



# Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

February 2021 - July 2022







### Artwork

#### Black fish (Warraagan) Season

This painting is a tribute to my Brother in Law who always took my sister, their sons, my sons and myself and other immediate family members fishing and swimming along the river and the beach. This was a regular outing during the summer months. He taught the young boys how to catch fish, clean and prepare it and then cook it on an open fire on the river bank, where it would then be shared amongst the families. He was a great fisherman with local knowledge of the best fishing spots: knowledge which he passed down to the boys. The river and beaches are still a great provider of freshwater and salt water fish for my family and a resource we need to look after.

### Artist

My paintings don't always tell the traditional stories that usually come with indigenous art, but they tell my story, one of reconnecting with my family, finding my place and where I belong. my works reflect the "conciliation" between traditional methods with modern colours and mediums. They are what lies deep in my heart and soul.

In short my paintings are my story, my journey, nothing more, nothing less.

Yaarri Yarraag /goodbye.

Artist Profile: <https://www.boomalli.com.au/jude-jarrett/>

### About this document

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## Foreword

It is encouraging that Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are becoming increasingly common in Australian public life. At the same time, there is a risk that 'having a RAP' becomes a tick box exercise, an unthinking piece of corporate compliance. It is one thing for an organisation to 'have a RAP', and quite another for the organisation – its board and staff – to understand what Reconciliation is, and what the larger goal of the local action plan is. What is it, really, that an organisation is signing up to when it adopts a RAP?

Reconciliation Australia tells us that 'At its heart, Reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians'. To strengthen the relationship, non-Indigenous Australians need to know why it is not strong now, to know about and acknowledge a history – a very recent history – of dispossession, violence and racism. And to see reconciliation as being for the benefit of all Australians, non-Indigenous Australians need to know about and respect the complexity, sophistication and beauty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, beliefs, laws and society.

This 'historical acceptance' is just one of Reconciliation Australia's five dimensions of Reconciliation; it is the basis for improved race relations, greater equality and equity, institutional integrity and, ultimately, national unity. These five dimensions of Reconciliation are the larger goal towards which our local RAP is dedicated.

A particular Reconciliation focus for the Welfare Rights Centre is equality and equity: through our expertise in the social security system, we work towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' being able to participate equally and equitably in all areas of life.

While pursuing equality and equity, for all people, is core business for the Welfare Rights Centre, we have been slow to consciously and expressly commit to Reconciliation. Guided by Reconciliation Australia's approach of Reflect, Innovate, Stretch, and Elevate, we have reflected on our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and with this RAP we set out our unique vision for reconciliation.

A very visible example of the steps we are taking towards reconciliation is the appointment of an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer; less visible is regular cultural awareness training for board members and staff. These are just two examples of a detailed and ambitious Reconciliation Action Plan which marks out an important new stage of the growth of the Welfare Rights Centre as a champion for equality and equity. We are resolved to never let our RAP be a tick box exercise, and to ensure that it works to push us towards real action towards achieving Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past and present.



## Our Vision for Reconciliation

The Welfare Rights Centre's office is located on the land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation and we pay our respects to the Gadigal People and their Elders, past, present and emerging.

We declare our commitment to Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. We acknowledge and recognise the ancestral connection between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the land, which is a sovereignty that co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

As a Statewide service provider, we extend our acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living on and off Country throughout New South Wales.

The Welfare Rights Centre acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have endured injustice and dispossession, that this continues into the present and that the law has played a role in perpetuating this injustice.

Our vision is for a fair, just and inclusive society, where everyone has the resources to meet their basic needs and to participate fully in society. Realising this vision means listening to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, providing our legal services in a way that is respectful, relevant and accessible, and advocating for law reform.

We heed the call to action contained in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We will walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to redress injustice. We commit to Makarrata, to the coming together after a struggle.

This Reconciliation Action Plan sets out how the Welfare Rights Centre will realise its vision for Reconciliation and the actions we will take to develop partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We use the word "Reconciliation" but recognise that Australia is for the first time working towards a relationship based on truth, equality, peace and harmony.

## Our Business

The Welfare Rights Centre provides free legal information, advice and representation to help people who live in New South Wales navigate the social security system. Many people dealing with Centrelink have complex, intersecting issues in their lives that cause deep distress, including health, housing, safety, and financial pressures. Accessing social security entitlements and challenging unfair debts alleviates financial hardship and prevents disadvantage that can span generations.

Providing a culturally safe service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is core business and we recognise the interaction between historical and current injustice and the social security system, and the impacts of intergenerational trauma.

We are located in Surry Hills, Sydney, which is Gadigal Land, but our service extends to all people living in NSW. We have twelve staff members and are currently recruiting an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (February 2021).

## Our Reconciliation Action Plan

The Welfare Rights Centre is developing a Reconciliation Action Plan because we acknowledge the past and current injustice endured by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and we wish to demonstrate our commitment to Reconciliation in a public and deliberate way.

Our Board is committed to Reconciliation and has two Aboriginal directors. While the Centre has not previously taken a deliberate and structured approach to Reconciliation, we have always been committed to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Acknowledge Country at the commencement of our Board and staff meetings. Our commitment to Reconciliation and to implementing our Reconciliation Action Plan is reflected in our Strategic Plan. Our Executive Director is our RAP Champion and will take responsibility for driving internal engagement with and awareness of our RAP.

## Our Current Activities

Our casework prioritises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Many tell us they heard about us through word-of-mouth in their community and they have heard we have helped their family or friends before. Over the years, there has been a steady increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people approaching our service for help with their Centrelink problem.

We have also commissioned a prominent Aboriginal artist to prepare a mural for our workplace that reflects our commitment to social justice and community.







## SECTION 1

# Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<p><b>1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships</b> with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identify</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our <b>local area or sphere of influence</b>, and <b>develop a directory</b> of Aboriginal-controlled organisations.</li> </ul>	<p>Commence: February 2021 Complete: September 2021</p>	<p>Executive Director and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research <b>best practice and principles</b> that <b>support partnerships</b> with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</li> </ul>	<p>Commence: February 2021 Complete: September 2021</p>	<p>Executive Director and Admin Officer</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek invitations for the Executive Director or Principal Solicitor to be a guest at <b>Aboriginal Interagency meetings</b>.</li> </ul>	<p>Commence: February 2021 Ongoing</p>	<p>Executive Director/ Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer</p>
<p><b>2. Build relationships</b> through celebrating National <b>Reconciliation Week</b> (NRW).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circulate <b>Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources</b> and reconciliation materials to our staff.</li> </ul>	<p>NRW: 27 May-3 June 2021 and 2022</p>	<p>Executive Director</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RAP Working Group members</b> to participate in an <b>external NRW event</b>.</li> </ul>	<p>NRW: 27 May-3 June 2021 and 2022</p>	<p>Executive Director</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in at least <b>one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW</b></li> </ul>	<p>NRW: 27 May-3 June 2021 and 2022</p>	<p>Office Administrator</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a <b>staff morning tea</b> to celebrate NRW, where staff share what reconciliation means to them or share a story from their work or life about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or cultures have impacted them.</li> </ul>	<p>NRW: 27 May-3 June 2021 and 2022</p>	<p>Office Administrator</p>



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>3. Promote</b> reconciliation through our <b>sphere of influence</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communicate our commitment to reconciliation</b> to all staff, board members and volunteers, by including our RAP in board, staff and volunteer inductions and including it in all Centre planning.</li> </ul>	NRW: 27 May- 3 June 2021	Executive Director, Principal Solicitor and Intake Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate developing a <b>Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation</b>, signed by staff and the Board, framed and displayed in foyer.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021	Chair & Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identify external stakeholders</b> that our organisation can <b>engage</b> with on our reconciliation journey, e.g., the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Aboriginal Medical Service.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021 Complete: July 2021	Executive Director & Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations</b> that we could approach to <b>collaborate with</b> on our reconciliation journey, e.g., Community Legal Centres NSW, Tenants Union, ACON, Black Rainbow, and Economic Justice Australia.</li> </ul>	April 2021	Executive Director & Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish our RAP on our <b>website</b> and promote it through our <b>social media</b>.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Community Legal Education & Comms Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge and <b>promote key events</b>, such as NRW, Yabun Festival, and Apology Day through our <b>social media</b>.</li> </ul>	NRW: 27 May- 3 June 2021 Yabun Day: 26 January 2022	CLE & Comms Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the inclusion of <b>Gadigal Land in the Centre's address</b> in external communications, e.g., letterhead, email signature blocks.</li> </ul>	August 2021	Executive Director
<b>4. Promote</b> positive race relations through <b>anti-discrimination strategies</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research <b>best practice and policies</b> in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.</li> </ul>	September 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a <b>review of HR policies and procedures</b> to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.</li> </ul>	September 2021	Executive Director





## SECTION 2

## Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>5. Increase understanding, value and recognition</b> of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase understanding, value and recognition</b> of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights <b>within our organisation</b>.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prepare a calendar</b> of significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates, with a particular focus on local events, enter into Outlook, and invite staff to events (see creative spirit website).</li> </ul>	February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a <b>review of cultural learning needs</b> within our organisation.</li> </ul>	June 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and Review our <b>Cultural Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients Policy</b>.</li> </ul>	Commence: June 2021 Complete: February 2022	Executive Director & Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff to participate in <b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness training</b> once every year, with costs shared with one or more other CLCs where necessary.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021 Ongoing	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subscribe to <b>relevant information sources</b> and circulate throughout the organisation (include Koori Mail, Indigenous Law Bulletin, Career Trackers).</li> </ul>	Commence: July 2021	Office Administrator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the <b>CLCNSW Cultural Safety Workbook</b>.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circulate the <b>“Share our Pride” tool</b> to staff and volunteers.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Executive Director



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>6. Demonstrate respect</b> to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing <b>cultural protocols</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an <b>understanding of the Gadigal People</b> of the Eora Nation, where our office is located, e.g., develop a presentation at a staff meeting.</li> </ul>	October 2021	Executive Director & Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Increase staff understanding</b> of the purpose and significance behind <b>cultural protocols</b>, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.</li> </ul>	December 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish an <b>Acknowledgement of Country on our website</b>.</li> </ul>	February 2021	CLE & Comms Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have an <b>Acknowledgement of Country before each Board and staff meeting</b>.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Executive Director
<b>7. Build respect</b> for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by <b>celebrating NAIDOC Week</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the <b>meaning of NAIDOC Week</b>.</li> </ul>	June 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an <b>information pack</b> about the meaning of NAIDOC week to raise staff awareness.</li> </ul>	May 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circulate to staff information about <b>NAIDOC Week external events in our local area</b> and encourage staff to attend.</li> </ul>	June 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAP Working Group to participate in an <b>external NAIDOC Week event</b>.</li> </ul>	First week in July 2021	Executive Director
<b>8. Build respect</b> for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by <b>participating in the Yabun Festival</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with CLCNSW to hold a <b>stall at the Yabun Festival</b> and roster staff to attend the stall.</li> </ul>	26 January 2022	Executive Director
<b>9. Build respect</b> for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by <b>acknowledging Mabo Day</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek legal advice on the proposal to <b>change staff working conditions to observe Mabo Day</b> as a staff public holiday instead of the public holiday held on Australia Day.</li> </ul>	Commence: October 2021 Mabo Day: 3 June 2022	Executive Director





Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>10. Deliver culturally safe services</b> to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install a <b>mural</b> by Aboriginal Artist which will be seen when people enter the office.</li> </ul>	December 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Display <b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia map</b>.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Office Administrator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In our foyer make available copies of <b>Koori Mail</b>.</li> </ul>	Commence: July 2021	Office Administrator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide <b>easily digestible online and culturally safe information</b> in a range of formats on common social security problems.</li> </ul>	May 2021	CLE & Comms Officer and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients the option of talking to our <b>Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer</b>.</li> </ul>	March 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maintain accurate and up to date records</b> of our services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021 Ongoing	Intake Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Review analysis, information and data</b> from Services Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics and academics on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to and experience of the social security system.</li> </ul>	Commence: April 2021 Complete: September 2021	Executive Director and Aboriginal Community liaison Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In providing our advice and casework services, <b>listen to and seek to understand our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients' experience</b> of the social security system.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021	Principal Solicitor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At our staff and casework meetings, identify our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and consider the <b>interaction between historical and current injustice and disadvantage and the social security system, and the impacts of intergenerational trauma</b>.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021	Executive Director & Principal Solicitor





## SECTION 3

# Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>11. Improve employment outcomes</b> by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a plan for <b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment</b> within our organisation.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement policies and procedures which <b>support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members</b>, and which create a culturally safe workplace.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021 Complete: December 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing</b> to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Source further <b>funding to employ</b> an Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer on a permanent basis.</li> </ul>	Commence: May 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the application of recruitment processes and <b>encourage the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants</b>, e.g., advertise 'non-identified' positions in Aboriginal media channels.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021	Executive Director
<b>12. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity</b> to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate <b>sourcing products and create a list</b> of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses to meet the Centre's office, catering and other needs</li> </ul>	Commence: March 2021 Complete: November 2021	Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate <b>Supply Nation membership</b>.</li> </ul>	Commence: February 2021	Office Administrator





## SECTION 4

## Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>13.</b> Establish and maintain an effective <b>RAP Working Group</b> (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maintain the CLC RWG</b> to assist in RAP implementation.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft <b>Terms of Reference</b> for the RWG.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander <b>representation on the RWG</b>.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish the <b>internal Welfare Rights Centre RAP Working Group</b>.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Executive Director
<b>14.</b> Provide appropriate support for <b>effective implementation of RAP commitments</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define <b>resource needs</b> for RAP implementation.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engage the Board</b> in the delivery of RAP commitments.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Chair & Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define <b>appropriate systems</b> and capability to <b>track</b>, measure and report on RAP commitments.</li> </ul>	March 2021	Executive Director
<b>15. Build accountability and transparency through reporting</b> RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete and submit the <b>annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire</b> to Reconciliation Australia.</li> </ul>	September 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present RAP to <b>CLCNSW National Reconciliation Week event</b>.</li> </ul>	NRW: 27 May- 3 June 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit report on RAP development and progress to <b>Off the Record</b>.</li> </ul>	March 2022 Annually	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add RAP implementation progress as standing item on <b>staff meeting agenda</b>.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on progress of our RAP implementation in our <b>Annual Report</b>.</li> </ul>	August 2021	Executive Director





Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>16.</b> Continue our reconciliation journey by <b>developing our next RAP</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register via Reconciliation Australia's <a href="#">website</a> to begin <b>developing our next RAP</b>.</li> </ul>	March 2022	Executive Director
<b>17.</b> Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are <b>involved in the leadership of our Centre</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When there is <b>a vacancy on the Board</b>, advertise an expression of interest for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander CLC employee to become a member of the Welfare Rights Centre and nominate for the Welfare Rights Centre Board.</li> </ul>	AGM: November 2021	Chair & Executive Director
<b>18.</b> Ensure our commitment to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is <b>embedded in the Centre's overall strategy</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include our commitment to reconciliation in the Centre's <b>strategic plan</b>.</li> </ul>	February 2021	Chair





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