

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2017–June 2019

**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**



Our vision for reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country will be restored to a place of equity, dignity and respect. We aspire to the healing of our national soul and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to be fully valued, with broken relationships restored and social inequalities eradicated.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan, or RAP, is an agreed strategy on how Mission Australia intends to contribute to reducing the gap in living standards between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians. We know from external evidence and our own research and work, that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are socially and economically disadvantaged compared to the general population.

Intergenerational trauma is one contributor to that inequality, and we need to recognise the history of dispossession, colonisation and the continuing discrimination faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

For the long-term benefit and cohesion of this country, it is vital that governments, community organisations and businesses play their part in building relationships and working towards a reconciled, just and equitable Australia.

At Mission Australia, we believe in celebrating the rich heritage of one of the oldest continuing cultures, and recognising the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

As a community service provider, we have an opportunity to serve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities we work with in a culturally appropriate way. Wherever possible, we will partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to deliver programs and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We believe that, to achieve substantial and sustainable change towards Reconciliation, solutions must be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people. These initiatives need to be adequately funded over the long term and services must be coordinated, and not delivered in isolation. We will engage with local communities and Traditional Owners and Elders to develop culturally appropriate programs that are best suited to local circumstances.



Culturally appropriate practice

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, differ in religion and spirituality, racial background, language and ethnicity. Therefore, we see it as important to develop an understanding of individual communities' cultural diversity and deliver services and outreach practices which are acceptable to individuals, families and to the community. In collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak policy bodies, we will advocate for evidence-based policy changes which improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and put Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the centre of all policy and program decisions.



Our business

As a leading, national, Christian community services organisation, we support vulnerable people and communities to be more self-sufficient. We operate over 450 services and programs across all states and territories, including remote and regional areas of Australia. Our goal is to reduce homelessness and strengthen communities. We are dedicated to delivering evidence-based, integrated services that make a powerful and sustainable difference to people's lives in five key areas:

1 Homelessness & housing

We offer specialist support services that prevent vulnerable young people, adults and families from becoming homeless, as well as providing crisis accommodation, transitional housing, social and affordable housing to safely exit people from homelessness.

2 Families, children & early learning

We provide a wide range of services for families and children, including high quality early learning services. We create stable and positive environments for families to thrive, so that children have the love, support and opportunity they need to reach their potential.

3 Young people

We believe in the potential of every young Australian. Through a diverse range of youth-focused services, we support young people to engage positively with education, family, community and employment, so that they can lead change and make a positive contribution to society.

4 Mental wellbeing support

We work with people affected by alcohol and drugs or mental health issues, providing flexible, individual and targeted care that helps them and their family and carers to overcome their challenges and reach their goals.

5 Employment, skills & training

We help early school leavers and the long-term unemployed to gain the confidence, experience and skills to continue their study, explore training and job opportunities and earn an adequate income. We work closely with employers to help people with disability transition into the workplace.

We employ 2,838 employees nationally across the organisation, of which 111 (or 4%) of employees have self-identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Approximately 18% of our clients have identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

MISSION AUSTRALIA

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Our first RAP was launched in 2009 and, while it has helped us as an organisation focus on how we can contribute to improving the living standards of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there is more we can and should commit ourselves to doing to advance reconciliation.

During our first RAP we identified local relationships and successful engagement models that have now been cemented in wider activities within Mission Australia. We laid a foundation for understanding and educating staff on the services that can assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The journey taken between the first RAP to now has allowed us to embed our local understanding and identify opportunities for ongoing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations.

Since our last RAP, Executive Leaders and other staff have visited a range of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities, with specific cultural training provided. We have established processes and protocols to ensure invitations are issued to Traditional Owners to perform a Welcome to Country. All new staff members working within any service in Mission Australia undergo induction on our RAP and we have

communicated significant cultural days and events to all staff. At a local level, there have been a variety of cultural activities undertaken, to engage the people we work with and the wider community in the Reconciliation journey.

To develop our new RAP, we have reflected on our original RAP and acknowledged the successes and challenges we faced from an implementation and longevity perspective. We have analysed the opportunities and pressures, including opportunities to refine and deepen our commitment to reconciliation across the organisation. We have engaged with staff from across the country and the peak reconciliation body, Reconciliation Australia, to create this new RAP, ensuring we are meeting the current needs of the communities in which we work. This RAP will be communicated to all Mission Australia staff through a variety of mediums, to encourage staff to get involved in this journey.

There is a governance body operating within Mission Australia, which ensures the implementation of the RAP. The RAP Reference Group, which consists of diverse employees, is the key group responsible for implementing the RAP in Mission Australia. This group creates content, generates ideas and drives progress on the RAP. In addition to the RAP Reference Group, a RAP Steering Committee, consisting of high level managers and executives, reviews all content regarding the RAP, and makes final decisions. The RAP is also sponsored by a key member of the

Mission Australia Executive team, who is ultimately responsible for its implementation and success. During the implementation phase of this new RAP, each member of the Executive has key deliverables (listed below) which they will be held accountable for. The Project Management Office will provide governance support to the Reference Group and Steering Committee and report to the executive on progress against deliverables.



Relationships

Trusting relationships are essential, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are based heavily on relationships. We commit to developing relationships at every level of our organisation – nationally, state-wide and locally – wherever our work is based.



All staff will adopt a spirit of humility and willingness to understand and learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The fulfilment of targets will depend upon the effectiveness of this networking and relationship building.

Focus areas

Our Voice - Generate support and effect social change as a courageous voice and advocate for people in need.

Our Services - Grow and shape evidence based services to achieve the greatest positive change for the most marginalised and disadvantaged.

Action	Deliverable
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1. RAP Reference Group to actively monitor the RAP development, status of implementation and tracking actions

Mission Australia's Commitment:

- Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people are represented on the RAP Reference Group
- Cultivate ideas and form recommendations for inclusion within the next RAP
- Establish Guiding Principles for working together and a Terms of Reference
- Ensure the RAP Reference Group meets a minimum of three times per calendar year to review progress

2. Celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week (NRW) by providing opportunities to build and maintain relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians

Mission Australia's Commitment:

- Circulate annual National Reconciliation Week resources to all staff via the intranet
- Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share stories in order to grow cultural understanding. Publish these stories and make available to all staff via the internal intranet
- Organise at least one event in our state offices and National Office, to better connect, engage and support our whole organisation to participate in National Reconciliation Week
- Register all NRW events via Reconciliation Australia's NRW website
- Support an external NRW event
- Ensure our RAP Reference Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW

3. Mission Australia will develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes

Mission Australia's Commitment:

- Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement
- Follow community protocols and seek to develop partnerships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and/or organisations when delivering culturally specific programs and services
- Provide targeted client support in areas of significance to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations we partner with to support the delivery of these programs and services
- Engage with services on a quarterly basis to provide case studies of culturally appropriate activities that can be shared on the intranet

4. Mission Australia will seek to advocate for equality and reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians

Mission Australia's Commitment:

- Circulate the RAP to all employees each year as part of National Reconciliation Week
- Provide a copy of the RAP as part of the standard induction process and 'New Starter' packs for all new employees
- Publish the RAP on Mission Australia's intranet and internet sites and reference in the Annual Report to promote awareness and cultural understanding
- Publish case studies and stories pertaining to reconciliation on the intranet on a bi-monthly basis
- Use evidence-based research and evaluations to influence public policy relating to social issues impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities
- Partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak groups to advocate for policies and programs which support the self-determination and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People
- Produce a report focussed on the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people based on the Annual Youth Survey every second year

Respect

At Mission Australia, respect is one of our key values. We treat people as we expect to be treated, offering love, acceptance and a voice of support in the face of life's challenges. We respect each other and acknowledge the diversity of our colleagues and clients. We collaborate proactively with colleagues and the community. We treat each other with courtesy, politeness and sensitivity.



Mission Australia's vision for reconciliation is that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this country will be restored to a place of equity, dignity and respect. We aspire for the healing of our national soul as we see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures fully valued, broken relationships restored and social inequalities eradicated.

Focus area

Our Services

Grow and shape evidence based services to achieve the greatest positive change for the most marginalised and disadvantaged.

Action	Deliverable
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5. Engage employees in cultural learning opportunities to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements

Mission Australia's Commitment:

Develop a cultural awareness strategy that includes the following actions:

- Provide cultural awareness training in our standard induction process for all staff
- Encourage staff to further their own cultural awareness through their personal development plans
- Train staff, covering locally specific protocol, cultural understanding and cross-cultural communication - for staff in services specifically targeted for / based in areas of significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population
- Upload resources on the intranet for staff to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- Create opportunities for peer support for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to partner with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues in other locations/roles to encourage cultural understanding
- Investigate opportunities to work with local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants to develop cultural awareness training
- Provide opportunities for non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander members of the RAP Reference Group, key people leaders across our organisation and the Executive Team to participate in events and specialist cultural training to enhance appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements
- Promote the Reconciliation Australia's Share Our Pride online tool to all staff
- Ensure all current MA employees undertake this training once the package has been finalised

6. Engage employees in understanding the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols, such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Land, to ensure there is a shared meaning

Mission Australia's Commitment:

- Use the Acknowledgement of Land wording developed by the RAP Reference Group as the standard wording across the organisation
- Develop a Cultural Protocols Guide outlining the cultural significance of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Land and other protocols
- Publish the Cultural Protocols Guide on the intranet to make available to all employees to develop cultural awareness and understanding
- Invite a Traditional Owner to perform a Welcome to Land at the opening of new sites and/or significant services and other significant events, such as program launches
- Encourage staff to include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all meetings
- Prepare a calendar of key dates significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and encourage staff to attend or host local celebrations
- Develop workforce plans for remote areas to address the identified priorities of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Develop a list of key contacts for organising a Welcome to Country and maintaining respectful partnerships
- Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Connection Register, to enable our non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to gain an understanding of local customs

7. Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with their culture and communities by celebrating NAIDOC Week

Mission Australia's Commitment:

- Encourage all staff to participate in NAIDOC week activities and NAIDOC Community sub groups
- Encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to access cultural leave provisions to participate in cultural activities and communities during NAIDOC Week
- Invite all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues to share their heritage in the workplace
- Encourage offices to support local community events
- Review existing HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to any staff engaging in local NAIDOC week activities
- Participate in local NAIDOC activities

Opportunities

Mission Australia believes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should enjoy quality of life with every opportunity to succeed. As a leading provider in community services, housing and early learning services, we recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We continue to work closely with local communities in metropolitan, regional and remote areas to address training, employment, early childhood education, housing and children's' and families' needs. Mission Australia will continue to work with these communities in order to promote reconciliation and equality.



Focus area

Our Voice

Generate support and effect social change as a courageous voice and advocate for people in need.

Action	Deliverable
<p>8. Investigate opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within our workplace</p>	<p>Mission Australia's Commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention strategy • Achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff numbers equal to or higher than numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients • Engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies, including professional development • Collect information on our current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment opportunities • Conduct an annual employee survey to gather information on demographics and to seek feedback on how we can improve as an organisation • Develop succession planning for current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff that ensures cultural appropriateness is incorporated into our workforce planning for all areas of the organisation • Where possible, include an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander member of staff and/or community independent panel member on interview panels when recruiting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander specific roles and for roles that predominantly service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people • Advertise role vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media as part of the recruitment process for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander specific roles (as defined within contract requirements) and for roles that predominantly service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people • Review HR policies and procedures and develop a consolidated policy, that outlines all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee policies and procedures, to assist managers in providing a culturally safe and supportive workplace (e.g. Sorry Business) and encourage participation • Include the following phrase in all job advertisements: 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply'.
<p>8. Investigate opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within our workplace</p>	<p>Mission Australia's Commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mentoring Network across the organisation providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to connect and support each other and to have a 'sounding board' for advice and guidance in an appropriate, culturally safe, environment. • Develop structured opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to participate in preparing future tender submissions for the design and delivery of services specifically targeted for / based in areas of significant Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander population
<p>9. Investigate opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity within our organisation</p>	<p>Mission Australia's Commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review procurement guidelines to consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers through Supply Nation • Develop and communicate to staff a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to procure goods and services • Utilise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander catering during NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week events where ever possible • Develop one further significant commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned business. • Review procurement policies and procedures to identify any barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to supply our organisation with goods and services • Investigate Supply Nation membership

Tracking progress and reporting



Action	Deliverable
<p>10. Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia</p>	<p>Mission Australia's Commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually • Investigate participating in the RAP Barometer
<p>11. Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings internally and externally</p>	<p>Mission Australia's Commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the RAP achievements, challenges and learnings on the Annual Report and internally via the Intranet • Track the RAP's Implementation and report quarterly as part of the standard Projects Governance Framework to the Executive Team
<p>12. Review and develop next RAP</p>	<p>Mission Australia's Commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements • Send draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review and feedback • Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement.



**Mission Australia helps
people move towards
independence by standing
together with Australians
in need, until they can
stand for themselves**

Contact us

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