



# Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2023 – July 2025

# Acknowledgement of Country

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WHFS acknowledges the Whadjuk Nyoongar people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country in the Perth area, the land upon which WHFS provides services.

We pay our respects to Elders, past and present and emerging whose ongoing commitment to truth telling, culture and conservation remains stronger than ever.

We respect the strong and enduring First Nations' connection with the land, waterways and community for more than 60,000 years.

# Endorsement

**Reconciliation Australia commends Women's Health & Family Services on the formal endorsement of its second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).**

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. 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 & Family Services continues to be part of a strong network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate – allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways. An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that Women's Health & Family Services will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity. These learnings extend to Women's Health & Family Services using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders.

The RAP program's emphasis on relationships, respect, and opportunities gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for Women's Health & Family Services to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, Women's Health & Family Services will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term. Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of Women's Health & Family Services's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

**Congratulations Women's Health & Family Services on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.**

**Karen Mundine  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia**



# The Artwork

*'I create artworks by taking inspiration from my client and what I see and feel around me through my spirituality and what connects me to my culture. I especially love using Aboriginal symbols to portray a story and narrative.'*

– Buffie Corunna

Womens Health & Family Services commissioned Buffie Corunna, Noongar Yorga Aboriginal Woman, to create the artwork for our Reconciliation Action Plan.

The artwork depicts a connection to all women who work and engage with WHFS, as well as the range of healing pathways, healing tools and support the organisation provides.

The finished piece represents a full interpretation of our work.



Community and connection  
yarning circles symbolise the coming together of all peoples

Pathway lines represent the many pathways we choose to take on our healing journey.  
Pathways and support to the wide range of services offered through the Womens Health and Family Service

Tools for healing and support

Leaves symbolise healing

All the women that work at and engage the Womens Health and Family Service

Artwork Key: Each symbol represents an element of our organisation.



# The Artist

Kaya - Hello. My name is Buffie. I am a Noongar Yorga - Aboriginal Women of the Noongar Nation, born in Albany, Western Australia. My family connections are from Gnowangerup. A small town in Western Australia.

I love spending time with those that I love and have a strong bond with my family. Much of my work is greatly influenced by family, cultural connections, my spirituality and relationships.

I can express myself whole heartedly through my artwork. I believe art is one of the greatest tools to help with any mental and emotional issues. I have always loved painting, drawing and experimenting in a variety of art mediums. I am especially drawn to the challenge of conveying to others, through art, how I am influenced by my spirituality, my culture and my life experiences. I use art as a platform for storytelling. We all have a story to tell and art is one of the most creative forms to share our stories.

I create commissioned pieces, both digital and acrylic paint on canvas. I create artworks by taking inspiration from my client and what I see and feel around me through my spirituality and what connects me to my culture. I especially love using Aboriginal symbols to portray a story and narrative.

# Our Vision for Reconciliation

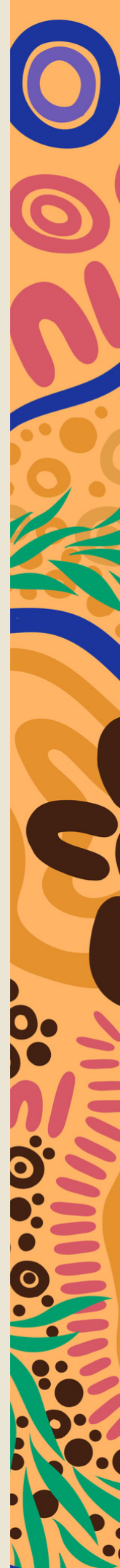
Our vision for a reconciled Australia is a society where First Nations peoples are recognised for their continuing spiritual, physical, social, and cultural connections with this country's land and waters and have been given self-determination and equitable access to the resources they require to meet their needs.

WHFS understands that reconciliation is fundamental to achieving our organisational vision of better futures for WA women.

In the context of our work, we recognise colonisation has left, and continues to leave, a legacy of violence, family separation, loss of cultures, languages and country and that First Nations women experience violence and poor health outcomes at disproportionate rates.

Alongside this we recognise that First Nations women have deep cultural knowledge that should be utilised as a source of strength and healing for social and emotional wellbeing. We will work to ensure that this knowledge is embedded into our services so that they are culturally safe and genuinely inclusive.

We will advocate for the voice of First Nations peoples to be included in shaping national policy as fundamental to reconciliation and for the wellbeing of First Nations peoples across Australia.



# Our Organisation

Trading as Womens Health and Family Services (WHFS), an independent for-purpose organisation which provides health and support services to women and their families, WHFS has been operating in WA for over 45 years.

WHFS is a gender specific service with women as its primary clients. WHFS provides services to children and men where this will improve the overall health and wellbeing of women.

Located across the wider Perth metropolis WHFS offers a wide range of medical, nursing, allied health, mental health & counselling, Family & Domestic Violence (FDV) advocacy, health promotion and education and career support services to WA women.

WHFS' services are open to all WA women and prioritise those who are socially and economically disadvantaged; First Nations women; women from CaLD backgrounds; disabled women; women who are carers and women experiencing FDV all of whom are at higher risk of ill health. WHFS also provides specialist First Nations women specific programs.

## WHFS understands health in its broadest context as defined by the WHO:

*Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity;*

*The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.*

WHFS therefore strives to provide integrated physical, mental health and social support programs that reflect this context and a deep understanding of the social determinants of health.



WHFS connects with more than 7,000 clients from diverse backgrounds each year with many experiencing significant disadvantage and marginalisation.

As a small organisation WHFS understands that collaborative partnerships with other NGOs in the health and social services sector are fundamental to delivering on one of our key strategic goals, that is to have social impact.

Close working relationships with other AOD, mental health, community legal and community organisations to develop warm referral pathways and co-locate services, enhance the depth and diversity of the services we can provide and assists us to deliver services across a continuum.

WHFS operates in WA only and currently employs 92 staff (58 FTE) across all of its programs in the Perth metropolitan area.

WHFS has four permanent office locations, two based in Northbridge along with offices in Joondalup and Mirrabooka.

Our staff are also co-located in several sites including Perth and Mirrabooka Police Stations, Midland, Ellenbrook and Fremantle.

WHFS has a target of 7% First Nations peoples for our workforce and has currently achieved 6%, with 4 First Nations women making up 3.6FTE working within the service.

# Our First Nations Programs

Our Aboriginal Women's Service has been delivering First Nations specific programs for more than 12 years.

As an Aboriginal-led program, the service seeks to address the difficulty First Nations women can experience in building trusting relationships as stolen generation survivors and family members who have experienced the inter-generational and historical trauma associated with institutionalisation.

WHFS also has many other programs and services which aim to work closely with our Aboriginal Women's Service team to improve the health and wellness outcomes for First Nations women in line with the Closing the Gap targets.

WHFS believes that its support can strengthen First Nations women across the generations by empowering clients to represent their own interests, and to move towards sustainable and effective change.

WHFS Aboriginal Women's Service connects and works with up to 300 First Nations women and their families annually, providing counselling, psychosocial and family support, advocacy, and referrals, as well as group activities and peer support groups.

Our focus is not only upon building pathways for First Nations women to access specialised services – it is also upon building our cultural capacity so that our First Nations clients will feel equally comfortable to access all of the programs we provide.

# Our RAP

For WHFS, having a dynamic Reconciliation Action Plan operating within the organisation is fundamental to us achieving our organisational vision of “better futures for WA women” and to us actively demonstrating our values of respect, integrity, diversity, inclusion, and innovation.

WHFS developed our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2011 following discussion with First Nations staff. A Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group was established, Terms of Reference and a Statement of Commitment agreed to in August 2013. WHFS’s first Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan approved by Reconciliation Australia operated from 2017-2019.

The development of this third organisational and second Innovate RAP due in 2021, has been delayed by the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic which saw our organisation move to working remotely compromising our capacity to consult and collaborate effectively on the Plan.

We have elected to delay our RAP renewal to 2023 to ensure we have fully consulted and reflected upon the learnings of our previous Plan.

WHFS RAP Committee is made up of WHFS staff members, including First Nations and non-Indigenous staff from across all areas of our operations.

Each program area is asked to nominate a representative to ensure that the needs and views of clients accessing all our operational areas can be represented.

Administrative support is provided to the Committee by the Executive Assistant. WHFS RAP Champion is the CEO.

WHFS RAP Committee comprises of:

CEO; Team Leader Aboriginal Women's Service (Aboriginal staff member), 2 x Aboriginal Family Support Workers (2 x Aboriginal Staff members); Advanced Practice Nurse (Torres Strait Islander Staff member); Registered Nurse; Senior Health Promotions Officer; Program Manager Quality & Stakeholder Engagement; Manager Client Services; Parents Next Career Advocate; Perinatal Mental Health Clinician; Human Resources Officer; Case Worker/Counsellor ART; Social Media & Digital Marketing Officer; FDV Coordinator; Executive Assistant.

The RAP Committee have agreed to the use of the term First Nations peoples throughout this document to respectfully encompass the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities.

# Consultation

WHFS organisation wide Stakeholder Engagement Framework requires all program areas, including our Aboriginal Women's Services, to consult extensively with clients in the review of existing and development of new services and programs. Within our health services contracts we measure client satisfaction and program outcomes along with confidential self-reported client evaluations providing rich insights into how well we are meeting our client's needs and assisting them to reach their individual goals.

Our First Nations engagement also includes bringing together local businesses and First Nations workers (from mainstream programs) to discuss current issues, referrals, ideas, and overall service provision for First Nations clients many of whom access the same services. We hold quarterly meetings with a membership that includes Department of Communities, Arche, Headspace, Mort Care and others.

# The key learnings from our previous RAP

Our number one learning from the 2017-2019 Plan was that the RAP needs to be owned by the whole organisation with our First Nations staff acting as the Advisors rather than being the team who do the 'heavy lifting' of events and engagement.

Much of the responsibility for events and engagement activities in our previous Plan resided with key First Nations staff. When our Aboriginal Women's Service Manager retired it left a vacuum in leadership that was amplified by the COVID pandemic and lockdowns.

We learned from the stalling of our RAP renewal process that the RAP Committee needs to have a greater shared accountability for the Plan being dynamic and bringing it to life within the organisation.

Whilst we implemented cultural awareness training across the organisation with our previous RAP, we learned that staff are hungry for deeper knowledge and the opportunity to do more advanced training in cultural capacity. We aspire now to developing cultural competency rather than just awareness.

An action in our prior RAP was to recruit a First Nations woman representative to our board. The Chair and CEO approached a number of Nyoongar women leaders but found that this group to be heavily committed in their Communities and assisting ACCO's in governance.

WHFS will continue to try and recruit a First Nations woman to join our board as well as aim to establish a dedicated Cultural Advisory role filled by a First Nations woman elder(s) to work with the Board and Executive.

# Our RAP

## The Plan of Action

July 2023 – July 2025



# Relationships



Strengthening our relationships with First Nations Communities will provide for better collaboration and understanding that will result in the delivery of culturally secure health, support and advocacy services. WHFS commits to meaningful relationships that can only be built on a foundation of mutual respect and as such, the employees of the organisation demonstrate respect for First Nations peoples, their cultures, histories, and vision for the future.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations stakeholders and organisations.</b>	Develop a dedicated role and recruit a cultural advisor(s) role within the organisation to assist the RAP Committee, Board and Executive in development of their cultural competency and with the development of mechanisms to obtain deeper community feedback.	December 2023	Lead: CEO
	Meet with local First Nations stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	March 2024	Lead: CEO. Support: Exec team and Cultural Advisor
	Develop and implement a First Nations engagement plan to work with First Nations stakeholders and organisations.	March 2024	Lead: CEO. Support: Cultural Advisor, Program Mgr
<b>Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).</b>	Circulate Reconciliation Australia’s NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024, 2025	Lead: Program Mgr. Support: Social Media & Digital Marketing Officer
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May 2023, April 2024	Lead: Program Mgr Support: Social Media & Digital Marketing Officer
	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May-3 June 2024, 2025	Lead: Program Mgr. Support: Senior HP Officer & Digital Marketing Officer
	RAP Committee and Management Team to participate in one external NRW event annually.	27 May-3 June 2024, 2025	Lead: Program Mgr Support: CEO
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia’s NRW website.	27 May-3 June 2024, 2025	Lead: Executive Assistant



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Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Implement training to staff on Reconciliation.	June 2024	Lead: Program Mgr & HR Officer
	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	March 2024	Lead: Program Mgr. Support: HR Officer & Digital Marketing Officer
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation internally and publicly through all our corporate communications and with visual cues in our facilities.	July 2023	Lead: Program Mgr. Support: Executive & Management team, Social Media and Digital Marketing Officer
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	December 2023	Lead: Team Leader AWS. Support: First Nations RAP Committee Members
	Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	June 2024	Lead: CEO. Support: Program Mgr, Executive & Management team
	Participate in a minimum of 5 reconciliation related events or promotions annually.	April 2024, 2025	Lead: Program Mgr Support: RAP Committee Members
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	December 2023	Lead: CEO. Support: Cultural Advisor and HR Officer
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	December 2023	Lead: CEO Support: Program Mgr
	A review of HR policies and procedures to identify anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	September 2023	Lead: HR Officer
	Use the organisations anti-discrimination stance as the framework for responding to contemporary issues with our organisational social media	December 2024	Lead: Health Promotion Officer Support: Digital Marketing Officer

# Respect



Womens Health & Family Services acknowledges the cultural heritage of First Nations peoples and their connection to land and waters. The organisation values the views of First Nations peoples and seeks their advice on all aspects of the work that is relevant to them.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Increase understanding, value and recognition of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.</b>	Conduct a self-assessment of cultural competency within our organisation.	December 2023	Lead: Program Mgr Support: Service Managers
	Consult First Nation(s) advisors on the development and implementation of an organisational cultural competency strategy.	December 2023	Lead: CEO Support: Cultural Advisor
	Develop and implement an organisational cultural competency strategy in line with consultation.	December 2024	Lead: CEO Support: RAP Committee
	Provide opportunities for RAP Committee members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured advanced level cultural learning.	December 2024	Lead: Program Mgr Support: RAP Committee and Executive and Management team
<b>Demonstrate respect to First Nations peoples by observing cultural protocols.</b>	Incorporate an Acknowledgement of Country into all formal meetings and communications. Welcome to Country protocols observed with organisational celebrations.	December 2024	Lead: CEO Support: Program Mgr
	Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	March 2024	Lead: Program Mgr Support: Social Media and Digital Marketing Officer
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	March 2024	Lead: Program Mgr Support: Social Media and Digital Marketing Officer
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	July 2023	Lead: CEO Support: Cultural Advisor

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Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Build respect for First Nations cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.</b>	WHFS represented at an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2023, July 2024	Lead: Team Leader AWS Support: RAP Committee
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	July 2023, 2024	Lead: Program Mgr Support: CEO, Social Media and Digital Marketing Officer
	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC week.	April 2024	Lead: HR Officer
<b>Improve staff understanding of culturally and historically significant dates</b>	Provide all staff with the choice to work on January 26th and attend Survival Day rally's in the city in support of changing the date.	January 2024	Lead: CEO
	Provide corporate communications to staff on significant days informing them about these and their historical significance.	March 2024	Lead: Program Mgr. Support: Health Promotions Officer and Social Media and Digital Marketing Officer
	Create an electronic library of resources on the internal intranet to inform staff about First Nations History and Cultures and provide content for stakeholder engagement, events etc.	July 2023	Lead: Program Mgr Support: RAP Committee

# Opportunities



Our organisation recognises the value of WHFS First Nations employees across all areas of our workplace. Increasing the numbers of First Nations staff will assist in strengthening our reconciliation effort and continue to build a culturally secure and inclusive work environment.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Improve employment outcomes by increasing First Nations and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.</b>	Consult with First Nations staff and Cultural Advisor to develop a First Nations recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	December 2023	Lead: HR Officer Support: Program Mgr
	Implement a First Nations recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	July 2024	Lead: COO Support: HR Officer
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	July 2023	Lead: HR Officer
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach First Nations stakeholders.	July 2024	Lead: HR Officer
	Increase the percentage of First Nations staff employed in our workforce to meet our target of 7%	December 2023	Lead: HR Officer Support: Executives and Managers
	Develop student placement opportunities for First Nations health and mental health undergraduates and post graduate students including provisional registration for First Nations registered psychologists	October 2023	Lead: HR Officer Support: Program Mgr
	First Nations RAP Committee members encouraged to join Ember Connect to tap into additional mentoring. Management and executive Team encouraged to join Ember Connect as allies to support and mentor First Nations women in their career development and also to access training in cultural competency. WHFS to provide Ember Connect with access to facilities and resources to support their work.	August 2023	Lead: Program Mgr Support: Team Leader AWS, RAP Committee Management and Executive teams

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Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Increase First Nations supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.</b>	Develop commercial relationships with First Nations businesses with an emphasis on staff training and development reflecting our business as a human services provider	September 2023	Lead: CEO Support: COO
	Review and update procurement practices and strategies to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	September 2023	Lead: COO Support: HR Officer
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	September 2023	Lead: HR Officer Support: COO
<b>Improve First Nations participation in WHFS programs</b>	Discuss actions to improve and increase client numbers as a standing agenda item for each RAP meeting. Report First Nations participation in all WHFS programmes quarterly to the RAP Committee and review progress.	July 2023, October 2023, January 2024	Lead: Program Mgr Support: RAP Committee
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# Governance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.</b>	Maintain First Nations representation on the RAP Committee.	December 2023	Lead: CEO
	Review current Terms of Reference for the RAP Committee bi-annually.	February 2025	Lead: Executive Assistant
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	July & October 2023, January, April, July & October 2024, 2025	Lead: CEO Support: RAP Committee
<b>Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.</b>	Allocate budget for engagement of an organisational Cultural Advisor, additional cultural competency training and participation in First Nations events and celebrations	July 2023	Lead: CEO Support: Finance Manager, Program Mgr
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2023	Lead: CEO Support: Program Mgr
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	July 2023	Lead: Program Mgr
	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	February 2024	Lead: CEO

# Governance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.</b>	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	Lead: Program Mgr Support: Executive Assistant
	Include Reconciliation Activities in RAP Committee meetings as standing agenda item.	July 2023	Lead: Program Mgr Support: RAP Committee
	Committee members to report additional cultural competency or reconciliation training attended by team members in their departments.	July 2023	Lead: Program Mgr Support: RAP Committee
	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.	July 2023, 2024, 2025	Lead: Executive Assistant
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	August 2023, 2024, 2025	Lead: Executive Assistant
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	June 2025	Lead: Program Mgr, Support: Executive Assistant
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	July 2023, 2024, 2025	Lead: Social Media & Digital Marketing Coms Officer
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	September 2023, 2024	Lead: Social Media & Digital Marketing Coms Officer Support: Program Mgr
	Participate in Reconciliation Australia’s biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	April 2024	Lead: Executive Assistant Support: HR Officer
<b>Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.</b>	Register via Reconciliation Australia’s to begin developing our next RAP.	January 2025	Lead: Program Mgr. Support: Executive Assistant

# Contact details

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