment of Country statement on Commission email auto-signatures.	September 2016	Office of the Director General
Display an Acknowledgment of Country statement on the Commission's websites (intranet and internet)	September 2016	Office of the Director General
Procure and display the table flag set of the Australian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in all major meeting rooms within Commission buildings.	December 2016	Business and Funding with all Directorates
Procure an Aboriginal Australia map to be displayed in a public place in every Commission building.	December 2016	Business and Funding with all Directorates

Focus area: Cultural awareness and recognition

Action 2.2: Engage employees in cultural learning to increase the understanding and appreciation of the diversity of Aboriginal histories, cultures and achievements

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Continue to provide opportunities for Working Group members, Reconciliation Champions, managers and other key leaders to contribute to cultural awareness training for employees.	May 2018	Business and Funding
Require all current employees to complete the Public Sector Commission's online training module 'Sharing culture' on Aboriginal cultural awareness via the Commission's intranet.	September 2016 to May 2018	Business and Funding
Continue to ensure new Local Coordinators and Area Managers complete the 'Valuing diversity' program as part of core training.	May 2018	Business and Funding
Ensure all new Commission employees complete the online training module 'Sharing culture' as part of their compulsory induction program.	May 2018	Business and Funding
Continue to partner with PEEDAC Aboriginal Corporation to provide cultural awareness training for staff in all supervisory and management positions.	May 2018	Business and Funding
Explore the opportunity to monitor Aboriginal media publications for disability-related news in line with the Commission's existing media monitoring.	October 2016	Office of the Director General

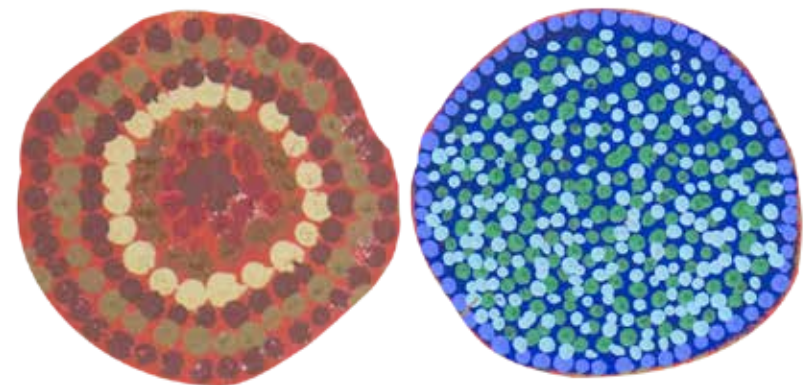
Action 2.3: Promote active recognition and participation in events that celebrate Aboriginal cultures during NAIDOC Week

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Promote and celebrate NAIDOC Week throughout the Commission by organising at least one annual internal event for Commission staff.	July each year	Rotate hosting responsibility between Directorates
Enable participation by Local Coordinators in local community NAIDOC Week events.	July each year	Local Operations
Communicate to Aboriginal employees the opportunity for participation with their cultures and communities during NAIDOC Week.	July each year	Business and Funding
Ensure relevant policies support staff participation in NAIDOC Week events.	May 2018	Business and Funding

Focus area: Cultural awareness and recognition

Action 2.4: Strengthen Aboriginal cultural responsiveness of funded disability service organisations

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Deliver education sessions to the Commission's independent quality evaluators on the assessment of culturally appropriate service delivery and cultural awareness, as it relates to National Disability Standards.	December 2016 and 2017	Sector Engagement and Development





Opportunities

Create meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal people to be part of the Commission's service delivery through employment or procurement

Focus area: Employment

Action 3.1: Investigate opportunities within the Commission to improve and increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal peoples

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Encourage Aboriginal peoples to nominate for Board positions, as vacancies arise.	May 2018	Office of the Director General
Continue to review and update recruitment and retention policies to improve participation by Aboriginal peoples in the Commission's workforce.	May 2018	Business and Funding
Further engage with Aboriginal employees on employment strategies to inform future employment opportunities, including professional development.	May 2018	Business and Funding with all directorates
Identify opportunities to further strengthen the Aboriginal awareness statement in all Commission job description forms and advertisements.	March 2017	Business and Funding
Explore the requirement for establishing an Aboriginal Liaison Officer position within the Commission.	November 2016	Office of the Director General with Disability Justice Centre
Develop and distribute an Aboriginal recruitment and retention guide for staff in supervisory and management positions.	April 2017	Business and Funding
Promote the benefits of advertising vacancies in the Aboriginal media to all staff in supervisory and management positions.	April 2017	Business and Funding
Provide six-monthly reports to the Corporate Executive on Aboriginal representation in the Commission's workforce.	June and December each year	Business and Funding

Focus area: Employment

Action 3.1: Investigate opportunities within the Commission to improve and increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal peoples

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Explore partnership opportunities with Aboriginal recruitment, employment, training and education organisations to improve the participation of Aboriginal people in the Commission's workforce	May 2018	Office of the Director General
Continue to review policies to ensure there are no barriers to workforce participation by current Aboriginal employees and future applicants.	May 2018	Business and Funding

Action 3.2: Investigate opportunities to increase supplier diversity within the Commission

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Continue to promote the Aboriginal Business Initiative (ABI), which enables government procurement practices to support economic participation by Aboriginal businesses.	May 2018	Business and Funding
Review procurement policies and procedures to continue to identify any barriers for Aboriginal businesses in supplying goods and services to the Commission.	May 2018	Business and Funding
Deliver information sessions to all Commission directorates to promote understanding and use of the ABI.	December 2016 to May 2018	Business and Funding
Review all contracts due to expire in the financial year to identify if any can be awarded to Aboriginal businesses under the ABI, where it does not conflict with the WA Disability Enterprises Initiative.	June each year	Business and Funding
Explore the feasibility of membership in the Aboriginal business directory, Supply Nation.	May 2018	Business and Funding

Tracking progress and reporting

Focus area: Accountability

Action 4.1: Report on Plan achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia for inclusion in the annual Impact Measurement Report

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Complete and submit the Reconciliation Action Plan Impact Measurement questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	September each year	Office of the Director General
Consider taking part in Reconciliation Australia's survey, the RAP Barometer.	May 2018	Office of the Director General

Action 4.2: Report on Plan outcomes and achievements

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Publicly report achievements, challenges and learnings in the Commission's Annual Report.	June each year	Office of the Director General
Report on Plan implementation to the Corporate Executive.	June and December each year	Office of the Director General
Incorporate achievements where relevant into National Disability Strategy reporting.	December each year	Policy and Planning

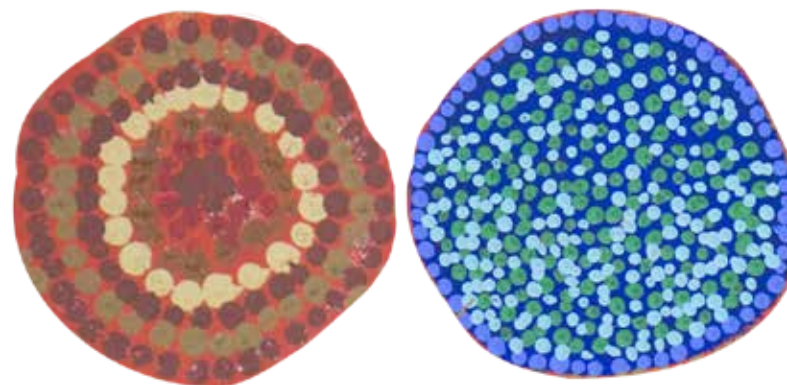
Action 4.3: Monitor implementation of National Standards for Disability Services elements that focus on promoting community and cultural connection for Aboriginal peoples among Commission-funded organisations.

Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve data quality to inform trend analysis regarding relevant policies, procedures and practices among Commission-funded organisations.	June 2016 and 2017	Sector Engagement and Development

Focus area: Accountability

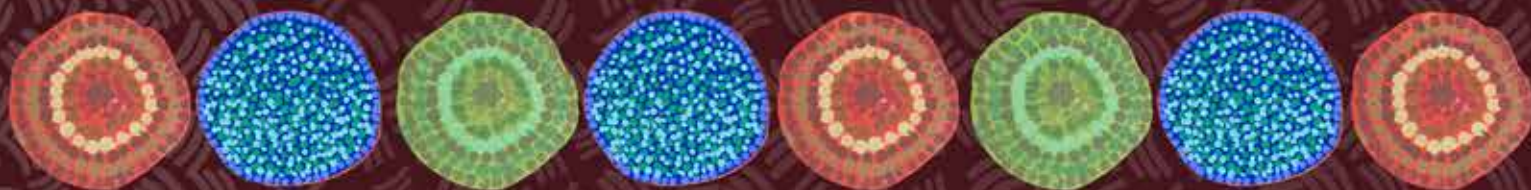
Action 4.4: Review the Plan and develop new Reconciliation Action Plan

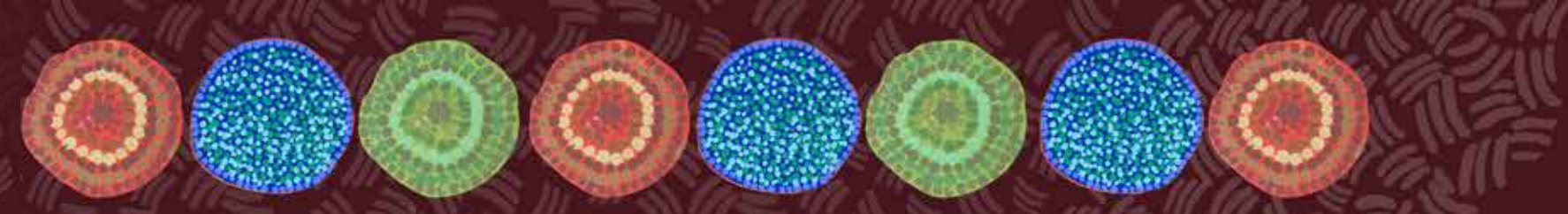
Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Review, refresh and update the Plan based on learnings, challenges and achievements.	March 2018	Office of the Director General with all directorates
Develop a new Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2020 in liaison with Reconciliation Australia.	March 2018	Office of the Director General
Send draft to Reconciliation Australia for formal feedback and endorsement.	June 2018	Office of the Director General



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Disability Services Commission

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