



Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

January 2022–December 2023



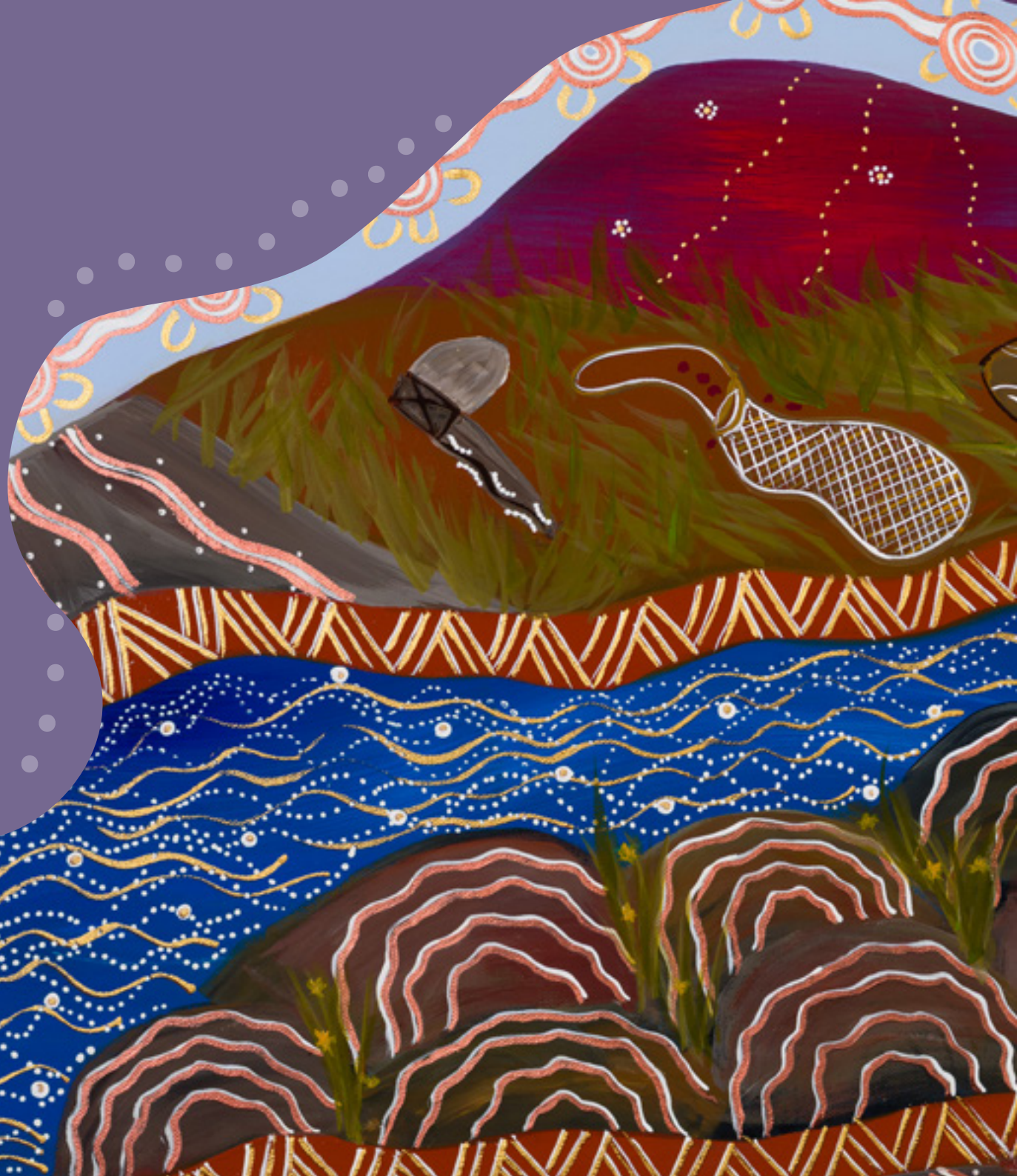
Merri Health
Healthcare that moves with you

Acknowledgement of Country

Merri Health acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land, water and skies where we work.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We also recognise our role in working towards reconciliation; to listen to and be led by the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to honour truth-telling so we can learn from the wrongdoings of the past, and to do the heavy lifting to lead change.



Statement from Merri Health's CEO

I am proud to present Merri Health's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022–2023 (RAP).

As a community health provider with services and partnerships across the state of Victoria, we believe we should play an important role in leading change across our community.

There is still a significant gap in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community. To change this, we know that recognition, respect and equality are critical.

Our third RAP continues our commitment to continuing our reconciliation journey, which began in 2005. It outlines our commitment to driving reconciliation through recognition, respect and equality.

This RAP also builds on the achievements Merri Health has made so far.

Our steps to become a safer and more welcoming organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our community partnerships to foster respect and eliminate discrimination in all its forms.

Our pride in celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.

Our deep commitment to be led by the voices of community.

This RAP also recognises the work we still need to do, as an organisation and community, to close the gap in health outcomes and see meaningful change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I look forward to partnering with our community to see this RAP come to life.

Tassia Michaleas
Chief Executive Officer
Merri Health



Our vision for reconciliation

Merri Health has a vision for reconciliation where the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live across the regions where we operate will be enhanced through respect, equity and recognition in all aspects of our community.

We will do this by continually striving to make our services accessible, culturally safe and responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and by focusing on eliminating the causes of health inequality, including the ongoing impact of colonisation. We will celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the shared history

of Australia with all communities we serve, to promote connection, collective pride and recognition of the oldest living culture in the world.

As part of our efforts towards reconciliation, Merri Health seeks to understand and apply Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems to guide our action. In particular, we draw on **Figure 1** which illustrates some of the domains of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing – namely social and emotional wellbeing – developed by Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart and Kelly.¹ The illustration frames individual, family and community wellbeing in the context of the term ‘connection’.

It describes how connections shape our sense of self, our experiences and expressions, and our wellbeing. This includes connection to:

- body
- mind and emotions
- family and kinship
- community
- culture
- Country
- spirit, spirituality and ancestors

Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart and Kelly also acknowledge the role of social, cultural, political and historical determinants in strengthening or disrupting connections.



This holistic definition of wellbeing informs our RAP, and aligns with our organisational strategic goals around creating a healthy and connected community.

This RAP has been developed to formalise and consolidate Merri Health’s ongoing commitment and achievements to date.

From working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, this journey will enable us as an organisation to continue to improve and build on these achievements in the years to come, and identify new opportunities for growth and development.

Merri Health will work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to:

- make a positive difference in the lives and health of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

- ensure that our organisation is culturally safe
- improve service access and cultural appropriateness
- improve health and wellbeing outcomes for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- celebrate the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members both past and present, in the areas where we operate and across the country
- increase awareness of the impact of racism on health and wellbeing outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, and the wellbeing of our broader communities
- be leaders for reconciliation, and foster leadership across our organisation



Figure 1: Social and emotional wellbeing from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective.

© Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart and Kelly, 2013
 Artist: Tristan Schultz, RelativeCreative.

Our business

Merri Health creates healthy, connected communities through local health services for people at every age and stage of life.

We know that at different times, health needs change. That's why we support people throughout life, with a range of wraparound services available all through the one local network. Our services span across:

- children and families
- young people
- carer support
- management of chronic conditions
- dental
- mental health
- disability services
- health and wellness
- aged care.

We've been part of our community for over 40 years. As a not-for-profit organisation, our focus is on partnering with people, responding to local needs, and strengthening the health of our entire community.

Although our origins are within the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne, Merri Health now delivers services across the state of Victoria. This includes 9 office locations for employees working on-site, and many employees working part-time from home.

Our values underpin all parts of our organisation, and drive the work that we do.

Currently, Merri Health engages 435 employees and 46 volunteers across our programs and services. In June 2021, we employed three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and engaged one Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander volunteer.

We are committed to working in collaboration with partners and community to achieve local solutions, and have extensive partnership networks across the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne, the Hume region and growing networks across Victoria.

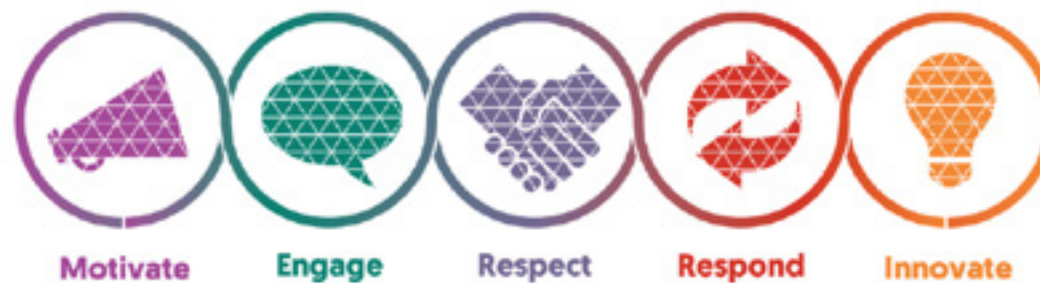


Figure 2: Merri Health values

Our reconciliation journey

Merri Health's reconciliation journey began in 2005, when we initiated a consultation process with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to recruit a Koorie Community Engagement Officer.

This was a newly created position, which initially aimed to work towards improving the accessibility of our services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.



Since 2005, this role has evolved to respond to the changing needs of our organisation and communities. Merri Health's Koorie Community Engagement Officer has facilitated and led a range of key initiatives, including:

- expanding Merri Health's cultural learning activities to include cultural appreciation training, Koorie Conversations, and cultural immersion activities
- developing and strengthening partnerships with key community partners such as Wandarra Aboriginal Incorporation, ACES (Aboriginal Community Elders Services) and VACCHO (Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation)
- engaging employees across the organisation to celebrate National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week

- facilitating a local audiology project with Elders
- coordinating The Little Long Walk
- co-facilitating Speak Up, Speak Out: a family violence prevention project fostering leadership amongst young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In early 2014, Merri Health moved to formalise our existing work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, by creating a RAP for the organisation. A second RAP (Innovate) was endorsed in 2017, expanding on Merri Health's partnerships, internal engagement around reconciliation and employment strategies.

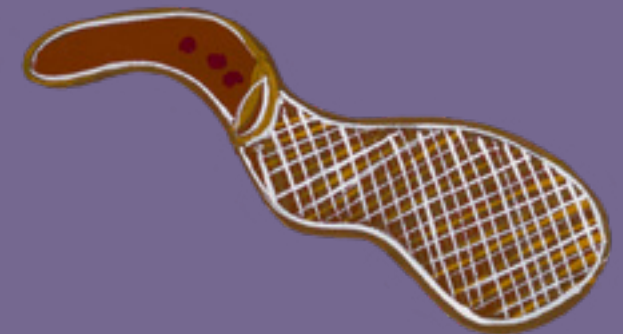
The Merri Health RAP Committee now drives actions under the RAP, providing advice and resources to see our vision for reconciliation come to life.

The RAP Committee includes management and executive sponsors, including the Manager, Community Wellbeing [RAP Champion] who chairs the committee, and the General Manager, Healthy Communities [RAP Sponsor]. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at Merri Health are also invited to join Merri Health's RAP Committee. Current members include the Koorie Community Engagement Officer and the Koorie Community Engagement Worker – Victims Assistance Program.

Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are represented by a local resident and respected Elder, a worker from

the Aboriginal Community Elders Services and the Aboriginal Liaison Officer from the Royal Dental Hospital Melbourne who is also a local Moreland resident.

Other employees who attend the RAP Committee include representatives from the Marketing & Communications team, Human Resources, Victims Assistance Program, Carer Services, Carer Gateway and other teams.



What we have learnt so far

Work to develop this Innovate RAP followed a comprehensive review of our 2017–2019 RAP.

Through this review, we recognised the need to consolidate and strengthen the actions initiated in our Innovate RAP before moving forward to the Stretch RAP.

Our priority for the future is to foster shared ownership of the RAP across the organisation to ensure that we offer a culturally safe and secure environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and employees across all our services, programs and teams.

A large focus of the next RAP will be ensuring all new employees know about the RAP, and how their role can contribute to advancing reconciliation. As an organisation we will commit to moving beyond being safe to stretching ourselves to take brave actions, advocate for change and promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence at every opportunity.

We know organisational representation at external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks helps us keep connected at the grass-roots level to community need. It enables us to engage with community-led priorities to improve our services and close the gap in health disparities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider community.

Currently, these networks are mostly attended by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees from Merri Health; for example, Local Aboriginal Networks, the Moreland Reconciliation Advisory Group and Wandarra. We would like to expand this practice to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, in line with our commitment to foster shared ownership of reconciliation across the organisation.



About the RAP artwork



Ngi-a-Gat Balit-Djak Yirramboi – Building a Very Strong Tomorrow.

In 2021, Melbourne-based fine artist, muralist and creative, Simone Thomson, created a new RAP artwork for Merri Health.

Simone Thomson is a Woi-Wurrung Wurundjeri and Yorta-Yorta Traditional Owner through her mother. She draws inspiration for her art through her spiritual connection to Country and the rich colours and textures of the earth and sky.

“

In an evening sky, Bunjil flies across a crystal moon staring out over country, his great creation... The moon represents Merri Health's commitment to shine a light on Reconciliation at all times of the day and night.”

Bunjil carries a gumleaf in his mouth. In the Woi-Wurrung language, the meaning of Wurundjeri means – ‘Wurrun’ meaning Manna Gumtree, and ‘djeri’ for the white grub that lives in the tree. The gumleaf represents Wurundjeri Country and signifies Merri Health’s respect to its Traditional Owners in building meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Bunjil’s reflection can be seen in the very rocky waters of Merri-Merri Yaluk – Merri Creek below. His reflection represents Merri Health looking inward and their commitment to Reconciliation.

The healing waters and surrounding areas of Merri Creek once provided abundant plant life and food sources and were used for restorative and medicinal purposes for our people. Women would carry woven baskets or wade in the water with stringy dilly bags around their necks collecting reeds and shellfish. The bush berries and medicine leaves that lay in the carved coolamon represent the healing properties of Country and Merri Health’s commitment to providing care and healing.

The large scar tree represents the 20 redgum scar trees found in the surrounding areas, these are the fingerprints of our ancestors. The shield carved from the tree signifies strength in culture fortified by Merri Health’s strength and commitment to building lasting relationships with community. The roots of the tree are widespread across Country just as Merri Health reaches across community with services for all ages.

A stone axe lays on the grass. The axe represents the many identified tools found in the area from long ago signifying Merri Health’s hard work and commitment to building relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Islander Community in their journey towards Reconciliation.

The junction in the waterways represents the Birrarung River and Merri Creek. Traditionally, the site was once a significant meeting place for heads of Clans which is signified by the meeting place etched in the moon. It’s on this sacred site that ceremonies were regularly held in the evening to remove sickness and disease by people smearing red ochre all over themselves.



The split waterways come together to form one strong river in a direction moving forward. This represents closing the gap in the health divide and Merri Health’s commitment, enthusiasm and responsibility to changing that. The gathering circles within represent all community working together in the ongoing journey of education and Reconciliation in building a very strong tomorrow – Ngi-a-Gat Balit-Djak Yirramboi.

Simone Thomson

Artist

Proud Yorta-Yorta and Wurundjeri woman



Relationships

Merri Health recognises that relationships are central to our work.

We know that building respectful and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is essential to achieving positive health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, and the broader communities that we serve.

We also recognise the significant effects of racism on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and believe we play a role in responding to and preventing racism in our communities.

We value the knowledge and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, and we know that working in partnership will create better quality outcomes and services for everyone.

Focus area: Engage

Actions under the Relationships section of this RAP align with Merri Health's core value: **Engage**.

We will work collaboratively with community and stakeholders to provide better health outcomes for everyone.

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Regularly meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand community needs - identify opportunities for working together and supporting each other - develop guiding principles for future engagement 	June 2022, June 2023	Manager, Community Wellbeing (MCW) General Manager, Healthy Communities (GMHC) Koorie Community Engagement Officer (KCEO)
	Meet at least 1 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner, stakeholder and/or organisation per year, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) - Yappera - Career Trackers - Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) 	June 2022, June 2023	MCW GMHC KCEO
	Map relationships/partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations across all Merri Health teams	June 2022	MCW KCEO Team Leader, Community Health Promotion (TLCHP)
	Promote local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks that employees can join via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intranet - staff e-news - Koorie Community Engagement Officer attending team meetings 	June 2022	KCEO

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	<p>Develop and implement a new engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - targets for increasing participation rates of Merri Health employees in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks by June 2023 - long-term targets for increasing participation rates of non-Aboriginal employees in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks 	June 2023	MCW KCEO
	Where it is the preference of the partner, formalise two-way partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations through an MOU or another mechanism	June 2023	MCW GMHC
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<p>Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our employees via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intranet - staff e-news 	April 2022, April 2023	Manager, Marketing & Communications (MM&C) KCEO
	<p>Encourage and enable RAP Committee members to participate in at least 2 external NRW events, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sharing information about local events - purchasing tickets for events (e.g. The Long Lunch) 	May – June 2022, May – June 2023	MCW
	Encourage and support employees and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW	May – June 2022, May – June 2023	GMHC

Relationships

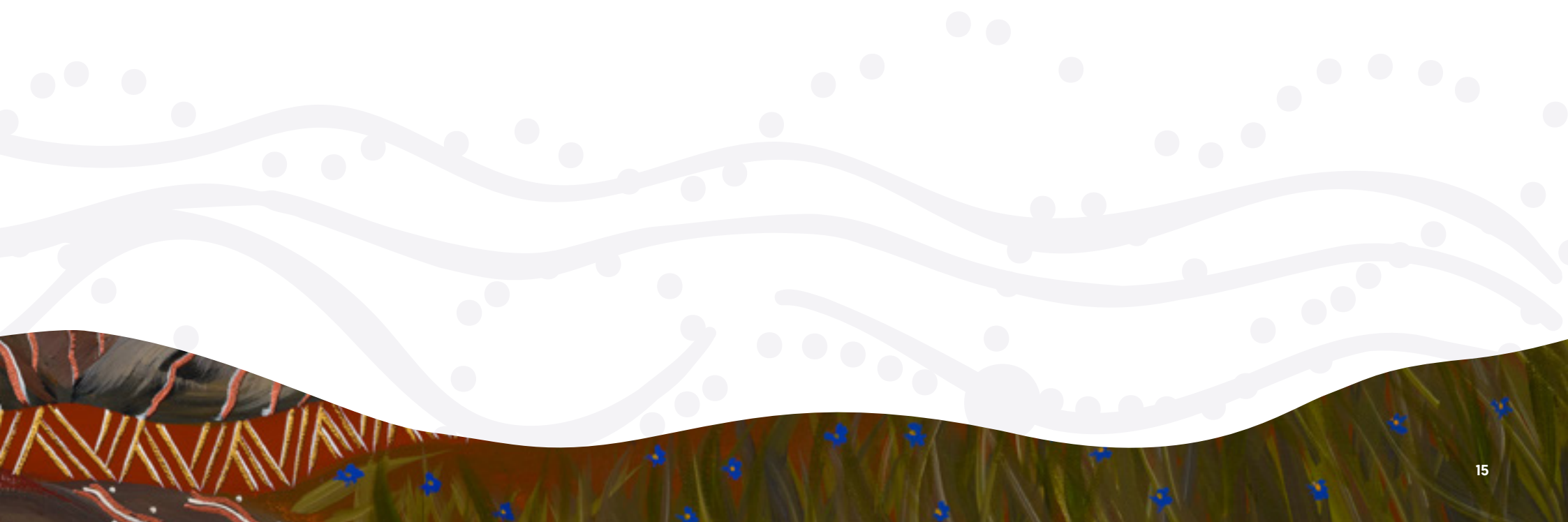
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Organise at least one NRW event annually that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aligns with the annual theme - amplifies the voices and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 	May – June 2022, May – June 2023	KCEO TLCHP MCW
	Register our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website	May 2022, May 2023	KCEO
	Provide small grants for community members to celebrate NRW at a grass roots community level	June 2022	KCEO TLCHP
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Develop a communications plan that communicates our commitment to and vision for reconciliation publicly, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to our employees - to our community - to our partners and external stakeholders 	January 2022, June 2022 January 2023, June 2023	MM&C TLCHP KCEO
	Implement strategies to engage our employees in reconciliation, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - piloting a small grants program for teams to run their own activities during National Reconciliation Week - hosting an event to launch Merri's new RAP - deliver a presentation on the RAP at an all staff forum at least once every two years 	May 2022 April 2022 June 2023	TLCHP KCEO MCW
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes	June 2023	KCEO

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	<p>Collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations on at least one project/initiative that advances reconciliation, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moreland Council - Darebin Council - Hume Council - The Long Walk - Reconciliation Victoria 	June 2023	KCEO MCW
4. Promote positive relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader community through anti-discrimination strategies.	At regular intervals, RAP Committee review HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions and future needs	February, May, August, November 2022 February, May, August, November 2023	Business Partner, Human Resources (HR)
	Engage with the RAP Committee, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to review our Equal Opportunity policy	September 2022	HR
	Following any policy reviews, communicate Merri Health's anti-discrimination policies for our organisation	October 2022	MM&C

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promoting training and education opportunities via the intranet and staff e-news - presentations on the RAP that include health impact data showing the detrimental effect of direct and indirect racism in contributing to health disparities 	June 2023	MCW GMHC KCEO
5. Work with partners to support/lead community-based projects that address race-based discrimination.	Partner with sporting clubs and the University of Melbourne on STARS (Standing Together Against Racism in Sport)	June 2022	TLCHP KCEO
	Deliver upstander training within the Moreland local government area to build a community of allies that reject/respond to racism when it occurs	June 2022	TLCHP KCEO





Respect

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, waterways and skies across the communities we serve.

As provider of health and community services across the state of Victoria, we believe we have an important role in understanding and respecting the cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights of Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We also believe our role extends to engaging others to understand our shared histories, and to respect and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

We will continue to lead by example, providing a range of cultural learning opportunities that meet the diverse needs of our employees, observing cultural protocols, and celebrating NAIDOC Week.

Focus area: **Respect**

Actions under the Respect section of this Reconciliation Action Plan align with Merri Health's core value: **Respect**.

In order to achieve meaningful outcomes for community, respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their rights, cultures, histories and knowledge must remain central to our work under this plan.

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
6. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation	February 2022	HR
	Consult the RAP Committee, local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the review and implementation of a cultural learning strategy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular reports to RAP Committee on participation rates in learning opportunities 	February, May, August, November 2022 February, May, August, November 2023	HR KCEO
	Review, implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our employees, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - setting targets for participation rates - making participation mandatory for different roles (e.g., RAP Committee members, senior leadership roles) - improving attendance rates at existing cultural appreciation training - more in-depth training that unpacks unconscious bias and privilege 	June 2022	MCW
	Develop and launch an online training module that is mandatory for all new employees	June 2022	KCEO HR
	Provide input into development of an Inclusive, Accessible and Respectful Communications Guide, a resource to support Merri employees with writing inclusive, accessible, and respectful content for our target audiences	June 2022	Community Engagement Advisor (CEA)
	Provide opportunities for RAP Committee members, HR managers and other key leadership employees to participate in formal and structured cultural learning by promoting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Merri's new online learning module - cultural appreciation training - cultural immersion opportunities 	June 2023	MCW KCEO HR

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase employees' understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols	September 2022, September 2023	MCW KCEO
	At least once per year, communicate Merri Health's cultural protocol policy to all employees, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intranet - staff e-news 	June 2022, June 2023	MCW KCEO MM&C
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year, for example at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the launch of Merri's next RAP - the opening of a new Merri Health site - a program launch or celebration 	June 2022, June 2023	MCW GMHC
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings	September 2023	MCW GMHC
	Acknowledge Country across organisational mail and communication platforms, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - letters to employees - letters to partners and external stakeholders - email signatures - Merri communications (Annual Report, stationary etc) 	April 2022	MM&C
	Integrate Acknowledgement plaques into Merri Health's site establishment checklist	February 2022	Manager, Facilities (MF)

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Committee to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Victorian NAIDOC Ball - local NAIDOC activities 	July 2022, July 2023	MCW
	Review HR policies and procedures as required to remove barriers to employees participating in NAIDOC Week	July 2022, July 2023	HR
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all employees and the Merri Health board via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the intranet - staff e-news - the Merri Health board communication platform 	July 2022, July 2023	MM&C KCEO GMHC
	Organise at least 1 organisation-wide NAIDOC Week event every year	July 2022, July 2023	KCEO
9. Advocate for and support the principles of the Uluru Statement from the Heart: Voice, Treaty, Truth.	Educate the Board on the Uluru Statement from the Heart campaign via the Merri Health board communication platform	July 2022, July 2023	KCEO MCW GMHC MM&C
	Explore opportunities for employees to learn about the Uluru Statement from the Heart via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the intranet - staff e-news 	July 2022, July 2023	KCEO MCW MM&C



Opportunities

As a large (and growing) organisation of more than 435 employees, Merri Health is a significant employer within local communities. We provide a range of opportunities for community members to work, study or volunteer with us. Our vision is to ensure that our employees reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve.

As a provider of health and community services across the state, we are also committed to ensuring our services are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. One key mechanism for ensuring cultural safety for consumers is recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

We also value the expertise and creativity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and businesses, and recognise the importance of independent, Aboriginal-owned businesses to the principles of self-determination.

Focus area: Innovate

Actions under the Opportunities section of this Reconciliation Action Plan align with Merri Health's core value: **Innovate**.

In order to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working, studying, and volunteering at Merri Health, we need to try new strategies to be seen as an employer of choice.

Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy	June 2023	HR
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviewing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, students and volunteers once per year - comparing the total number of employees, students and volunteers to previous years 	June 2022, June 2023	HR
	Regularly consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inviting members of the RAP Committee to participate in consultation workshops - presenting new policies/frameworks to RAP Committee meetings for feedback 	June 2023	HR MCW
	Monitor the advertising of job vacancies to ensure they effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders	June 2023	KCEO
	Regularly review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace	June 2023	HR
	Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employed in our workforce - completing student placements with Merri Health, including structured work placements (SWLs), school-based apprenticeships or traineeships (SBATs) and work experience 	June 2023	MCW HR

Opportunities

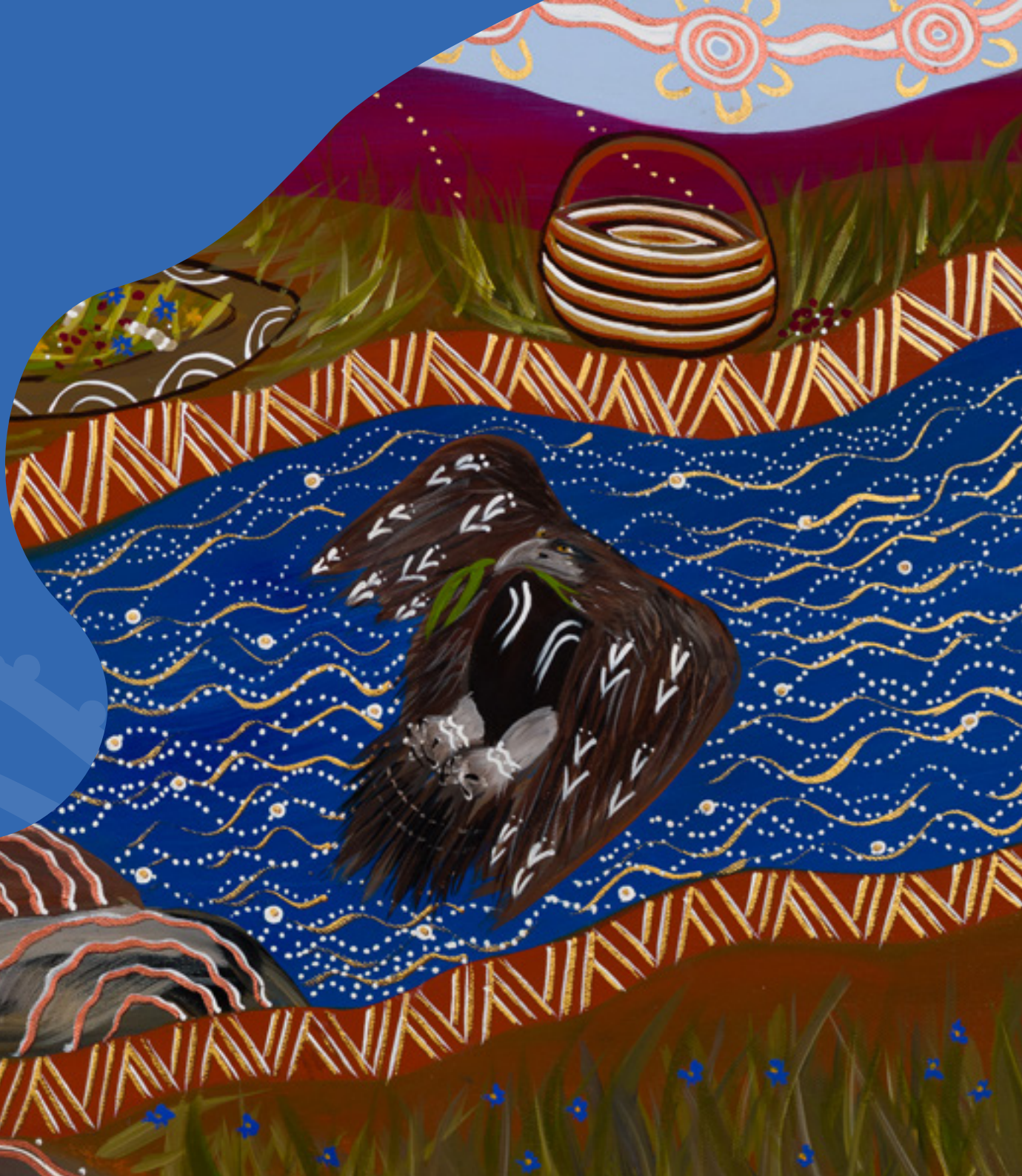
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Victims Assistance Program (VAP) to liaise with HR and universities to offer targeted social work placements to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	December 2023	Manager, VAP (MVAP)
11. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a list of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses that might be used by employees, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - catering - cultural learning or immersion programs - child and family resources - gifts - team building activities 	January 2022	KCEO TLCHP
	At least once per year, promote local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses to employees via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intranet - staff e-news 	April 2022, April 2023	KCEO TLCHP MM&C
	Develop new commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a Victorian artist to develop a new artwork for our RAP - a printing company to print hard copies of our new RAP 	January 2022	MCW
	Maintain commercial relationships with at least two Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses each year, for example: cultural learning providers	October 2022, October 2023	MCW KCEO
	Improve systems for monitoring commercial relationships and overall spending with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses	February 2022	MCW

Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Develop a formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviewing procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses 	June 2023	MCW
12. Improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members by strengthening the cultural safety of our services.	Hume VAP to increase the number of secondary consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client services (under appropriate confidentiality agreements)	June 2023	MVAP
	Co-locate the Northern Koorie Engagement Worker position at Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS)	June 2022	MVAP
13. Improve support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees by working together to support employees to thrive.	Establish a new peer support network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees	June 2022	KCEO
	Build a new, culturally safe system for compiling/reviewing feedback from exit interviews when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees leave the organisation	June 2022	HR
	Design a new training module for managers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees	December 2022	KCEO HR
	Introduce a new mentoring/buddy program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who are new to Merri Health	June 2023	KCEO HR
	Implement new strategies to recruit people without formal qualifications (e.g., learning on the job, working while completing formal qualifications, study leave)	June 2023	MCW HR



Governance



Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
14. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Committee to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP Committee, including:	June 2022	MCW
	- annual reviews of membership and participation rates	June 2023	KCEO
	- regularly promoting membership to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, and their managers		
	- inviting new partner organisations to join the RAP Committee		
	- identify and address barriers to participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, including employees		
	Review the Terms of Reference for the RAP Committee every two years	June 2023	MCW
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation	February, May, August, November 2022	MCW
		February, May, August, November 2023	
15. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Review and define resource needs for RAP implementation annually	May 2022,	MCW
		May 2023	GMHC
	Engage our senior leaders and other employees in the delivery of RAP commitments, including:	June 2023	MCW
	- integrating RAP actions and/or outcomes into divisional strategic plans		GMHC

Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - monitoring partnerships across the organisation - monitoring participation in cultural learning across the organisation - monitoring the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, volunteers and students across the organisation - improve systems for monitoring commercial relationships and overall spending with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses 	June 2023	MCW GMHC HR
	Maintain at least 2 internal RAP Champions on the RAP Committee, including one Executive Leadership Team member and one Management Leadership Team member	June 2023	MCW GMHC
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia	September 2022, September 2023	KCEO TLCHP MCW

Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	<p>Report RAP progress to all employees and senior leaders quarterly, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a report every six months to the Board Community Engagement Sub-Committee (also to be shared on the intranet) - at least one presentation at an all staff meeting every two years - at least one update per year in an all staff newsletter - sharing a copy of the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire with the Merri Health Board 	<p>February, June, August, October 2022</p> <p>February, June, August, October 2023</p>	<p>MCW</p> <p>TLCHP</p> <p>KCEO</p> <p>MM&C</p> <p>GMHC</p>
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually via Merri Health’s annual report	October 2022, October 2023	MCW KCEO MM&C
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia’s biennial Workplace RAP Barometer	April 2022	MCW KCEO
	Register via Reconciliation Australia’s website to begin developing our next RAP	January 2023	MCW

Statement from Reconciliation Australia's CEO

Reconciliation Australia commends Merri Health 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. Merri Health continues to be part of a strong network of more than 1,100 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 Merri Health will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to Merri Health 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 Merri Health 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, Merri Health will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of Merri Health's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Merri Health on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Reference

1 Gee G, Dudgeon P, Schultz C, Hart A, Kelley K. [2014]. Understanding Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective. Chapter 3 in Dudgeon P, Milroy H, Walker R. (Eds). *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice (2nd Edition)*. Australian Council for Education Research and Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Department of Health and Ageing: Canberra.

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Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

January 2022–December 2023

