

REFLECT

JULY 2023 – DECEMBER 2024

Reconciliation Action Plan



Acknowledgement of Country

Bendigo Community Health Services acknowledges we live, work and enjoy Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. We extend our appreciation to the Djaara and Taungurung peoples.

We pay respect to Elders past and present for their continued holding of memories, traditions, culture and community aspirations.

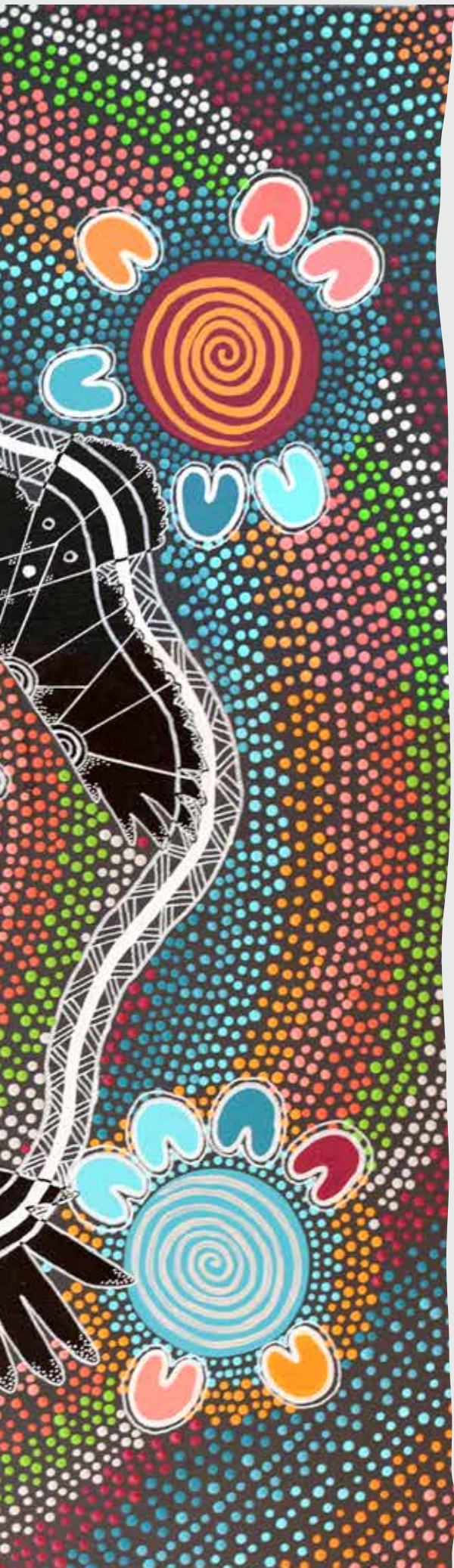
We recognise sovereignty has never been ceded and express our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of colonisation and their lasting impact. May we walk forward together in harmony and the spirit of healing.

It was and always will be Aboriginal land.

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Healing a Community

Acrylic on canvas

This painting was developed for Bendigo Community Health Services, which provides a service throughout the Dja Dja Wurrung community. The people around the campfire in the centre are the workers coming together, providing health support services to our local community while working towards closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health. Each colour represents a different program.

The painting captures the story of Dja Dja Wurrung Dreamtime where the people regarded the Eagle (Bunjil) as the Lord of the Forest and Mountains, the Crow as the Lord of the Plains, and the Bat as a friendly spirit who watched over the weary traveller, warning them of dangers and guiding them to safety.

These totems of the Dja Dja Wurrung community capture each spirit animal's strength and how they can help with the healing of Indigenous people. The painting draws on the land, the healing that comes from the connection to land and animal spirits, the openness of the plains, the feeling of freedom that comes from being on Country and the wellbeing that is restored to the spirit as we go through the healing process.

From the artist

Paige Charles-Morgan is a proud Yorta Yorta/Dja Dja Wurrung/Palawa woman. She has been an exhibiting artist for the past six years and has been the recipient of the NAIDOC Art Exhibition People's Choice Award for several consecutive years. She paints on different mediums using acrylic and watercolour, and also enjoys digital art.



Paige has worked in health administration with the Anangu community in a remote Aboriginal South Australian region. She recently finished studying at Swinburne University and returned home to Dja Dja Wurrung Country to work at Docherty Legal and to dedicate herself to her arts practice.



Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Bendigo Community Health Services to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Bendigo Community Health Services joins a network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Bendigo Community Health Services to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Bendigo Community Health Services, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine

Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Foreword

On behalf of Bendigo Community Health Services, we are proud to introduce this Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

This is an important phase of our journey to partner respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as we walk towards reconciliation.

In the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples issued an invitation for all Australians 'to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future'.

The statement followed a historic consensus at a constitutional convention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, to seek to change the Australian Constitution to give First Australians a real voice in our federal parliament.

The focus is on voice, treaty and truth.

With the key elements of the statement being voice, treaty and truth – Bendigo Community Health Services recognises the role we play in seeking ways reconciliation can be achieved in our workplaces and community.

Respect and recognition are key values supporting strong relationships between ourselves and many of our partners – values we have upheld since our early days almost 50 years ago.

Among our many valued partnerships are those with local Aboriginal communities. Currently, we partner with Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative in our shared aim to deliver quality healthcare services,

and actively support the annual Bendigo Reconciliation and NAIDOC Week activities.

Reconciliation is an essential element of who we are and what we strive to achieve. It is reflected in our core values and our commitment to respectful relationships, to seek deeper understanding and to support opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We centre this Reflect RAP on the three pillars of Relationships, Respect and Opportunities, while also holding dear the principles of self-determination, to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can meet their social, cultural and economic needs. The principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, equality, non-discrimination, good governance and good faith all form elements of the foundational principle of self-determination.

This RAP provides a framework to translate our principles into action. By embedding these principles into policies and operational paradigms, we will continue to build strong and respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities.

We are prepared to be informed, stand together and work through the challenges ahead in good faith.

Mandy Hutchinson,
Chief Executive
Officer

Melanie Eddy,
Chair Board
of Directors

Our Vision for Reconciliation

Bendigo Community Health Services' vision for reconciliation is for a society where recognition and respect characterise our interactions with Australia's First Nation's peoples. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had tens of thousands of years' experience living in Australia ahead of settlement, and through their knowledge and experience of the land we have opportunities to learn.

Our staff understand the impact of dispossession weighs heavily on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, creating barriers to personal and professional growth which will take generations of positive progress to relieve.

Our profound and sincere hope is that through our RAP, we will support members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to make decisions about their lives and their futures, which will in turn build self-determining and empowered communities. The many health services we deliver support community members throughout their lives, and through this RAP we aim to improve our service delivery for the benefit of all.

headspace Bendigo marked NAIDOC Week 2023 with the launch of two works by local First Nations artists, Emily and Josie Gower, pictured here with Aunty Lyn Warren, Bendigo NAIDOC Committee Chair



Our Business

Bendigo Community Health Services is a community-owned, not-for-profit organisation with sites in central Bendigo, Kangaroo Flat, Eaglehawk, North Bendigo and Elmore.

For almost 50 years, we have helped people across our region live healthier, more connected lives.

We currently deliver more than 50 programs and services, reflecting the diverse needs of our community.

This includes access to GPs, along with services covering families and children, mental health and counselling, alcohol and other drugs, sexual health, men's and women's health clinics, supporting the LGBTIQ community and refugee settlement. BCHS also helps people manage specific health and well-being needs, such as managing their mental health or living with chronic conditions such as diabetes, respiratory issues or heart disease.

Our services are critical in improving the health and well-being of all people, without prejudice.

Our deep understanding of the unique needs and challenges of local communities means we are well placed to respond through targeted programs and services.

This is particularly the case in areas where intersectional disadvantage may be evident – taking into account the social, physical and economic conditions that impact upon health.

At Bendigo Community Health Services, we take a person-centred approach – partnering with our clients on their healthcare journey, ensuring they are an active participant when it comes to planning their individual well-being needs.

We focus on the person and their strengths, factoring in their life experience and understanding they are the expert in their own lives.

The critical role we play in helping people lead healthier lives also reduces the pressure on our public hospitals and the broader public health care system.

Equally, it is important for us to advocate on behalf of the many diverse communities we work with, to effect systemic change that will lead to more positive outcomes for all.

We are committed to amplifying the voices of the people we work with, to ensure the healthcare system reflects their needs – and in particular those with intersecting experiences.

We employ 264 people across our organisation. While the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is currently not known, we will work within this RAP to determine culturally appropriate ways to understand this.

At Bendigo Community Health Services, we take a person-centred approach – partnering with our clients on their healthcare journey, ensuring they are an active participant when it comes to planning their individual well-being needs.



Our RAP

This Reflect RAP is integrally linked to our Strategic Plan, which commits us to provide the right services to those most in need in the best way to make the greatest difference to our community. It establishes 'where we are' and outlines a way forward with inclusion, respect, integrity and self-determination. Based on these values, we will examine and strengthen internal processes, build on community relationships to listen and learn about reconciliation.

We will engage with our staff and community to develop and deliver culturally-appropriate programs and services. We will continue building an inclusive workplace through recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and adjusting employee support processes to be culturally appropriate, such as our staff induction program.

BCHS has always prioritised acknowledging and responding appropriately to reflect our community, and historically has incorporated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within this planning. The Reflect phase of this RAP prompts us to further consider the unique needs, insights and knowledge of our Aboriginal communities and ensure our reconciliation planning is authentic and purposeful.

A Reflect RAP also provides an opportunity for us to take stock, acknowledge our past achievements and identify where gaps or challenges lie. Through this phase we will develop better knowledge of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, incorporate cultural safety initiatives into our operational activities and demonstrate our commitment to the process of reconciliation.

RAP Working Group

The Bendigo Community Health Services Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RWG) was formed in 2020 from initiatives to embed diversity and inclusion into our values. It has since met regularly to develop this plan.

The working group consists of:

- Dale Hardy, Executive Leader, Wellbeing, Inclusion and Independence
- Caitlyn Bowe, Podiatrist, Allied Health Services
- Julie Cairns, Senior Leader, Family Services
- Lindsay Rose, Senior Leader, headspace
- Natalia Smith, Senior Adviser, Strategy, Planning and Analysis
- Paul Morgan, Diversity and Inclusion Project Worker
- Stephanie Rose, Senior Leader, Risk and Quality
- Valerie Nkala, Health Promotion and Community Engagement Officer

None of the working group identify as First Nations people, which is reflective of the nature of the wider organisation. RWG reports are communicated to key BCHS decision-making groups, such as the Senior Leadership Team, the Executive and the Board of Directors.



This Reflect RAP will guide us to develop innovative activities to encourage and enable all staff to take part in cultural safety training. We will also ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are supported to participate in cultural activities.

Our actions

RELATIONSHIPS

	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our area or sphere of influence	December 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	December 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Identify and document existing professional relationships with Aboriginal community-based organisations and Aboriginal community-controlled health services.	December 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Undertake gap analysis to ensure effective relationships are optimising service delivery across the broad range of community stakeholders and program areas.	March 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	May, June 2024	Executive Leader Wellbeing Inclusion and Independence
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May, June 2024	Executive Leader Wellbeing Inclusion and Independence
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff and clients.	July 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	Identify external stakeholders our organisation could engage with on our reconciliation journey.	September 2023	Executive Leader Wellbeing Inclusion and Independence
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	September 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies	Encourage and promote positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples based on best practice approach in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	December 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	October 2023	Executive Leader People and Culture
	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	October 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Incorporate into existing staff induction and training packages information on unconscious bias in recruitment and people management.	December 2023	Executive Leader People and Culture

RESPECT

	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a value proposition for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, histories, knowledges and rights within our organisation.	February 2024	Executive Leader Wellbeing Inclusion and Independence
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	November 2023	Executive Leader People and Culture
	Adjust clinical supervision templates to facilitate reflection on culturally responsive and inclusive practice to support practitioners to reflect on their own cultural learning.	February 2024	Executive Leader Risk Quality and Compliance
	Develop and deliver an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence training package to all employees.	June 2024	Executive Leader People and Culture
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an improved understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	June 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	June 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Organise to have Acknowledgement of Country plaques installed at every BCHS site with a smoking ceremony conducted by a member of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community at the unveiling of the plaque.	August 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	July 2023 & 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting events in our local area.	July 2023 & 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	RAP Working Group to develop participation plan for an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2023 & 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker

OPPORTUNITIES

	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a value proposition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	December 2023	Executive Leader People and Culture
	Review the Inclusion and Equity policy that supports the access and equitable opportunity for employees and clients.	December 2023	Executive Leader People and Culture
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	September 2023	Executive Leader People and Culture
9. Annual reporting on BCHS recruitment data	Report annually on the recruitment and retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees compared with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	June 2024	Executive Leader People and Culture
10. Provide access to cultural leave to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	Review existing employee benefits (as documented in policies) that provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees with access to cultural leave for cultural ceremonial and NAIDOC purposes.	August 2023	Executive Leader People and Culture
11. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop an understanding of the benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses, including exploration of Supply Nation membership.	June 2024	Executive Leader Resources and Enterprise Development
	Explore opportunities for all BCHS sites to commission and display local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' artwork.	May 2024	Executive Leader Communications and Community Engagement

GOVERNANCE

	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form a Reconciliation Working Group (RWG) to govern Reconciliation Action Plan development, implementation and review.	July 2023	Executive Leader Wellbeing Inclusion and Independence
	RWG to provide six monthly progress reports to BCHS Board and communicate these to the broader BCHS community.	February 2024	Executive Leader Wellbeing Inclusion and Independence
	Draft and annually review Terms of Reference for the RWG.	July 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	August 2023	Executive Leader Wellbeing Inclusion and Independence
	Promote the RAP Working Group through BCHS Communications team to foster Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee involvement throughout our RAP journey.	August 2023	Executive Leader Communications and Community Engagement
13. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	September 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Develop an appropriate action register to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	July 2023	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
14. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings both internally and externally.	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	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	July 2023 & 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	July 2023 & 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker
15. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	August 2024	Equity & Inclusion Project Worker



Contact:

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