

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre
Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan
March 2021 – March 2023



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*We acknowledge the Gadigal-Wangal People of the Eora Nation, who are the traditional Custodians of the land on which we work.
We acknowledge this was, and always will be, Aboriginal Land.*

About the Cover Artwork

Caring for Country

This piece speaks to the contrast between the traditional and modern life we experience as Indigenous Peoples. The Goanna, an animal of the earth, is pictured in the centre with a cityscape along his back. He is lined with medicine leaves showing the continuation of Country in modern times. He stands on the land scratching his claws into the earth showing us that regardless of the ever changing skyline, Country is and will always remain. The dots of ancient stories are slowly revealed with every scratch. The goanna glows with power, not strength in a physical sense but power of spirit and ancestry just below his skin. The message from this piece is we must continue to care for Country. Even in the city, even today. Our strength is drawn from it and no matter the changes of modern life it will always remain. The goanna embodies the power Country provides to us all.

About the Artist

Melle Smith-Haimona is an emerging Ngunnawal artist and mother of two, living on Wangal land in Sydney. Her children have Te Arawa whakapapa & Ngunnawal Mob connections and today she stand as a reflection of them in her cultural journey.

Melle enjoys working in a multitude of mediums but the majority of her work is digital. Melle has been drawing since she could hold a pencil, painting (watercolour/acrylic) since 2013 and working in procreate on her iPad since 2016. Her work has a strong connection to country and shows pride in her culture, womanhood and self strength.

Melle would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which she works, lives & plays on, the Wangal People of the Durug Nation.

www.mellehaimona.com
www.instagram/mellehaimona.artist



Our vision for Reconciliation



Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) is located on Gadigal land in Newtown, in the inner west of Sydney. The suburb is known for its diverse and eclectic nature. Prominent in the area is the emblematic *I have a dream* mural, featuring a painting of Dr Martin Luther King, above the Aboriginal flag. Our vision for Reconciliation is reflected in the words and sentiments of Dr King’s *I have a dream* speech, “Now is the time to make justice a reality for all”.

Our vision for Reconciliation has at its heart our core value of Social Justice. We aspire to the ceasing of inequality and the disproportionate levels of homelessness, incarceration, and life expectancy experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our vision for Reconciliation is ensuring justice is a reality for all Australians.

Another value of Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is Belonging: Everyone has the right to have a safe place to be and a community they belong to. We are committed to creating respectful and safe environments, opposing racism and discrimination in all its forms and nurturing a sense of cultural belonging.

We learn, we grieve, we laugh, and we act, together

We learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about the history of this country. We learn from the wisdom and knowledge of Elders. We learn in order to do better and ensure the wrongs of the past are never repeated.

We grieve alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as we acknowledge the hardships and trauma the community have endured and survived. Reconciliation can only take place when past injustices are acknowledged.

We laugh and we celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ resilience and ongoing connection with Country. We celebrate and embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, heritage, music and dance as a proud part of our shared identity.

We act together to build a better tomorrow. Our organisation’s longstanding vision is for *a just community which includes and acts*. It is our intention to act with and alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in building community and developing Reconciliation.

Our Business

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) is an independent, not-for-profit agency that aims to build an inclusive, resilient, self-reliant and creative community.

We operate predominately in the Inner West of Sydney covering the local government areas of the Inner West Council and parts of the City of Sydney. We employ 31 staff, the full-time equivalent of 19 staff. We have 8 Board members and a membership base of 160. We currently have one staff member who identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and it is a priority of this RAP to increase this and also have Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation on our Board.

The Centre provides support services to the local community with an emphasis on tackling social isolation and homelessness. We seek to engage with the most vulnerable in the community such as the aged, people at risk of homelessness, people with mental illness, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people on low incomes. We work with a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We recognise the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when it comes to homelessness, incarceration and poor health outcomes is a direct result of past colonialism and present-day racism.

Established over forty years ago NNC has developed networks and connections within local service sectors, with a focus in the areas of aged care, specialist homelessness services and community development. We are building links, relationships and networks with children and families and with the broader community sector. We have two long term established Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups targeting older people from the Greek speaking community and Communities of former Yugoslavia and have recently started a social support group for the Portuguese and socially isolated seniors in the Inner West.

Our RAP Journey

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre has a long history of advancing social justice issues. Over the past three years (2017-2020) the organisation has had a Cultural Safety Working Party (CSWP) that led to:

- The development of our First Nations People's protocols
- An organisational apology statement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community
- Commissioned artwork from a local Aboriginal artist to give a visualisation to our apology statement
- Open community consultation meeting with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people facilitated by Yarn Australia. This event combined both a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultures and traditions with the sharing of storytelling and traditional songs from the Torres Strait Islands. It enabled the whole staff team to come together with partner agencies and share their understanding of Reconciliation
- A staff training audit was conducted to identify what level of cultural competency existed amongst staff and what training around Reconciliation was required
- The introduction of an online Cultural Awareness training program for all staff
- A review of organisation recruitment procedures and introduction of mandatory selection criteria to include cultural competence

In 2018 NNC issued a public apology statement to the Aboriginal community. An extract from that statement reads:

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre holds social justice as a core value and seeks to build a future based on mutual respect and shared responsibility for our community and for this land. We acknowledge that we are on Gadigal land. We acknowledge the wrongs committed both past and present. We believe that the high rates of incarceration, suicide, infant mortality and homelessness suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, reflect the discrimination that persists in this country today.

We commit to upholding the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We commit ourselves to opposing racism and all forms of discrimination. We commit ourselves to a Reconciliation process by seeking advice from, and working with, Indigenous organisations and communities in their struggle for better health, justice, educational and housing outcomes.

We are developing a RAP because we are a social justice organisation that is committed to the Reconciliation process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Innovate RAP is championed internally by the Client Services Manager, who convenes and drives the RAP working party (RWG). Aunty Jenny Thomsen was engaged as an Aboriginal and Torres Islander community representative on the RAP working party. She has a long history of involvement in operations and service delivery in community services in our local area.

The Reconciliation Action Plan framework gives structure and context to the work we have been doing. It ensures we are not working in isolation, but part of a structured Australia wide movement to progress Reconciliation across the nation. The RAP framework moves our well-meaning intentions to concrete actions. It provides a tool for accountability and a way to measure our progress.

Our RAP working party is made up of people from across the organisation who are passionate about Reconciliation:

- Liz Yeo – CEO
- Paul Adabie – Client Services Manager
- Aunty Jenny Thomsen - Community member
- Molisa Carney – BHOS Case Manager
- Jason Preston – BHOS Case Manager
- Mel Dominguez – Community Development Coordinator
- Rob Lake – Aged Care programs Manager
- Georgia Carter – Fundraising and Marketing Manager

Contact details

Name: Paul Adabie

Position: Client Services Manager

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Our RAP Priorities

Recruitment

We have identified the need for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified role within our Homeless Outreach Team. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are overrepresented in the homelessness population and in our client group. To build trust and work effectively with individual service users our staff teams need to be reflective of the people we work with and advocate for.

Education

It is important to Newtown Neighbourhood Centre that all our staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to provide culturally appropriate and sensitive responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing our services. We strive for a workplace in which issues of racism and discrimination can be discussed openly and fearlessly. Our identification of minimum training requirements and revised recruitment practises reflect this commitment.

Connection and Integration

Our aim and purpose as an organisation is to build an inclusive, resilient and creative community. This can only be achieved by building connections between community members, ensuring our resources build inclusion and developing the capacity of community members. A key aspect of this is ensuring our physical building is used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations. We are committed to providing free access to our building for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community groups.

Our RAP Commitments

Relationships			
<p><i>Building relationships and connections across all community members regardless of heritage and background is central to our role in building an inclusive community. We believed what unites us is greater than the differences between us. Stronger relationships and ties between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community lead to a stronger, more resilient and connected community. Stronger relationships between NNC and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups based on understanding and respect will result in better service delivery to all individual service users.</i></p>			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</p>	<p>Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations such as Yarn to develop guiding principles for future engagement.</p>	<p>July 2021 July 2022</p>	<p>Client Services Manager</p>
	<p>Develop partnerships with Aboriginal Employment Strategy agencies, tertiary educational facilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals to enable the direct employment of an Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander worker.</p>	<p>June 2021</p>	<p>BHOS Team Leader</p>
	<p>Arrange a schedule of service visits for key NNC staff to meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to establish cohesive and collaborative relationships.</p>	<p>June 2021</p>	<p>Community Development Coordinator</p>
	<p>Annually reflect and consult on activities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and services involved in our work, to identify priority areas for future action and activities. This may involve working with consultants to seek feedback from relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>June 2021</p>	<p>Aged Care Manager</p>
	<p>Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations</p>	<p>October 2021</p>	<p>Aged Care Manager</p>

	Explore the possibility of each year selecting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation for NNC staff to support by way of volunteering or fundraising.	March 2021	Community Development Co-ordinator
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and Reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2021, May 2022	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May-3 June, 2021 and 2022	Client Services Manager
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May-3 June, 2021 and 2022	Client Services Manager
	Facilitate at least one NRW event each year at Neighbourhood Centre.	27 May-3 June, 2021 and 2022	Aged Care Manager
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's <u>NRW website</u> .	By April 2021 and 2022	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
Promote Reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Implement strategies to engage all staff in Reconciliation. (eg monthly "insights/learnings" at every staff meeting).	May 2021	Client Services Manager
	Communicate our commitment to Reconciliation publicly.	November 2021	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive Reconciliation outcomes, as well as to learn from their initiatives and experience.	November 2021	Fundraising and Marketing Manager

	Lend support and promotion through NNC media to social justice campaigns such as Close the Gap, Time for Change, Deaths in Police Custody and Acknowledgement of Apology Statement anniversary (February 13 th).	November 2021 and 2022	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
	Ensure all external public documents and media reflect our commitment to Reconciliation.	May 2021	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
	Identify and meet with other local organisations that have RAPs	April 2021	Client Services Manager
	Encourage partner organisations and organisations in our local area to develop a RAP.	October 2021	Client Services Manager
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	July 2021	Operations manager
	Review and communicate anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	June 2021	Operations Manager
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	May 2021	Operations Manager
	Host a screening of the <i>'Final Quarter'</i> for all staff and facilitate a discussion following the film utilising the associated resources.	June 2021	Aged Care Manager
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	May 2021	Client Service Manager
	Explore possibility of running racism bystander training for local community members to empower people to step in when they witness racist behaviour.	June 2021	Community Development Officer

Respect

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre respects the connection to land, the histories experienced, the cultures developed and the resistance and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across this land. We recognise that a shared future can only be forged from acknowledging the wrongs of the past and listening with open hearts and minds to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Respect is the underpinning of NNCs values of social justice and belonging. Treating others with respect is central to the way we work with individuals. It is captured in our Code of Conduct and central to how we work with each other and the wider community. It is a core quality assurance measure; we regularly ask our service users if they feel they have been treated with respect by the worker. Being treated with respect is a key determinant of a client's successful outcomes after interaction with our staff.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct annual review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	April 2021	Aged Care Manager
	Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resource library for staff to borrow and share books about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and communities.	November 2021	Community Development Manager
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy based on staff training audit survey.	July 2021	Aged Care Manager
	Investigate local cultural immersion opportunities for staff	July 2021	Aged Care Manager
	Ensure language in social media posts and other publications avoids cultural misappropriation and misuse of language.	May 2021	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
	Ensure all staff complete online cultural learning modules.	April 2021	CEO

	Implement Cultural Learning strategy for staff team from induction stage to ongoing continuing professional development.	September 2021	Operations Manager
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	June 2021	Client Services Manager
	Commit to regularly sharing cultural learning and information across our digital platforms	November 2021	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
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.	December 2021	CEO
	Annual review of NNC's First Australian Protocols document.	July 2021 and August 2022	Aged Care Manager
	Ensure all staff are aware of their obligation under NNC policy to make an Acknowledgement of Country at any public event at which they present.	May 2021	CEO
	Review all external documents and publications to ensure protocols for Acknowledgement of Country are observed.	April 2021	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
	Ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander materials and images used respectfully and are reviewed for correct application of branding.	April 2021	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at Newtown Festival and NNCs Annual General Meeting each year. (Festival / AGM as appropriate).	November 2021 and November 2022	CEO
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	March 2021	CEO

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.	November 2021, and 2022	Aged Care Manager
	Review HR policies and procedures to ensure no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	April 2021	Operations Manager
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	First week in July, 2021 and July 2022	CEO
Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections to Country in our communication materials.	Ensure website and all published materials such as Annual Report acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections, continuity and resilience	March 2021	Fundraising and Marketing Manager
	Update email signatures to recognise Close the Gap, NAIDOC Week and other significant dates	May, August 2021 and 2022	Fundraising and Marketing Manager

Opportunities			
<p><i>NNC will ensure there are equal and equitable social, economic and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within every aspect of our work and activities. This not only enhances our knowledge and understanding of culture internally but enables us to improve our external relationship building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We seek to actively contribute to the capacity building and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led community organisations.</i></p>			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve employment opportunities by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	June 2021	BHOS Team Leader
	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to target job invitation adverts to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	March 2021	BHOS Team Leader
	Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members on recruitment strategies and targeting of job vacancies.	March 2021	BHOS Team Leader
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	September 2020	BHOS Team leader
	Advertise job vacancies in appropriate channels to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	March 2021	Operations Manager
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	April 2021	Operations Manager
	Complete annual survey of staff profile to ensure adequate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Staff.	May 2021 May 2022	Operations Manager
	Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce.	November 2021	CEO

	Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership on the board	November 2021	CEO and Board members
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy or policy.	June 2021	Operations Manager
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	June 2021	Operations Manager
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to managers	July 2021	Operations Manager
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	June 2021	Operations Manager
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	June 2021	CEO /Operations Manager
	Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander companies that provide specific services required by the centre and encourage staff to use these companies wherever possible	December 2021	Operations Manager
Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations use of the centre facilities.	Encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and groups to use rooms for events or meetings by waiving the hiring fee.	July 2021	Operations Manager

Governance			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Drive RAP forward within the organisation.	Annually review Terms of Reference for the RWG.	July 2021	Client Services Manager
	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Rap Working Group	July 2021	Client Services Manager
	Meet at least eight times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	November 2021, November 2022	Client Services Manager
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	March 2021	CEO
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	March 2021	CEO
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2021	Client Services Manager
	Maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	July 2021 & 2022	CEO
Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2021, 2022	Client Services Manager

and learnings both internally and externally.	Report RAP progress to all staff and Board	April and September 2021 & 2022	Client Services Manager
	Ensure Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation is discussed and reviewed annually by Board	September 2021 & 2022	CEO
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually, so that we are held accountable for our activities	November 2021 & 2022	CEO
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	May 2022	Client Services Manager
Continue our Reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	June 2022	Client Services Manager

