



Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

January 2023 – January 2024





About the Artist

Alkina Edwards

"I am a proud Aboriginal Woman who comes from many strong blood lines and connections which I have been brought up to know my whole life. I am Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba, Mutthi Mutthi and Wiradjuri from my Mothers side and Wakka Wakka, Bundjalung and Jinibara from my Fathers side.

I have always been raised in having strong cultural beliefs and values and always remaining to follow cultural protocol.

I have been creating art since I was a little girl and was taught at an early age how to create Aboriginal art from my family including my mother, father, cousins, siblings, elders and more. They taught me the appropriate and proper art styles that I am connected to and how to create and tell the stories through those indigenous art styles."

  [Click to view social media profile](#)

About the Artwork

Within the piece Alkina has placed multiple elements which represent the work we do and support options available at The Bridge Youth Service. These include Housing, Schooling and Education, Youth and Family Relationships and Pregnancy and Parenting support.

Throughout the background the long neck turtle has been placed, which is the totem of the Yorta Yorta people, representing them and the country we stand on.

Pregnancy and Parenting

Youth and Family Relationships



Long neck
turtle
represents
the Yorta Yorta
people and
the country we
stand on

Schooling and Education

Housing



Acknowledgement of Country

The Bridge Youth Service acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work: the Yorta Yorta Nations, Taungurung and Wurundjeri people.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We extend our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that call these lands home.

We acknowledge and recognise their enduring connection to this land, its waterways and skies.

We affirm that sovereignty was never ceded, and this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

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Reconciliation Australia CEO Statement



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT



Karen Mundine

**Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia**

Reconciliation Australia welcomes The Bridge Youth Service to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

The Bridge Youth Service 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 The Bridge Youth Service 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 The Bridge Youth Service, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Our Business

Here at The Bridge Youth Service, our mission is to create opportunities that foster safety and security for young people, enhance family harmony and promote supportive communities – enabling all young people to reach their full potential.

We deliver services and supports to young people and their families with a particular focus on those who have experienced marginalisation and/or disadvantage but with a philosophy that includes the provision of services to all young people.

Our programs focus on a diverse range of needs with services including placement prevention, family reconciliation, family

mediation, antenatal, parenting, housing support, mentoring and education support. Through our innovative programs and practices, we support and work with between 1,000-1,200 young people per year.

The Bridge Youth Service has offices located on Yorta Yorta Nations, Taungurung and Wurundjeri Countries respectively (Shepparton, Wallan and Seymour),

as well as a weekly staff presence in Cobram. Since opening in 1995, The Bridge has grown to support the Mitchell, Murrundindi, Moira and Strathbogie shires as well as the City of Greater Shepparton.

The organisation now has around 50 employees, of which there are two Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff members.

The programs we deliver are funded through the Victorian Government, Department of Families, Fairness & Housing, the Department of Education & Training and Murray PHN, as well as private foundations, fundraising activities and local community.

Our Vision for Reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is that working on the Traditional Lands of the Taungurung, Wurundjeri and Yorta Yorta Nations, we will improve the health outcomes of young people and their families through our focus on equality and equity.

Through our valuing of inclusion and diversity we will provide both a culturally safe environment for young people and staff, through recognition, participation, and pride for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions, as well as celebrations that are informed by our partnerships with local Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations as well as state and national organisations.

Our Values:



We Value and Celebrate Diversity



Collaboration and Collegiality



Curiosity and New Ideas



Connection and Reach



Flexibility

Improved health outcomes through our focus on equality and equity.



Why are we undertaking a RAP

Our RAP represents our commitment to all dimensions of reconciliation. We value unity and recognise the effort and responsibility that comes with seeking it on local, state and national levels.

We will continue to educate ourselves about the histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, acknowledging the ongoing impact policies from the past have on today's individuals, families and communities. We commit to celebrating the oldest living cultures in the world and respect the traditions that are an important part of that.

Our RAP is our call to action. We want to continue to be an organisation who improves outcomes for young people, their families and our community. We will continue our allyship and advocacy and call out inequity when we see it. We recognise that this means challenging stereotypes and social norms in our efforts to overcome racism.

As a staff we want to ensure the way we ask questions is safe and appropriate. We want young people and their families to have confidence that The Bridge Youth Service is culturally safe and supportive and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are equipped to kick goals.

Approach to implementing

Whole of organisation commitment and contribution to our RAP is key to its realisation and effectiveness.

Our staff are actively involved throughout its life course, from its creation to carrying out our commitments and actions within it.

The Reconciliation Working Group (RWG) will hold primary responsibility of monitoring and implementing these

commitments, with the involvement and support from staff at all levels.

The RWG will meet bi-monthly, provide regular updates at staff meetings and will have direct reporting lines and connection to our Leadership team/Board of Management.

RAP Champion

Reneae Ford

**Program Manager,
Youth & Family Support**

The Program Manager of Youth & Family Support has been appointed RAP Champion. They will be actively involved in all aspects of the organisations reconciliation journey and activities, including attendance at the RWG meetings.

They will hold responsibility for increasing the profile of Reconciliation as a priority internally and externally, driving engagement and awareness and providing support to the RWG in carrying out actions within the RAP.

Our RWG members

Reneae Ford
Program Manager,
Youth & Family Support

Linda King
Program Manager,
Young Pregnant & Parenting Team

Frankie Doig
Quality & Research Coordinator

Milla Morris
Lead Practitioner,
Putting Families First Program

Jessie Barnes-Hill
Community Engagement
& Inclusion Lead

Tim Hunter
Education Settings

Sally Dunstan
Putting Families First Practitioner

Hayley Rowan
Youth & Family Practitioner

Julie Batey
Reception & Finance Assistant

Ireland Leston
Young, Pregnant & Parenting team

Samuel Ho
Youth & Family Practitioner

Caroline Tracey
Young, Pregnant & Parenting team

Our Journey

The Bridge Youth Service's reconciliation journey so far has been grounded in respect and understanding; through participation and collaboration with the local communities we operate in.

We hope to continue and build on activities and initiatives in the future.



Internal activities/initiatives

Change the Date January 26th

The Bridge Youth Service understands the need to celebrate the love we all have for this amazing country that we share.

January 26th is not the date to do this, sovereignty of this land was never ceded.

We wholeheartedly support the call for “Change the Date”, recognising the significance and meaning this date carries for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In solidarity and support, our Shepparton office remained open on January 26th 2022.

Staff were given the option to work as a normal day of work, and take a day of leave on an alternate date. Staff were provided with information regarding January 26th and the Change the Date campaign so as to make informed decisions.

Each year our office will remain open on January 26th and we will continue to support and advocate for changing of the date.

Recognising Traditional Countries

As part of National Reconciliation Week 2022, we made the ongoing inclusion of Traditional place names/Countries in our email signatures, outgoing mail, when supplying our own mailing address and on all social media posts.

We understand the importance of acknowledging Country and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded. We hope that by including traditional place names/countries in our communications, we can contribute to affecting change across our spheres of influence.

Ongoing learning, engagement and sharing

We acknowledge that increasing our cultural knowledge and understanding is an ongoing journey and not a destination. We are committed to regular and ongoing education, engagement and guidance across all levels of the organisation. Currently we engage with formal cultural education sessions every two years, with staff strongly encouraged to participate in other learning and engagement opportunities that become available.

We ensure that information is shared across the organisation on dates of significance and local events taking place, with staff encouraged to participate. We actively promote and share these via our social media platforms.

Community Partnerships



Current

Putting Families First Goulburn

The Bridge Youth Service are a part of a pilot program being implemented in the Goulburn region in 2022, the Putting Families First (PFF) program.

It is being led by Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, in partnership with FamilyCare, OzChild and the Bridge Youth Service.

The consortium has a shared vision of achieving better outcomes for young people and their families, recognising and respecting each agencies breadth of and depth of skills, knowledge, expertise and cultural match.

PFF aims to intensively support families who come into contact with the Justice systems and to make sustained change in their lives.

Current

Other involvement

The Bridge Youth Service teams are also active participants in local networks and Communities of Practices, of which local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, teams and community members also participate, providing direction and guidance to practice. These include; Child and Family Alliance, Family Preservation and Reunification Community of Practice and Local Area Service Network - Homelessness.

Past

Cradle to Kinder

The Bridge Youth Service previously had a Memorandum of Understanding with Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, which saw the sub-allocation of Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder program places to be delivered by The Bridge Youth Service, providing families with alternate choice of organisation to receive the service.

This partnership was held for 8 years, and involved ongoing communication, joint planning, cross agency staff support and guidance.

This partnership sadly concluded when the Cradle to Kinder program ceased.

Past

lawa Collaboration

For 4 years, between 2018 and 2022, The Bridge Youth Service were a part of the lawa Collaboration.

The collaboration was founded and led by two local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and made up of child and family focused organisations. All were dedicated to actively work together, contributing to increasing the engagement and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in early year's development, education and holistic support options and promote equity and inclusion for these families in Greater Shepparton. The collaboration utilised a range of approaches to achieve its aims, including creation of community resources, embedding consultation and codesign in service delivery practices and building sector wide cultural knowledge through professional development opportunities.

The collaboration group concluded in its original form due to targeted funded programs being rolled out in the area that share the same aims and objectives.



Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Statement



Melinda Lawley
Chief Executive Officer
The Bridge Youth Service

The Bridge Youth Service made a commitment 10 years ago to focus on ensuring our services were culturally safe for young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. I am proud to be leading the next step in this commitment through the development of this RAP.

As the CEO of The Bridge Youth Service, I recognise the current over representation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in child protection and the justice system as well as those who are affected by chronic health conditions, family violence and homelessness. Over the last 10 years we are proud that young people have come to us for this support. We want to ensure this continues and that our open door is inviting, comforting and culturally safe for those who haven't walked through it yet.

We can do more to ensure this happens. Through our staff training, our community engagement efforts and our partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist services, we commit to building our understanding of the intersectionality in this over representation. Locally this means we want to demonstrate our allyship, that we are making time to improve our systems and that we want to do this in partnership with the local community.

We want to capitalise on the optimism of youth, the leaders of the future, the young parents we assist. The voice of young people is important to us. We want the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to be prioritised and entrusted with us to assist in the healing and change that needs to occur.



Board of Management Statement

The safety, growth and prosperity of young people and their families is at the heart of what we do at The Bridge Youth Service.

We make this public commitment as an organisation to reconciliation. To us it means we will ensure the inclusion of reconciliation concepts in every aspect of the work we do.

We recognise and acknowledge the injustices and atrocities caused by colonisation and the intergenerational trauma that continues. We recognise the strength and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the importance of their voice and its importance to lead the healing and empowerment that needs to happen.

As a Board of Management our sphere of influence is both within the organisation and externally as we engage with others in the community. We will continue to build cooperative and consultative relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and continue our strong working partnerships with Aboriginal controlled services.

We recognise that we have considerable power to influence community attitudes and can clearly demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation through continued acknowledgement in all our publicity.



"We recognise the strength and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the importance of their voice."

Relationships, Respect, Opportunities, founded upon strong Governance



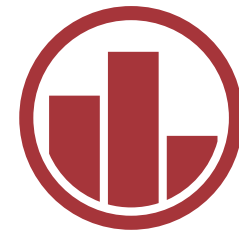
Relationships



Respect



Opportunities



Governance

Relationships

Action	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 local area or sphere of influence.	January 2023	CEO
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	February 2023	RAP Champion
	Investigate ways in which we can ensure our approaches are guided and informed by the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people within our communities.	March 2023	Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead
2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Continue to circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials, including outward facing media channels.	May 2023	Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2023	RAP Champion CEO
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June 2023	CEO
	Host a NRW event for internal and external stakeholders at each respective office location.	27 May - 3 June 2023	Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead
3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to and vision for reconciliation to all staff and publicly.	January 2023	CEO
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	March 2023	Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	April 2023	RAP Champion
	Reconciliation is included as a standing agenda item at all staff, Leadership and Board of Management meetings.	January 2023	CEO
4 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	March 2023	RAP Champion
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	April 2023	Corporate Services Manager

Respect

Action	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 business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	April 2023	CEO
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	May 2023	Corporate Service Manager
6 Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Ensure all staff understand who the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	January 2023	Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	February 2023	
7 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Continue to share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2023	RAP Champion
	Promote local external NAIDOC Week events to our staff and via social media.	June 2023	Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2023	
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NAIDOC Week.	June 2023	CEO

Opportunities


Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	June 2023	CEO Corporate Service Manager
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	June 2023	
	Review of job descriptions, key selection criteria and interview processes to reflect organisational expectations of knowledge of the Traditional Owners and specific organisations in the areas in which we operate and understanding of our commitment to reconciliation.	July 2023	Corporate Services Manager
9 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	September 2023	Corporate Services Manager
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	September 2023	


Governance


Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Continue to support the RWG in governing RAP implementation.	June 2023	CEO
	Draft a RWG Terms of Reference which includes direct contact and reporting lines CEO and Board of Management.	February 2023	CEO Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	April 2023	RAP Champion Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead
	Continue to hold bi-monthly RWG meetings to monitor implementation of RAP activities and reporting commitments.	June 2023	RAP Chair
11 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define and commit to resource needs for RAP implementation.	February 2023	CEO Board of Management
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	January 2023	CEO RAP Champion
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	January 2023	CEO
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2023	Quality & Research Coordinator
12 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.	June 2023	Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August 2023	
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2023	
	RWG provides quarterly progress reports to organisational leadership and Board of Management.	April, July, October 2023 & January 2024	
	Produce RAP report/infographic that will be circulated and made available externally via website and media channels.	January 2024	Reception & Finance Assistant
13 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our Innovate RAP.	September 2023	Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead

Contact details:

Jessie Barnes-Hill
Community Engagement & Inclusion Lead

 03 5831 2390

 0456 650 347

 jbarneshill@thebridge.org.au



THE
Bridge
Youth
SERVICE

