

THE EMPIRE

APRIL 2024 – JUNE 2025

REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Empire acknowledges the Traditional Custodians,
the Giabal, Jarowair and Western Wakka Wakka peoples,
where we work and present stories.

We would like to pay respect to the Elders, past and present and to
all First Nations peoples.

2

ABOUT THE ARTIST

ADRIAN BAUWENS

3

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

ARTIST STATEMENT

4

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

ANDREW WIELANDT

5

A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

GIULIANA BONEL

7

A MESSAGE FROM RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

KAREN MUNDINE

8

THE ARTWORK

FEATURE

10

OUR BUSINESS

ABOUT THE EMPIRE

11

OUR VISION

OUR GOALS

12

OUR RECONCILIATION PLAN

OUR COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

14

OUR CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS

OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH OUR COMMUNITY

16

RELATIONSHIPS

RECONCILIATION COMMITMENTS

17

RESPECT

RECONCILIATION COMMITMENTS

18

OPPORTUNITIES

RECONCILIATION COMMITMENTS

19

GOVERNANCE

RECONCILIATION COMMITMENTS

ADRIAN BAUWENS

ABOUT THE ARTIST

For as long as I could remember, I've always been drawn to country and the arts.

In my younger days, my parents would always take me out for walks, exposing myself to country and developing a deep love and connection to this land.

On top of that, my early days of drawing also started with my parents, whether it was watching inspiring cartoons like *Dragon Ball Z* with my mother, or drawing with my father — these early experiences basically shaped me into who I am today.

It was only a matter of time before I began to work on my craft and involve myself in environmental works.

For the most part I am self taught, kind of just figuring it all out as I go.

Whereas with the environmental works, I have tried just about everything from being a park ranger, animal catcher and part of a revegetation team. With these experiences, I now believe to be in perfect harmony with what I value; creativity and the land.

And so, I've become a professional artist as of 2019, as well as a park ranger at the same time. With that said, my work is the embodiment of all these experiences I have gained over the years, and I hope to share and expose others to a deep love for this land.

ADRIAN BAUWENS
Artist





We Are Yuree by Adrian Bauwens

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

For thousands of years, my people walked these lands in harmony with the land.

We sang songs and danced to honour our beautiful animals and culture. Often, we embody our Yurees (totems) and proudly sing out to country, for our connection is strong.

Likewise with The Empire, performance was an important element of our culture.

For centuries, people would gather here at the Bunya mountains and exchange cultural knowledges, this is illustrated in this work; where people from different countries, dance to show off their country and identity.



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

EMPIRE THEATRES PTY LTD

It is with great pride that I am the Chair of The Empire at the time of our inaugural Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The Board, staff, and other stakeholders at The Empire recognise the significance of First Nations culture and artists not only across our region but also across Australia, so this Reflect RAP allows us to express the importance of reconciliation for First Nations peoples and the broader community.

Our Reconciliation Working Group has worked tirelessly on the Reflect RAP through our strategic plan. Their advice has provided us with invaluable guidance, and they have my and the Board's thanks.

I now look forward to continuing our reconciliation pathway with Reconciliation Australia, our stakeholders and First Nations peoples to support and provide positive change in our community.

ANDREW WIELANDT

Chairman

Empire Theatres Pty Ltd



A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

EMPIRE THEATRES PTY LTD

The Empire is pleased to launch our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) – a significant step in our ongoing commitment to fostering reconciliation in Australia and strengthening our relationship with First Nations peoples.

The Empire is committed to elevating the voices of First Nations peoples and creating a meaningful impact in support of reconciliation. Our Reflect RAP is not just a document; it is a testament to our dedication to reconciliation in alignment with our strategic plan. By embedding reconciliation into the core of our operations, we aim to elevate the voices of First Nations peoples and contribute to shared vision for a better future.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Reconciliation Working Group members Adrian Bauwens, Kerry Canning, Daniel Hill, Janelle Fletcher, Kate Brennan and Jeanette Wedmaier, whose tireless efforts and invaluable insights have been instrumental in shaping our Reflect RAP. Your passion and dedication have laid a strong foundation for us to build upon.

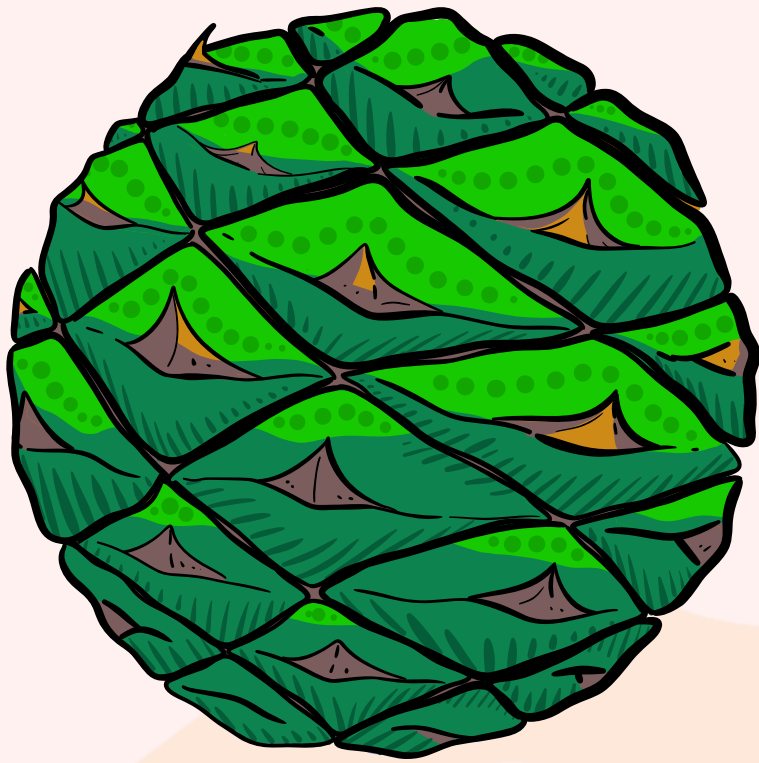
I also want to thank our Board and staff for their unwavering support and commitment throughout this journey. Together, we will create lasting, positive change and continue to support and elevate First Nations communities.

The Empire is dedicated to driving forward with purpose, and our RAP will guide us in making a real, tangible impact.

GIULIANA BONEL

General Manager
Empire Theatres Pty Ltd

EMPIRE THEATRES PTY LTD





A MESSAGE FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Reconciliation Australia welcomes The Empire to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

The Empire joins a network of more than 2,500 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables The Empire to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations to The Empire, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

KAREN MUNDINE
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia





THE EMPIRE

OUR BUSINESS

The Empire is the cultural hub of the Toowoomba Region, boasting the largest performing arts precinct in regional Australia. We ensure The Empire's significant suite of arts and entertainment venues are valued, maintained and activated.

AS A CONTROLLED ENTITY OF TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL COUNCIL, WE HAVE COMMUNITY AT THE HEART OF OUR OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMMING. OUR FUNDAMENTAL BUSINESS IS THEATRE. WE WORK WITH OUR INDUSTRY PARTNERS, COLLABORATORS, AUDIENCE AND CLIENTS TO:

DEVELOP

Develop dynamic, inclusive and exceptional opportunities for performing arts and community activities.

DELIVER

Deliver diverse, world-class performing arts experiences, anywhere.

CONNECT

Connect people, ideas and stories to shape and inspire imagination and creativity.

Located just 150km outside of the state's capital, the Toowoomba region has always been a place of gathering, trade, ceremony, and storytelling. The Empire continues the legacy of community gathering and storytelling primarily through performance presentations. From its beginnings in 1911 as a cinema, a catastrophic fire and subsequent rebirth in 1933, through to its renovation and reopening as a live theatre venue in 1997, The Empire has been a feature of the region for over 110 years.

Since its reopening in 1997, The Empire has welcomed more than 2.5 million patrons and presented over 100 performances each year across its four venues.

The Empire's main auditorium features beautiful art deco design partnered with state-of-the-art technology capable of accommodating all types of theatrical design and presentation. In addition to welcoming artists from all over Australia and the world, each year The Empire showcases performances and presentations from the local community which accounts for approximately one third of the overall program.

In addition to the administration and management of the precinct, The Empire's services and operations include presenting, producing, venue hire, bar operations, ticketing, external hire of equipment and services, marketing, production, facilitation of Empire Youth Arts and the contract holder of the South West Queensland Regional Arts Services Network.

OUR VISION

We will lead by example. We nurture, enable, and inspire dynamic cultural growth, championing experiences for with and by community.

OUR VALUES

INNOVATION

We are vibrant, adventurous, entrepreneurial and bold

COLLABORATION

We cannot achieve our goals on our own

TRANSFORMATION

We stimulate change for the better

CREATIVITY

We are champions for the arts

EXCELLENCE

We embrace quality and best practice in all we do

OUR RAP

OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures hold a unique place in Australian society and history. As the first people to tell stories on this country, it makes sense that the arts, particularly the performing arts, are uniquely positioned to elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and meaningfully contribute to reconciliation.

EMPIRE THEATREPTTY LTD

The Empire's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) ensures that we play our part and lead by example with protocols, programming, and best practise community engagement.

Since reopening in 1997, The Empire has programmed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work and engaged with the local community to welcome and facilitate representation in our regional arts space.

Our priority moving forward is to cultivate meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, showcasing the stories and promoting the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers and storytellers.

The Empire is aware of both our scope of influence locally and within the industry and our position as a Local Council owned facility. With the work we have done and will do towards reconciliation, we hope that we can overcome barriers, perceived and physical, to participation and engagement.

The Empire's new Strategic Plan launched in 2022, encourages us to connect relationships, programs, and procedures already in place, through the RAP process. Staff completed cultural training at the start of 2023 and work continues to be delivered with consideration and consultation. A RAP was identified as a strong framework that would keep us accountable and formalise our commitment to reconciliation.





As we work to promote reconciliation, we will encourage and enable culturally safe process, embed protocols and consultation processes, promote creative career pathways and demonstrate a welcoming environment for audiences.

We will do this across the scope of our organisation, through our presented work and in our everyday operations. RAP implementation will be led by Program and Engagement Manager Jeanette Wedmaier and championed across all levels of the organisation by General Manager Giuliana Bonel.

As internal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation is minimal, continual external consultation for programming and representation via the Reconciliation Working Group is required and will be utilised.



OUR CURRENT

PARTNERSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES

The Empire is committed to continual engagement with our audiences, clients and community.

In our 2022 Strategic Plan, meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities showcasing the stories and promoting the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists was made a priority.

Future activities will build on the groundwork of community building that has already been established.

PROGRAMMING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music artists such as Jessica Mauboy, Busby Marou, Thelma Plum, Troy Cassar-Daley to name a few have all performed multiple times at the precinct as hirers and The Empire has regularly hosted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander touring companies over the years including Bangarra Dance Theatre, Djuki Mala and Ilbjerri Theatre Company.

Each time a show showcasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists or stories are presented, it gives us an opportunity to make and build on connections with our community.

Through these shows and subsequent activities, The Empire has built strong working relationships with agencies, organisations and

individuals such as Carbal Medical Centre, Bunya People's Aboriginal Corporation, Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts, Winangali Infusion, and many individual artists.

These relationships have informed and guided past programs and engagements and with further collaboration, will allow us to broaden and deepen the scope of our programming of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work as well as future engagement projects.

PAST PROJECTS

Responding to community need, The Empire has on occasion created projects that targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people directly. In each case a Steering Committee was formed to ensure relevance and cultural competency.

- Ceremonial Ripples was a one-day event for year four students with the aim of empowering young people with knowledge of local traditional culture and creating cultural exchange and growth. Students participated in workshops led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in language, dance, visual art and

storytelling and focused on the importance of building local knowledge and sharing. This program ran for three years with the help of federal funding.

- Deadly Perspectives was a forum focusing on the issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. We invited leaders to speak to their experiences and share their own perspectives on the world and life in Toowoomba.
- Performance workshops have been common with touring products connecting to community and schools.
- Cultural days, hosting artisan markets, conversations, commissioning visual artists and smoking ceremonies at significant events have also been features of our program over the years.

PROTOCOLS AND TRAINING

The Empire has established Acknowledgement of Country protocols across the company and staff have participated in cultural competency training at the start of 2023.

We will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure that our physical spaces are welcoming and inviting.



RELATIONSHIPS



| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|---|--|---------------------|---|
| 1 Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. | Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence and collaborate where possible to achieve mutually beneficial goals. | JUNE 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. | SEPTEMBER 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Include key contributors from the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on event VIP list. | JUNE 2024 | Management Support Officer |
| | Ensure The Empire's strategic plan prioritises engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the showcasing and promoting the stories and work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. | JUNE 2024 | General Manager |
| 2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW). | Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. | MAY 2024 | Management Support Officer |
| | Reconciliation Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. | 27 MAY-3 JUNE, 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. | 27 MAY-3 JUNE, 2024 | Lead: Program and Engagement Manager Support: General Manager |
| | Work with local NRW committee and collaborate on the presentation of existing events if appropriate. | APRIL 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| 3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence. | Light up The Empire for NRW to show respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities | MAY 2024 | Lead: Program and Engagement Manager Support: Marketing and Technical Team |
| | Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. | APRIL 2024 | General Manager |
| | Demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation to our audiences through our actions and communications. (eg. pre-recorded acknowledgement available for all presenters and installing permanent signage in the foyer acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in line with cultural protocols) | JUNE 2024 | Lead: General Manager Support: Marketing Manager |
| | Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. | JUNE 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. | JUNE 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| 4 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies. | Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. | NOVEMBER 2024 | Lead: Program and Engagement Manager Support: General Manager |
| | Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. | NOVEMBER 2024 | Lead: General Manager Support: Management Support Officer |

RESPECT



| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|--|---|---------------------------------|---|
| 5 Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning. | Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights within our organisation. | AUGUST 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation, including a review of training and induction processes. | JUNE 2024 | General Manager |
| | Begin development of a resource with Traditional Owners that extends the Welcome and Acknowledgement protocols into cultural learning about the region. With the intention that this resource can be distributed to visiting artists and clients to increase local understanding and history. | DECEMBER 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| 6 Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols. | Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area. | JUNE 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Increase organisation's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. | MAY 2024 | Lead: Program and Engagement Manager Support: Visitor Services Coordinator |
| | Develop a protocol guideline for The Empire for use by staff, Board, volunteers and visiting performers/clients, comprehensive of requirements and recommendations for print, in person and online. | MAY 2024 | Lead: Program and Engagement Manager Support: Marketing Manager |
| 7 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week. | Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. | JUNE 2024 | Management Support Officer |
| | Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. | JUNE 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Reconciliation Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. | FIRST WEEK IN JULY, 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Present a performance piece in or near NAIDOC week featuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performances and/or stories to celebrate and elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contemporary performance. | JULY 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | The Empire will offer to sponsor an arts-based NAIDOC week award in the local area awards in consultation with NAIDOC award organisers. | MAY 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |

OPPORTUNITIES



| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|---|--|---------------------|---|
| 8 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development. | Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. | AUGUST 2024 | General Manager |
| | Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. | APRIL 2024 | General Manager |
| | Investigate collaborating with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentoring, employment and training organisations and offer opportunities through work placement and work experience to expose individuals to arts-based careers. | MAY 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| 9 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes. | Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. | MAY 2024 | General Manager |
| | Investigate Supply Nation membership. | MAY 2024 | Management Support Officer |
| | Commission an artistic work (in any artistic discipline) every two years from a local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artist. | APRIL 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| 10 Increase presenter and audience outcomes by inviting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander input into programming processes. | Form an advisory group to inform, advise and advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories and performances to be presented at The Empire. | APRIL 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Commit to presenting two or more performance pieces across the calendar year that feature Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander companies, stories and/or artists. | APRIL 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| 11 Promote equality and access to performances through equitable ticketing practises | Identify the need and level subsidy that is ideal in order to make attending performances accessible to the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. | JUNE 2024 | Lead: Program and Engagement Manager Support: Administration Manager |
| | Develop a business case for ticketing accessibility including a review of current ticketing access programs and pathways and make recommendations for improvement. | OCTOBER 2024 | Lead: Program and Engagement Manager Support: Administration Manager |

GOVERNANCE



| ACTION | DELIVERABLE | TIMELINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
|---|---|------------------------|--|
| 12 Establish and maintain an effective Reconciliation Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP. | Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation. | APRIL 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG. | APRIL 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG. | APRIL 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| 13 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments. | Define resource needs for RAP implementation. | MAY 2024 | Lead: Program and Engagement Manager Support: General Manager |
| | Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments. | JUNE 2024 | General Manager |
| | Maintain a senior leader to champion our RAP internally. | APRIL 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. | APRIL 2024 | Program and Engagement Manager |
| 14 Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally. | Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence. | JUNE ANNUALLY | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey. | 1 AUGUST ANNUALLY | Program and Engagement Manager |
| | Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia. | 30 SEPTEMBER, ANNUALLY | Program and Engagement Manager |
| 15 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP. | Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. | APRIL 2025 | Program and Engagement Manager |

CONTACT US

We welcome enquiries and feedback on our Reflect RAP commitments and are happy to discuss any aspect with any interested parties.

Reconciliation Working Group Members:

Adrian Bauwens

Kerry Canning

Daniel Hill

Janelle Fletcher

Giuliana Bonel

Jeanette Wedmaier

Kate Brennan

Reconciliation Working Group Contact Information:

JEANETTE WEDMAIER

Programs and Engagement Manager

07 4698 9925

engagement@empiretheatre.com.au



**TOOWOOMBA
REGION**

Empire Theatres Pty Ltd is owned by, and managed on behalf of, Toowoomba Regional Council

