Women's Health East

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

May 2025 - May 2027



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RAP Design Statement

Alanna Sandy, a Taungurung artist, created the artwork featured in this document. The vibrant imagery and cultural symbols promote a deeper understanding of Aboriginal women's health.

The artwork depicts diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women—Aunties, Sisters, Sister girls, and Elders—engaged in health discussions within yarning circles. It showcases significant cultural items such as dilly bags containing clap sticks, coolamons (traditional carrying vessels) filled with bush food or medicine, and examples of basket weaving.

Dilly bags are very important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. They use these bags to carry special items for ceremonies, medicine, things to trade, and food. These traditional items show how strong and adaptable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is. In the artwork, the dilly bag has both old and new items. There are traditional things like clap sticks, but also modern items like water bottles, tampons, and mobile phones. This mix of old and new shows how First Nations culture preserves what's important from the past while also living in today's world.



Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia commends Women's Health East on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Commencing an Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build strong foundations and relationships, ensuring sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for Women's Health East to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff, and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, Women's Health East will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process, as well.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Women's Health East is part of a strong network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Women's

Health East's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Women's Health East on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine

Chief Executive Officer Reconciliation Australia







Statement from Women's Health East's Chief Executive Officer

I am delighted to introduce Women's Health East's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). As the women's health promotion organisation for Melbourne's eastern region, we are proud to work on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples enduring connections to Country, knowledge, kinship and culture. Our commitment is to reduce health disparities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women by promoting gender equality, preventing violence against women, and enhancing sexual and reproductive health. Guided by our values of human rights, social justice, diversity, inclusion, partnership, innovation, and respect, this RAP embodies our dedication to reconciliation.

Building on the success of our inaugural Reflect RAP, this two-year plan aims to deepen our understanding and commitment to reconciliation and closing the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal women and girls. We will work in partnership with local Aboriginal organisations and women to strengthen our health promotion programs and initiatives to advance the health, wellbeing, and self-determination of Aboriginal women and girls in Melbourne's east.

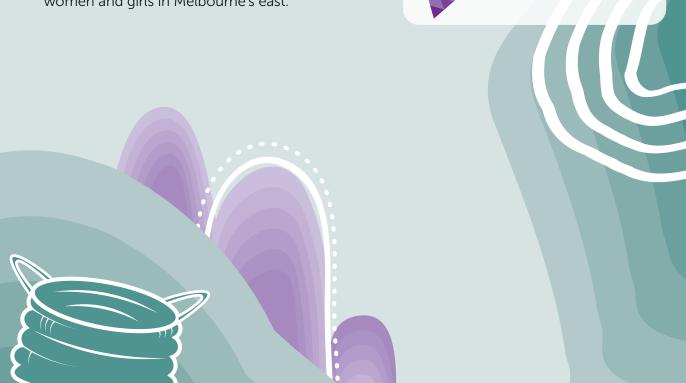
We are committed to listening to and amplifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's voices and fostering a culture of reciprocity and learning by enhancing our Board and staff's understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures and identities. Our goal is to build a culturally safe and inclusive workplace, increasing the representation of Aboriginal women on our staff, Board, and advisory committees. We will also engage with local organisations and businesses and improve our procurement practices.

Women's Health East pledges to be an ally and support the rights of First Nations peoples through truth-telling, justice and Treaty. We are excited to continue our reconciliation journey, striving for fairness, respect and equity for the vibrant and strong Aboriginal women and communities of Melbourne's eastern region.

Vomen's Health East

Elly Taylor

Chief Executive Officer Women's Health East



Our vision for reconciliation

Women's Health East's vision is a reconciled community that is equitable and just, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures are respected and celebrated. A reconciled Australia acknowledges the injustices of the past and is informed by truth-telling and a Treaty led by First Nations peoples.

For Women's Health East, reconciliation represents a future in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country benefit from gender equality, equitable health outcomes and live free from violence.

Our business

Women's Health East is an independent, health promotion organisation that works to build an equitable and inclusive society, so that women experience their best health and wellbeing. We work collaboratively with local governments, healthcare providers, organisations and communities, equipping them to make the institutional changes needed to create fairer, healthier and safer communities. We deliver health promotion programs for, and with, local women who experience marginalisation and disadvantage to advance their health, safety and wellbeing. As subject matter experts, we equip our partners with the tools and expertise they need to advance gender equality, prevent violence against women, and ensure better health outcomes for women in our community. We drive change towards these goals by supporting others with the expertise, information and guidance they need to make systemic changes within their organisations and within the wider community.

Women's Health East works on Wurundjeri Country in Melbourne's east. The region has a population of over 1.1 million people and covers the seven local government areas of Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges. We operate alongside 11 other feminist Women's Health Services across Victoria. Women's Health East, as a member of this statewide network, contributes to coordinated action to advance Victorian women's health, safety and wellbeing.

Our office is in Doncaster East, where we employ 24 staff, none of whom are Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander women or non-binary people. Women's Health East is committed to strengthening partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their communities, and acknowledges the unique knowledge, expertise and skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and partner organisations who we collaborate with in our region.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Women's Health East's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan is a vital step in promoting self-determination, health equity, cultural respect, and effective community engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and communities that we work alongside.

The RAP reflects our commitment to building our knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, perspectives, and practices, fostering an inclusive environment where all women are respected, valued and supported. Our RAP will help ensure that our workplace and health promotion programs and initiatives are culturally safe, appropriate and accessible. Women's Health East's Chief Executive Officer is the RAP Champion and is responsible for engaging our entire organisation—Board, staff, and volunteers—in a unified effort toward reconciliation.

We understand that colonisation, racism, and ongoing discriminatory policies, practices and cultural norms have caused severe impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including dispossession, family separation, and cultural loss. Through our Innovate RAP, we aim to build trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and foster meaningful partnerships with our local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and services. As a women's health promotion organisation, we hope our leadership will encourage other health sector organisations to make similar commitments, enhancing reconciliation efforts.

Since launching our Reflect RAP in 2023, Women's Health East has engaged in self-reflection to understand our history and role, assess our progress, and identify areas for improvement, while maintaining transparency and accountability. We have developed the capacity of RAP Working Group members by researching and presenting best practices in race relations, anti-discrimination, and effective partnerships. Additionally, we have explored our sphere of influence to identify organisations and networks for collaboration to enhance our reconciliation efforts.

Partnerships and activities

As a mainstream organisation, Women's Health East recognises the importance of building respectful and mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). This collaboration enables us to better advocate for and support self-determination and other priority issues identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and communities.

We are grateful to be growing meaningful relationships with two ACCOs in Melbourne's east; Oonah Aboriginal Health and Community Services and Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service (BWAHS), the regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled specialist family violence service in Melbourne's east. In recent years Women's Health East has partnered with and supported BWAHS in the delivery of Yarn Up a program that provides training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with lived experience of family and other forms of violence against women, and supports them to be speakers and advocates for addressing the systems, cultures and practices that lead to family violence and other forms of violence against women. BWAHS is also a member of east Melbourne's regional partnership for the primary prevention of violence against women, Together for Equality and Respect (TFER), facilitated by Women's Health East.

In 2023 and 2024, Women's Health East provided financial and administrative support to community activities during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, including the annual Walk Against Family Violence, in which BWAHS and Oonah Aboriginal Health and Community Services are key partners. Additionally, Women's Health East is a non-community member of the East Metro Dhelk Dja Action Group. Dhelk Dja Action Groups are place-based, Aboriginal community-led groups that drive local action across Victoria to prevent and address family violence through a partnership approach.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Additionally, since starting our RAP journey we have:

- Engaged local Aboriginal organisations to deliver cultural awareness training and initiatives to staff, senior leaders, and Board members.
- Conducted a comprehensive review of relevant policies and procedures, including updates to our recruitment practices.
- Developed organisational cultural protocol guidelines to ensure staff engage with Aboriginal organisations, employees and communities in a culturally responsive, safe, and respectful manner.
- Celebrated significant dates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history through internal and external events and communications.
- Increased our engagement with local First Nations suppliers.
- Updated our Staff Leave Entitlement policy to allow staff the choice to work on January 26th in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and elect to have another day off in lieu.

Considerations and learnings

Implementing our first Reconciliation Action Plan has been a significant journey, providing valuable learnings and opportunities for growth. As we worked towards building stronger relationships with First Nations communities and embedding cultural safety within our organisation, we encountered several challenges that required us to reflect and adapt. This process not only highlighted areas for improvement but also strengthened our commitment to reconciliation.

As a small organisation, we face limitations in having sufficient staff to work towards RAP deliverables. The tasks were assigned to a small working group, which added pressure to balance the RAP work with other organisational responsibilities. Working group members identified opportunities to align RAP actions with our core health promotion activities to embed

these into day-to-day work, making it more manageable for staff to fulfill RAP obligations without creating entirely new workflows.

Additionally, we identified the need to accommodate varying levels of cultural understanding within the organisation.

New staff needed foundational training, while longer-serving staff were ready to delve deeper into cultural safety and inclusive service delivery. This variance slowed progress as we worked to meet all staff members' learning needs. Addressing the varying levels of staff knowledge required a flexible training strategy. Recognising this challenge has helped us appreciate the need for ongoing, tailored professional development in cultural safety, ensuring both new and long-term staff are appropriately supported.

Governance

Given Women's Health East currently has no staff who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, we utilised professional and community connections to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have a connection to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Eastern Metropolitan Region of Melbourne and invited them to join our RAP Working Group.

The role of First Nations community representatives is to provide cultural advice and guidance to Women's Health East about the implementation of its Reconciliation Action Plan and our work with Aboriginal organisations, women and communities in Melbourne's east. Community representatives are invited to attend three RAP Working Group meetings per year. These are paid positions, and community representatives are compensated for their time attending meetings.

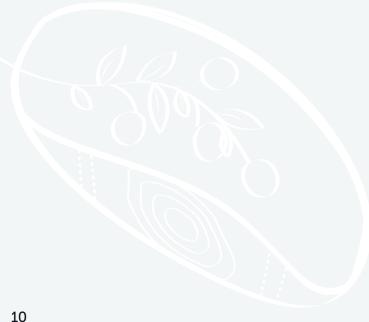
Our Reconciliation Action Plan

The RAP Working Group includes the following community representatives:

- Christine Wilson
- Kristy Nocker
- Sarah Joyce
- Cora Green
- Vanessa Murdoch

The RAP Working Group includes the following staff members:

- Elly Taylor, Chief Executive Officer
- Fiona Sharkie, Acting Chief Executive Officer
- Catherine D'Arcy, Manager Prevention of Violence Against Women
- Sarah Chong, Team Leader Community Engagement
- Claire Butselaar, Health Promotion Coordinator Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Katherine Lim, Team Leader Gender Equality
- Priscilla Zaathang, Bicultural Worker





Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities meaningfully allows Women's Health East to gain valuable insights and strengthen our programs and initiatives. Strong relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations enable us to combine resources, knowledge, and expertise, enhancing our ability to deliver comprehensive, culturally appropriate health services. Our commitment to these relationships ensures that our health promotion activities are equitable, culturally sensitive, and effective in meeting the diverse needs of all women in our region.

Act	ion	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1	Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	November 2025	Chief Executive Officer
		Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	February 2026	Team Leader - Community Engagement
2	Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2025 and 2026	Health Promotion Coordinator - Sexual and Reproductive Health
		RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2025 and 2026	Coordinator - Sexual and Reproductive Health Team Leader - Community Engagement
		Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June 2025 and 2026	Coordinator – Sexual and Reproductive
		Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May - 3 June 2025 and 2026	Team Leader - Community Engagement
		Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's <u>NRW website.</u>	May 2025 and 2026	Executive Assistant



Act	ion	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3	Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	April 2026	Team Leader - Community Engagement Chief Executive Officer Team Leader - Community Engagement Team Leader - Community Engagement Quality Coordinator Quality Coordinator Quality Coordinator
		Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	May 2025 and 2026	
		Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	November 2026	- Community
		Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	August 2026	- Community
4	Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing antidiscrimination provisions, and future needs.	January 2026	•
		Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	August 2026	
		Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti- discrimination policy.	May 2026	_
		Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	July 2026	Team Leader – Community Engagement
5	Partner with and elevate the voices and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to join the Together For Equality and Respect partnership and attend sector communities of practice and practice forums.	July 2025	Manager - Prevention of Violence Against Women
	organisations, women and communities.	 Use our social media platforms to elevate the voices, stories and perspectives of First Nations women. 	July 2025 and 2026	Manager Gender Equality



Our commitment to reconciliation means acknowledging the ongoing impacts of colonialism, racism, and dispossession on First Nations peoples. Truth-telling about the rights and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is crucial for building trust and respect, demonstrating that Women's Health East recognises their enduring connection to the land and unique cultural identities. Celebrating the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples fosters a positive, inclusive environment, promoting unity and shared purpose—key to the success of our health promotion activities. We are committed to listening to and respecting local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their communities, working to promote healing, self-determination, and wellbeing.

Acti	ion	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
6	6 Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	September 2025	Team Leader - Community Engagement
		Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy.	August 2025	Manager Prevention of Violence Against Women
		 Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff. 	October 2025	Team Leader - Community Engagement
		 Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning. 	March 2026	Chief Executive Officer
7	7 Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	March 2027	Team Leader – Community Engagement
		 Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. 	March 2027	Team Leader – Community Engagement
		Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	November 2025 and 2026	Executive Assistant
		Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	July 2025	Manager Prevention of Violence Against Women



Acti	on	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8	Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2025 and 2026	Team Leader - Community Engagement
		Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	June, 2025	Quality Coordinator
		Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	First week in July 2025 and 2026	Health Promotion Coordinator - Sexual and Reproductive Health
9	9 Respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's expertise by prioritising their insights in health decisions and tailoring promotion strategies to achieve equitable outcomes.	Engage Aboriginal organisations and advisors in the design of Women's Health East's regional strategies	May 2025	Health Promotion Coordinator - Sexual and Reproductive Health
		Work in partnership with Aboriginal organisations to deliver health promotion programs to local Aboriginal women that are culturally safe, respectful and promote self- determination	August 2025	Manager Prevention of Violence Against Women
		Showcase Aboriginal women's expertise and knowledge at Women's Health East's communities of practice, practice forums and webinars	August 2025 and 2026	Health Promotion Coordinator - Prevention of Violence Against Women



Women's Health East recognises that culturally safe and meaningful employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is vital for economic participation and self-determination, enriching our organisation with diverse perspectives. Women's Health East is committed to increasing employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and supporting economic development through procurement with their businesses. To advance equality in Melbourne's east and beyond, we must create professional development opportunities, remove barriers to participation, and ensure our services are accessible and responsive to First Nations peoples across our organisation.

Act	ion	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10	Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	September 2025	Team Leader – Community Engagement
		 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy. 	October 2025	Team Leader – Community Engagement
		Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	October 2025	Manager Finance and Business Operations
		Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	July 2025	Executive Assistant
		Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	September 2025	Quality Coordinator
11	Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	August 2026	Manager Finance and Business Operations
		Investigate Supply Nation membership.	April 2026	Executive Assistant
	outcomes.	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	October 2026	Coordinator Manager Finance and Business Operations Executive Assistant Manager Finance and Business Operations Manager Finance
		 Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. 	September 2026	Manager Finance and Business Operations
		Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	September 2026	Manager Finance and Business Operations



Act	ion	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12	Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	February 2026 and 2027	Chief Executive Officer
		Review, update if required and continue to apply the Terms of Reference for the RWG.	May 2025, 2026 and 2027	Team Leader - Community Engagement
		Meet bi-monthly to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	May 2025, 2026 and 2027	Executive Assistant
13	Provide appropriate support for effective	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2025 and 2026	Chief Executive Officer
	implementation of RAP commitments.	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	June 2026	Chief Executive Officer
		Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	May 2025	Health Promotion Coordinator – Sexual and Reproductive Health
		Maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	January 2027	Chief Executive Officer
14	Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and	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	Executive Assistant
	learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	Officer Executive Assistant Health Promotion Coordinator - Sexual and Reproductive Health Health Promotion Coordinator - Sexual and Reproductive Health Promotion
		Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	Coordinator – Sexual and
		Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	March, June, September December 2025, 2026 and 2027	Team Leader – Community Engagement
		Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	May 2026 and 2027	Manager Gender Equality
		Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	April 2026	Health Promotion Coordinator – Sexual and Reproductive Health
		Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	May 2027	Team Leader - Community Engagement



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
15 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our nex RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2026	Team Leader – Community Engagement





Contact Details:



