



# 10 TRUTHS ABOUT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLANS: Key Insights from Gari Yala 2



## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kirsten Gray is a Yuwalaraay/Muruwari woman living on Dharawal country and raising three children. Her artworks are a contemporary and vibrant reflection of her passion for her Aboriginal culture. 'Speaking truth' explores the nature and extent of the contributions made by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples in this land for millennia. Long before the birth of the Australian nation, our people were already making significant contributions to their families and communities. It was the contributions of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples upon the arrival of the British, which helped transform our country into what it is today. Much of this labour was often unpaid, unrecognised and undertaken in discriminatory and harsh conditions. Nonetheless, it is these ongoing contributions of our people which keep each other, our communities and this country, strong.

## ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND WORK

The [Centre for Indigenous People and Work \(CIPW\)](#) is a self-determined, joint initiative of the [UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research](#) and the [UTS Business School](#) that aims to address systemic inequities experienced by Indigenous Australians in the labour and employment markets, including racism, underemployment, exclusion from leadership positions and pay inequity, including superannuation.

The Centre seeks to reclaim the Indigenous employment narrative by and for Indigenous people through rigorous, industry-based Indigenous-led research, consulting, and partnerships with other stakeholders in the employment community, focusing on policy formulation, law reform and workplace-based solutions.

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## 10 TRUTHS ABOUT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLANS: EVIDENCE FROM GARI YALA 2

*Gari Yala 2 (Speak the Truth)*, Australia's only national survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' workplace experiences – designed by mob, for mob – provides evidence that Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are delivering measurable improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and their workplaces.

In the 2025 *Gari Yala 2* survey, 1,158 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers were asked whether their organisation had a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), enabling us to compare workplace experiences across RAP and non-RAP environments.

The findings are clear and consistent. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in organisations with RAPs are more likely to:

- report culturally safe workplaces,
- feel confident sharing their identity at work,
- experience lower levels of racism, and
- benefit from stronger organisational supports and systems.

Together, these results highlight the practical impact of RAPs as a structured approach to building workplaces where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can participate fully, contribute their strengths, and thrive.

The following 10 insights distil the most important findings.

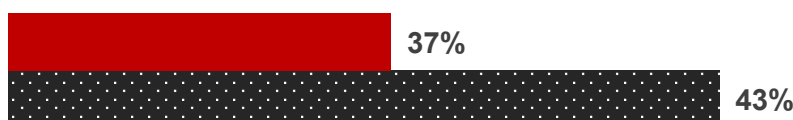
### Truth 1: RAPs are linked to more culturally safe workplaces

Cultural safety refers to an environment where individuals can express, practice, and maintain their cultural identity without fear of ridicule, discrimination, or marginalisation.

Indigenous employees in organisations with RAPs are more likely to report **being in a culturally safe workplace** – 43% of Indigenous employees in RAP organisations compared to 37% in non-RAP workplaces.<sup>1</sup>

This finding suggests that RAPs provide the organisational structure, governance, and accountability needed to embed cultural safety across the organisation.

#### Cultural safety by organisation type



- Culturally safe Indigenous workers in non-RAP organisations
- Culturally safe Indigenous workers in RAP organisations

## Truth 2: Employees in RAPs are more likely to share their identity

Given Indigenous employees in RAP organisations are more likely to say their workplace is culturally safe, it's not surprising to find that employees in RAP organisations are also more likely to feel safe sharing their identity and to openly share their identity in the workplace. We found:

- 42% of Indigenous employees in RAP organisations strongly agree **it is safe to share their identity** at work compared to only 34% in non-RAP organisations, and
- 62% of Indigenous workers in RAP organisations **openly shared their identity** at work versus 50% of those in non-RAP organisations.

*“Being a representative of the RAP working group and working for a company that highly values inclusiveness, with values embedded into the people and everything they do, is the reason why I'm happy to share my identity.”<sup>2</sup>*

## Truth 3: Trust in organisational commitment is higher in RAP organisations

Indigenous employees in RAP organisations are more likely to believe their **employer genuinely supports** the inclusive and equitable treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees – 74% of Indigenous employees in RAP organisations compared to 64% in non-RAP organisations.

This finding points to RAPs signalling that inclusion is not only stated, but also meaningfully enacted. Having this credibility matters. Indigenous workers in highly authentic organisations are:

- 5 times more likely to always be satisfied with their job,
- 8 times more likely to recommend their workplace to other Indigenous people, and
- 2.5 times less likely to intend to leave their employer in the next year.<sup>3</sup>

*“I work in a government agency with a strong RAP Committee and commitment from the Department. I'm very proud of my culture and very willing to share and educate others about ‘Our Mob’.”*

## Truth 4: RAPs are linked with lower levels of racism

RAPs appear to function as a protective factor for racism, as Indigenous workers in RAP organisations are less likely to experience racism. We found that:

- 50% of Indigenous employees in RAP workplaces **rarely or never experience racism** compared to only 36% in non-RAP workplaces, and
- 65% of Indigenous employees in RAP workplaces **rarely or never experience racial slurs** compared to 56% in non-RAP workplaces.

*“In the past I would not openly share my Indigenous identity at work due to fear of racism in the workplace and from customers...[but] in my current workplace I shared my identity as I felt safe to do so and was involved in RAP working groups and an Indigenous employee network.”*

Reducing racism is critical as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers who experienced racism very often, often, or sometimes are:

- 3 times less likely to be very satisfied with their job,
- 3 times less likely to recommend their workplace to other Indigenous people, and
- 3 times more likely to intend to leave their employer in the next year.<sup>4</sup>

*“It can feel hard to share [my identity] mainly because of entrenched attitudes and racism towards First Nations people in our society more broadly. While I feel my current workplace is supportive, I think there is some more work to do to elevate the conversation here and I am optimistic this will come as we move towards an Innovate RAP later this year.”*

### **Truth 5: Respect is greater across all workplace relationships**

RAPs are associated with more culturally respectful behaviours by the co-workers, immediate managers, and human resource staff of Indigenous workers.

- 49% of Indigenous workers in RAP organisations reported that their co-workers never reacted negatively to staff accessing cultural leave compared to only 38% in non-RAP organisations,
- 58% of workers in RAP organisations said their immediate manager never reacted negatively compared to only 42% in non-RAP organisations, and
- 63% of workers in RAP organisations said human resource staff never reacted negatively compared to only 43% in non-RAP organisations.

These findings point to RAPs influencing behaviour across the entire organisation, helping create consistent cultural norms.

*“I will happily talk about Indigenous matters with many of my co-workers. I am a proud member of the RAP team and am constantly striving to add my own insight to the collective group.”*

*“Staff have embraced the RAP in our workplace and are striving to create a culturally safe and inclusive workplace.”*

### **Truth 6: RAPs are linked to lower identity strain**

An important part of creating a culturally safe workplace is taking into account the high identity strain that close to two-thirds (63%) of workers deal with in the workplace.<sup>5</sup>

Identity strain refers to the strain employees feel when their identity does not meet the norms or expectations of the dominant culture in the workplace. It can happen for instance when:

- an Indigenous person has to work harder to prove that they can do the job,
- is questioned about whether they are really Indigenous,
- is asked to do something that compromises their cultural identity, or
- is told to ‘tone it down’ or be less outspoken about Indigenous issues.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in RAP organisations are less likely to experience pressure to compromise their cultural identity. We found that:

- 61% of Indigenous workers in RAP organisations are never or only rarely asked to do something that makes them **compromise their cultural integrity**, versus 54% in non-RAP workplaces, and
- 49% of Indigenous workers in RAP organisations report their identity is never or only rarely **judged as not fully fitting the expectations** of their workplace culture, compared to 41% in non-RAP workplaces.

Reducing identity strain supports wellbeing and retention. Indigenous workers with high identity strain were 3 times less likely to be satisfied with their job than those with low identity strain, and 3 times more likely to intend to leave their employer in the next year.<sup>6</sup>

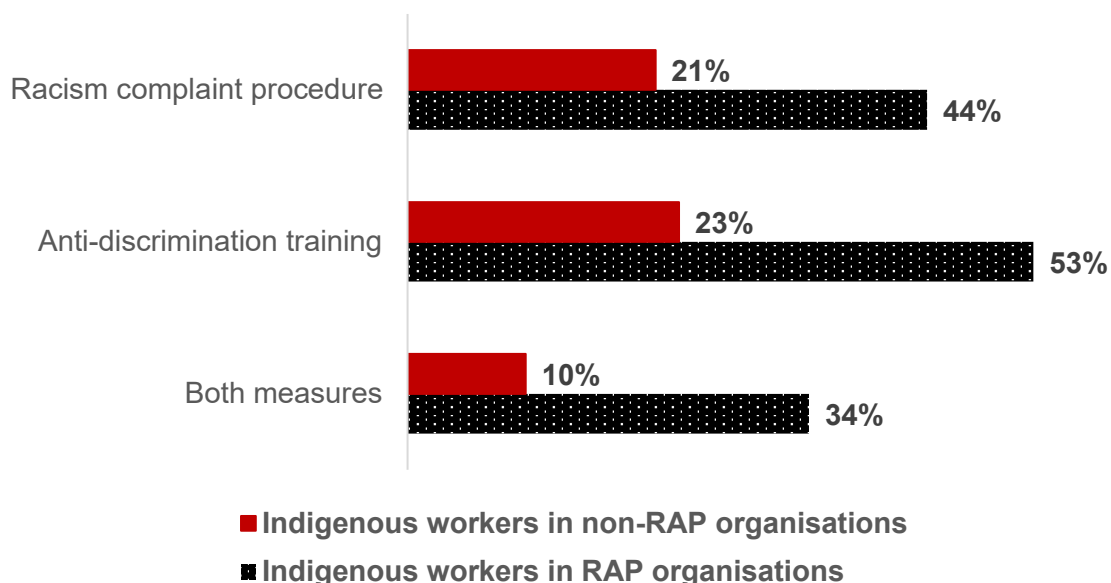
*“I’ve actively engaged in making my workplace safer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – for example we now have a critical mass of Aboriginal workers and we have done extensive cultural competency, and we have an active RAP and EDI working group.”*

### Truth 7: Practical anti-racism supports are more common in RAP organisations

We found that RAP organisations were twice as likely to have anti-racism measures in place.

- 44% of Indigenous workers in RAP organisations reported having access to a **racism complaint procedure** versus only 21% of those in non-RAP organisations.
- 53% of workers in RAP organisations reported having **anti-discrimination training** that addressed Indigenous-related discrimination and harassment compared to only 23% of those in non-RAP organisations.
- In fact, Indigenous workers in RAP organisations were three times more likely than those in non-RAP organisations to report having **both anti-racism measures** – 34% of those in RAP organisations had both versus 10% in non-RAP organisations.

Anti-racism measures by organisational type



Importantly, *Gari Yala 2* findings show that Indigenous workers in organisations that provide these anti-racism measures experience lower levels of racism.

- 48% of Indigenous workers in organisations providing racism compliance training experienced racism very often, often, or sometimes compared to a much higher 64% of those in organisations that did not offer training.
- 44% of Indigenous workers in organisations providing a racism complaint procedure experienced racism very often, often, or sometimes compared to a much higher 64% of those in organisations that did not offer training.<sup>7</sup>

RAP organisations were also twice as likely to offer cultural awareness training and Indigenous employee networks. Access to cultural leave was also more common.

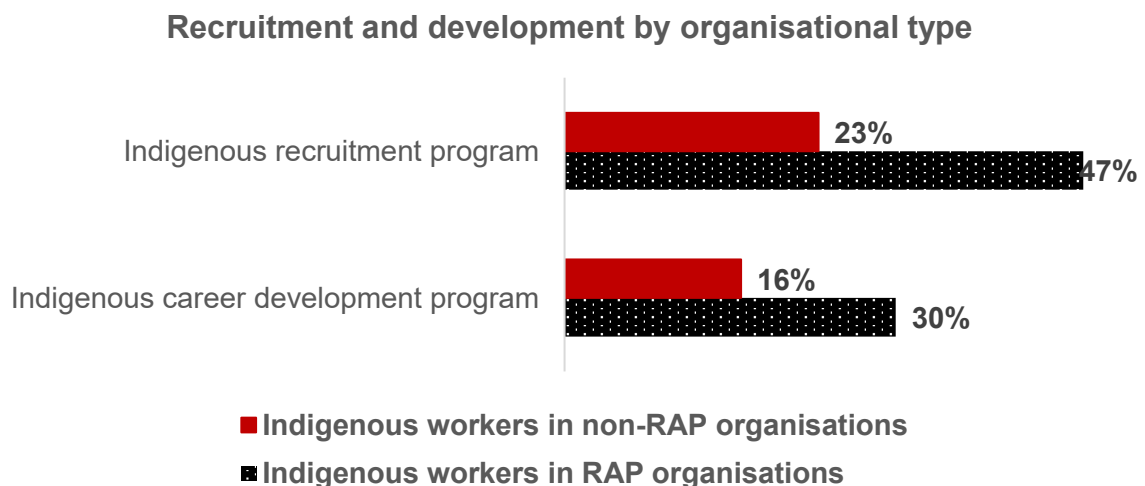
- 68% of workers in RAP organisations reported having **cultural awareness training** compared to only 34% in non-RAP organisations.
- 61% of workers in RAP organisations reported having **Indigenous employee networks** versus only 29% in non-RAP organisations.
- 69% of workers in RAP organisations reported having **cultural leave** available versus only 43% in non-RAP organisations.

*“Having a Stretch RAP at the workplace allows for more conversations and more people with commitments around reconciliation. And that in itself just means there is more education and activity happening in this workspace which assists.”*

### Truth 8: Talent pipelines and career development are stronger in RAP organisations

RAP organisations are significantly more likely to implement structured pathways that support the recruitment and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

- Nearly half (47%) of Indigenous workers in RAP organisations report the presence of **Indigenous recruitment** programs, compared to just 23% in non-RAP workplaces.
- Similarly, 30% report access to **career development** initiatives, compared to 16% in organisations without RAPs.



*“I’ve had some life-changing conversations and relationships with other Aboriginal people at work particularly about history and my family history...[and] I’ve had some great professional development experiences as well including working on a RAP, hosting and attending events and workshops, networking, and building partnerships in the community.”*

### **Truth 9: Economic participation and supplier diversity are higher in RAP organisation**

Organisations with RAPs are substantially more likely to engage Indigenous suppliers, with 71% of employees reporting this practice compared to just 33% in non-RAP workplaces.

This suggests RAPs extend impact beyond the workforce by strengthening supply chains, deepening community partnerships, and supporting broader economic inclusion.

### **Truth 10: Employees in RAP organisations have lower unpaid workplace demands (cultural/colonial load)**

While RAP organisations are linked with greater organisational activity, we found they're much better than non-RAP organisations at addressing unpaid workplace demands (cultural/colonial load).

- Workers in RAP organisations are more likely to have their cultural work recognised in their job descriptions.
- Workers in RAP organisations undertake minimal unpaid cultural work, while workers in non-RAP organisations are more likely to have heavier unpaid cultural workloads.

*“Cultural load has been recognised in the RAP...[which is] having a big impact on how staff are treated.”*

*“I think there is a shift in our Executive and Senior Management Team to distribute the load/responsibility regarding Reconciliation rather than it sitting with First Nations staff to do all the heavy lifting or help educate staff. It is everyone's responsibility and there is more emphasis on this in our new RAP strategy.”*

### **Bringing the insights together: RAP organisations do more and achieve more**

Across all 10 insights, a consistent pattern emerges. RAP organisations do more – and they achieve better outcomes. The data show that RAPs are linked with:

- greater structured action (policies, programs),
- better everyday behaviours (across staff, managers, HR), and
- improved employee experience (safety, respect, identity).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in organisations with RAPs report stronger cultural safety, lower racism, higher trust, and more consistent systems that enable Indigenous people to contribute and thrive at work.

For employers, the implication is direct: meaningful progress on reconciliation at work requires deliberate design, accountability, and sustained investment. Expanding the reach, quality and ambition of RAPs is therefore one of the most effective levers available to build

fairer, more inclusive workplaces and to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are not just present, but valued, supported and set up to succeed.

## Research method

*Gari Yala* is an Indigenous-led survey, based out of the UTS Centre for Indigenous People and Work, informed by Indigenous Standpoint Theory,<sup>8</sup> and guided by an Expert Panel of 19 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait academics and employment practitioners.

The survey instrument was informed by a comprehensive literature review and refined through piloting and statistical testing to ensure validity, reliability, and relevance. For *Gari Yala 2*, data were collected online between April and June 2025 from 1,158 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers across Australia using a combination of panel and community-based sampling approaches. All reported findings were statistically significantly different at the 95% confidence level.

## Want more information?

For more information on *Gari Yala 2* findings, methodology, and recommendations for change, please read the full research report at the [Centre for Indigenous People and Work](#) website.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This is a mean cultural safety score derived from responses to six cultural safety-related questions. Culturally safe workplaces were those where respondents scored their workplace on average 4 or more out of 5 on these questions (where 5 = all of the time and 1 = never). All reported findings were statistically significantly different at the 95% confidence level.

<sup>2</sup> All quotes in italics are comments shared by *Gari Yala 2* survey participants

<sup>3</sup> Jumbunna Institute (Brown, C., D'Almada-Remedios, R., Gilbert, J. O'Leary, J. and Young, N.) (2020). *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth): Centring the work experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians*. Jumbunna Institute.

<sup>4</sup> Centre for Indigenous People and Work (Young, N., Gilbert, J. and O'Leary, J.) (2026). *Gari Yala 2 (Speak the Truth): Centring the work experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians*. CIPW.

<sup>5</sup> Jumbunna Institute. (2020).

<sup>6</sup> Jumbunna Institute. (2020).

<sup>7</sup> Centre for Indigenous People and Work (2026).

<sup>8</sup> Foley, D. (2003). Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous standpoint theory. *Social Alternatives*, 22(1), 44–52.

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