



**RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN**

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**INNOVATE**

December 2021 - December 2023



**Mental Health  
Australia**

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features a dark blue base with scattered white and light blue circles of various sizes. Overlaid on this are larger, stylized shapes in shades of cyan, yellow, and purple. Some shapes resemble leaves or petals, while others are more geometric, like circles and ovals. The overall effect is a dense, textured pattern of organic and geometric forms.

Mental Health Australia is the independent peak body representing the full spectrum of mental health stakeholders and issues. This provides Mental Health Australia with a unique capacity to bring everyone to the table and create unifying opportunities. Mental Health Australia members include organisations representing people with experience of living with a mental illness or caring for someone with a mental illness, special needs groups, clinical service providers, professional bodies, public and private mental health service providers, researchers and state/territory community mental health peak bodies.

**Find out more at [mhaustralia.org](http://mhaustralia.org)**

Mental Health Australia Ltd  
ABN 57 600 066 635

## Innovate RAP

Reconciliation Australia commends Mental Health Australia 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 Mental Health Australia 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, Mental Health Australia 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 over 2.3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Mental Health Australia is part of a strong network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Mental Health Australia'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 Mental Health Australia on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

### **Karen Mundine**

Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia

## Our vision for reconciliation

Mental Health Australia's ultimate aim is for mentally healthy people, mentally healthy communities. Reconciliation is essential to achieving this.

Our vision for reconciliation is for equitable mental health outcomes - where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples no longer experience higher rates of mental ill-health and suicide than non-Indigenous Australians. Further, our vision is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing approaches to mental health to be respected and embraced across the mental health ecosystem.

Mental Health Australia wants to be part of creating an Australia which celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, honestly engages with our shared history and addresses current racial injustice. We will walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in pursuing reconciliation, and work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations in improving access to culturally safe mental health and suicide prevention services.



## Our business

Mental Health Australia is the peak, national non-government organisation representing and promoting the interests of the Australian mental health sector and is committed to achieving better mental health for all Australians. The organisation was established in 1997 as the first independent peak body in Australia to represent the full spectrum of mental health stakeholders and issues.

Mental Health Australia aims to promote mentally healthy communities, educate Australians on mental health issues, influence mental health reform so that government policies address all contemporary mental health issues, conduct research on innovative approaches to mental health care, and carry out regular consultation to represent the best interests of our members, partners and the community. In addition, Mental Health Australia continues to focus on the human rights of people with a mental illness, and recognises discrimination based on race, gender or sexuality is detrimental to mental health.

Mental Health Australia manages several key projects including the National Register of Mental Health Consumers and Carers, World Mental Health Day and Embrace Multicultural Mental Health Project, as well as auspicing the National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum. Mental Health Australia currently has 123 members, which include organisations representing people with lived experience of mental ill-health or caring for someone with mental ill-health, clinical service providers, public and private mental health service providers, researchers and state/territory community mental health peak bodies.

Our members are national and state organisations with coverage across Australia. Mental Health Australia has one office, based in the nation's capital on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country, with some staff working remotely from other states. We seek to influence national mental health reform and engage strongly with the Australian Government, the mental health sector and the Australian public in pursuing this goal.

As at September 2021, Mental Health Australia employs 15 people, none of whom identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

## Our RAP

Mental Health Australia is committed to reconciliation in Australia. We believe that together we can achieve a reconciled, just and equitable country.

In October 2013, Mental Health Australia's Board committed for the organisation to develop our first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This first Reflect RAP was built into our organisations' Strategic Plan (2014-16) and informed internal and external policies and strategies. Key achievements of this RAP included: the commissioning of a local Aboriginal artwork which is proudly displayed in our office; development of Mental Health Australia's protocol for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country in consultation with the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs; and maintaining and building upon our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in the mental health sector.

Building on this work, Mental Health Australia developed a second Reflect RAP in 2017-2019, incorporating some of the actions of an Innovate RAP. Through implementation of this plan, Mental Health Australia staff organised and participated in events to celebrate key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events, undertook cultural awareness training for community services staff and strengthened relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to better include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in our comments on government policy. As a result of our previous RAPs, Mental Health Australia's staff awareness of issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and specific actions we can take to enhance reconciliation in Australia has grown.

A RAP Working Group (RWG) was established to guide the development and implementation of Mental Health Australia's first RAP. Membership of this group has adapted as the organisation has changed overtime, but the group continues to include representatives from across the organisation's different teams. The RWG also reports to Mental Health Australia's Equity and Diversity committee. In the lead up to the development of Mental Health Australia's Innovate RAP, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff member from our neighbour organisation Indigenous Allied Health Australia was invited to formally join the RWG. Mental Health Australia's RAP Champion is our Director of External Relations.

The RAP Working Group membership consists of:

- Admin Support Officer, Indigenous Allied Health Australia (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Representative)
- Director External Relations or delegate (RAP Champion)
- Director of Corporate Services or delegate
- Events Coordinator
- Senior Policy and Project Officer

Mental Health Australia is excited to build on the foundations established through our previous Reflect RAPs, as we continue to learn, engage and work for reconciliation through implementation of this Innovate RAP.



## Relationships

Strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led mental health organisations will increase Mental Health Australia’s capacity to work towards systemic national mental health reform, for the benefit of all Australians. As part of this Innovate RAP, Mental Health Australia will strengthen our relationships with both existing and new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner organisations.

**Focus area:** This particularly relates to delivery of two of Mental Health Australia’s strategic priorities for 2021-2024, to highlight the social determinants for mental ill health and advocate for lasting changes across the whole ecosystem, and deliver value to our members and the wider mental health ecosystem.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Meet with local and national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	April 2022	Director External Relations
	Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations, engaging with best practice thought leaders on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and suicide prevention including Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with lived experience of mental ill-health.	July 2022	Director External Relations, Director Policy & Research
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia’s NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2022 and May 2023	Events Coordinator
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June, 2022 and 2023	Events Coordinator
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June, 2022 and 2023	Events Coordinator
	Organise at least one NRW event each year - explore collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health organisations.	27 May- 3 June, 2022 and 2023	Events Coordinator
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia’s NRW website.	May 2022 and May 2023	Events Coordinator

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Implement strategies to engage our staff in reconciliation.	July 2022	HR Representative
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publically and internally to our membership base of more than 120 organisations, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of RAP</li> <li>• Maintain MHA RAP webpage</li> <li>• CEO updates on NRW and NAIDOC week, and other important issues as they arise, including a guest blog for NAIDOC week.</li> </ul>	December 2021 July, November 2022	Director External Relations
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes – such as through our policy submissions and advocacy, communications campaigns, and members forums.	November 2022	Director External Relations, Director Policy & Research
	Collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation.	July 2023	Director External Relations
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Continue to review HR policies and procedures to ensure ongoing compliance with state, territory and federal anti-discrimination laws, and the organisation's future needs.	Updates at regular EDI committee meetings (review November 2022)	HR Representative
	Ensure the organisation's existing Equal Opportunity, Discrimination & Harassment Policy is properly implemented and communicated.	July 2022	HR Representative
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	December 2022	HR Representative
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism through awareness training and resources on the relationship between racism and mental ill health.	December 2022	HR Representative





## Respect

Mental Health Australia is committed to honouring and celebrating the strengths and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights. By increasing our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, Mental Health Australia will be more deeply informed about holistic approaches to mental health and wellbeing, and so better able to represent the mental health sector and provide a supportive environment for staff and stakeholders.

**Focus area:** This relates to Mental Health Australia’s strategic priority for 2021-2024 to highlight the social determinants for mental ill health and advocate for lasting changes across the whole ecosystem, as well as our commitment to honouring and amplifying lived experience.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. 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.	May 2022	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy.	September 2022	Director External Relations
	Incorporate and communicate identified cultural training requirements in the organisation’s Corporate Training Plan	October 2022	HR Representative
	Provide opportunities for all staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	December 2022	HR Representative
6. 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.	August 2022	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	November 2022	Director External Relations
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year, including Grace Groom Memorial Oration and AGM	November 2022, 2023	Director External Relations
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	Ongoing (Review June 2023)	CEO



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7. 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 2022, 2023	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week	March 2022	HR Manager
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	June-July 2022, 2023	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
8. Increase respect and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and approaches to mental health and wellbeing in our sphere of influence	Promote Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders through our campaigns - such as organisational partners in our annual World Mental Health Day activities, and opportunities to present at members policy events	October 2022, 2023	Director External Relations
	Investigate First Nations Ambassador Roles to promote and advocate for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples mental health and wellbeing, particularly in relation to the World Mental Health Day campaign	October 2022, 2023	Director External Relations





## Opportunities

Increasing opportunities and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will strengthen Mental Health Australia's impact, through increasing application of diverse approaches and increasing our relevance to a wider audience. Prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers and reducing barriers to employment are tangible expressions of Mental Health Australia's commitment to equity and reconciliation.

**Focus area:** This particularly relates to delivery of Mental Health Australia's strategic priority for 2021-2024 to deliver value to our members and the wider mental health ecosystem.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Contribute to improving employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Continue to advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, through relevant newsletters and websites.	As arise (review September 2022)	HR Representative
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders/advisors to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	September 2022	HR Representative
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	September 2022	HR Representative
10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Review our procurement strategy to support diversity of suppliers.	July 2022	Director Corporate Services
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	July 2022	Events Coordinator
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff and members.	July 2023	Director External Relations
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	July 2023	Events Coordinator
	Where possible develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses, including catering or training companies.	July 2023	Events Coordinator



## Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. 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.	November 2023	Director External Relations
	Review Terms of Reference for the RWG.	December 2021	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	December 2021, March, June, September, December 2022, March, June, September 2023	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	March 2022	Director Corporate Services
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments through regular executive meetings.	Monthly (review November 2022)	Director External Relations
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2022	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	December 2021, ongoing	CEO



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2022, 2023	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders at monthly staff meetings.	Ongoing (review November 2022)	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
	Publically report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, through our RAP webpage and annual report.	November 2022, 2023	Director External Relations
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	April 2022	Senior Policy & Projects Officer
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	April 2022	Senior Policy & Projects Officer



### Contact details

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## Artwork: Untitled by Melinda

**Brown, 2021** Melinda Brown is an Ngunnawal woman who now resides in the Northern Rivers, NSW, Bundjalung Nation. Mel has a Masters of Indigenous Studies – Healing and Trauma, and is a counsellor, cultural trainer, artist and author. Mel's passion is educating people in relation to improving services to Aboriginal communities and understanding the complexity of issues which affect Aboriginal communities.

### **The large ochre circle represents the primary life force that is ourselves as individuals, families or communities.**

We are the centre of our own universe and all that flows in and around us – This is what makes Us. With support and understanding, our healing journey can only be achieved on an individual level, by each of us from within.

### **The smaller ochre circles represent those who come and go from our lives and leave lasting effects throughout our life's journey.**

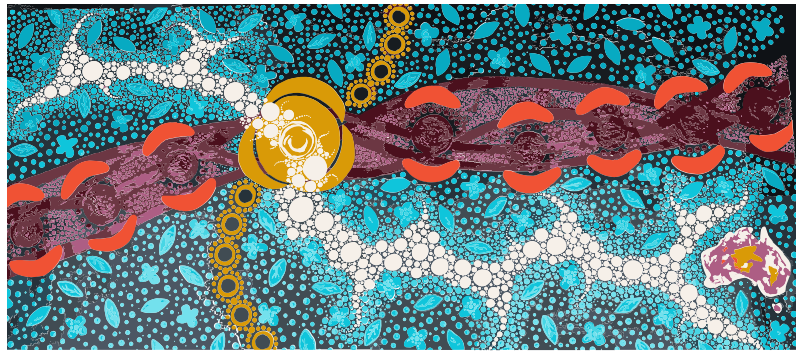
We share our lives with many people, some who come and go quickly and others who surround us for many years. Ultimately many of these people impact on our journey and can have a lasting influence on our overall mental health and wellbeing. The challenge is to limit the involvement of those who are unable to care and nurture us, whilst finding the courage to identify and hold those close to us who bring love and meaning to our lives.

### **The Red represents our Dreaming – Our life's journey of our past and future.**

Each person has their own individual Dreaming which is unique to them, similar to a fingerprint – Even those that look similar will have distinct differences in the ways in which they manage their past and future. Our past experiences influence the decisions we make and the way in which we view the world. We each have the power to change the future should the will to change exist.

### **The much smaller red dots represent the generational trauma in our past and the trauma which will challenge us in our future.**

Generational trauma is ever present, and whilst we can recognise the trauma of the past, we need still be aware of the future trauma's we inadvertently create for ourselves and the trauma that is created by forces outside of our control. Our resilience provides us with the skills to manage these events, both now and into our future journeys.



### **The lighter colour red, protects the deeper red circles and represents those who protect, nurture and support us.**

Support can look different for each of us, and can include family, friends, community and support services. Regardless of who we choose to protect, nurture and support us, the point is that they exist and we need only put out our hand and humbly accept assistance as it is offered to us.

### **The cream dots which etch a path through our Dreaming represent good mental health and wellbeing.**

During our times of good mental health and wellbeing our journey is clear and definable, it is strong and has the power to influence others and allows us to lead our best possible lives. It is also reasonable to expect that our journeys will not always be joyful, however being able to connect to our resilience of survival, we will create hope that good mental health and wellbeing can be reclaimed when we are ready.

### **The turquoise dots flow together with the cream dots and represents times when our mental health is adversely effected and flows outwards to other's who share our life's journey.**

Mental health and wellbeing is subject to interpretation by ourselves and others. Understanding and assessing our own mental health and wellbeing can be difficult depending on our level wellness at any given time. Sometimes we are absolutely well, and other times we may believe we are well, but in fact is we are not. It is those times when we need to rely upon other's to respectfully share their concerns and allow us time to explore solutions and find our way back to feeling well again.

### **The turquoise flowers and leaves represent the healing qualities of Mother Earth**

The flowers and leaves are the hope that when we connect with our environment, place our feet onto our Mother Earth, so she will embrace us and allow healing to transpire with the anticipation we can continue our journey back to good mental health and wellbeing.



**Mental Health  
Australia**