



# Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

August 2023 – August 2024





## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Volunteering Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. Volunteering Australia recognises that practices of community giving have been prevalent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for tens of thousands of years. We are committed to recognising the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and celebrating the power of volunteering and community giving to promoting reconciliation.



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## Foreword from our Chair and CEO

As leaders of Volunteering Australia, we are honoured to present our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, a testament to our dedication to reconciliation and the broader wellbeing of Australian communities.

As the national peak body for volunteering, it is our ambition for volunteering to be inclusive of all and we are committed to celebrating the invaluable practices of community giving among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Volunteering Australia supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in pursuing their right to self-determination and we strive to create space for truth telling and justice through our policy and practice.

Volunteering practices are embedded in the everyday cultural life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are dedicated to enhancing our understanding of community participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the Reconciliation Practice Group. This platform serves as a space for meaningful discussions that centres the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and contributes to shaping our policies and practices.

In our role as the national peak body for volunteering, we aim to lead by example in promoting reconciliation. We will continue prioritising relationship-building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – their researchers, community workers and organisations. We understand that by fostering strong relationships, we can amplify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices through our collaborative research and advocacy.

As we advocate for a more holistic approach to volunteering, we will also look inward and undertake a journey of reflection. Our Reflect RAP is the first step in formalising this reconciliation journey.



We are excited about the journey of reconciliation ahead and the opportunity to collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, learn from their rich cultures, and make a meaningful contribution to a more just society.

Thank you for joining us in this essential endeavour.

Michael Drew  
Chair  
Volunteering Australia

Mark Pearce  
CEO  
Volunteering Australia



## Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Volunteering Australia to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Volunteering Australia joins a network of more than 1,100 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 Volunteering Australia 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 Volunteering Australia, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia



## Our business

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, leading the reinvigoration of volunteering in Australia and representing the volunteering ecosystem at a federal level.

Volunteering Australia endorses the definition of volunteering as “time willingly given, without financial gain and for the common good” and recognises its multiple conceptualisations as an ‘an act of care’, ‘community giving’, and ‘cultural reciprocity.’ We are passionate about volunteering and its power to support communities and improve our health and wellbeing. Our vision is for a stronger, more connected, and resilient Australian community through volunteering.

Volunteering Australia is a not-for-profit national organisation. We currently employ 16 staff, involve three volunteers, and have a Board of Directors comprised of nine members. We are not aware of any staff who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. Our head office is in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, on the lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. We also have staff who work remotely across Australia.

In 2022 Volunteering Australia led the development of Australia’s first National Strategy for Volunteering in a decade. The National Strategy for Volunteering was co-designed by the volunteering ecosystem and provides a blueprint for a reimagined future for volunteering in Australia.





## Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Volunteering Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the oldest continuing civilisation in Australia. We affirm to recognising and uplifting First Nations practices of ‘community giving’, caring and giving to land, communities and other ecologies – past and present. We also acknowledge the historical and continued impact of colonisation and systemic racism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their cultural practices. Led by the Governance and Operations Manager and Policy Officer (Indigenous lead) as the RAP Champion[s], we affirm our dedication to building an organisation that amplifies the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through inclusive research, advocacy, and organisational practices.

Volunteering Australia strives to place Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination at the heart of our research and advocacy for First Nations peoples. To this end, we affirm the Uluru Statement from the Heart as a necessary first step towards reconciliation, whilst recognising that it is the prerogative of the First Nations peoples to decide the full contours of self-determination. As an organisation, we affirm our commitment to stand with First Nations peoples as their allies, and to learning with and through them in order to advocate for a more just society.

We acknowledge that voluntary practices of ‘community giving’ are an intrinsic part of the everyday cultural life of First Nations peoples. In this process of reconciliation, we are committed to learning about First Nations communities’ definitions and experiences of volunteering; to recognising their privileged knowledge and contribution to the community; and to platforming our research as forms of ‘truth telling.’ As the national peak body for volunteering, our aim is to build stronger synergies between collaborative research and advocacy on the First Nations communities. It is also to foreground relationship building with First Nations peoples – researchers, community initiatives and organisations – and to recognise that it is through the strength of our relationships with the Traditional Custodians of the land that we can represent the ‘national’ character of our work.



Volunteering Australia also recognises the past and ongoing discrimination and racism experienced within non-Indigenous organisations and the not-for-profit sector. Whilst recognising and uplifting Indigenous organisations for their privileged knowledge and indispensable contributions to land and community, we also commit to developing volunteer programs in non-Indigenous organisations that are culturally safe, respectful, and inclusive. We understand that we have a lot to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and that our commitment to inclusivity requires co-designed practices that are respectful of cultural norms and commitments.

In our position as the national peak body for volunteering, we would like to take a leadership role in promoting reconciliation by amplifying Indigenous voices through collaborative research and co-designed volunteer programs. As we advocate for a more holistic approach to volunteering for the broader sector, it is also imperative that we turn the gaze inwards, to practice what we preach, and to undertake a journey of reflection. Our Reflect RAP is the first step in formalising this reconciliation journey. We look forward to extending our learning through concrete actions, to building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and explore further opportunities to work on reconciliation in Australia.

We will approach the implementation of our RAP by getting all staff on-board to reflect on how the ethic of reconciliation may be foregrounded in all our engagements – from research and communications to administration, procurement and human resource management. We will recognise and centre Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination and we will use the RAP framework to help us navigate and inform our reconciliation journey.



## Our partnerships and current activities

Under the leadership of our CEO, Mark Pearce, who has worked for the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, Volunteering Australia has implemented a meaningful Acknowledgement of Country for all external and internal communications. We are also working towards incorporating a more inclusive language of 'volunteering' in our mission statement to represent and foreground the age-old cultural practices of First Nations peoples.

Volunteering Australia has made several submissions to the National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA) to advocate for inclusive and culturally sensitive volunteering practices in non-Indigenous organisations. Through our submissions we have also called for greater recognition of First Nations voluntary practices and their socio-economic capital.

In order to centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in our research and advocacy, Volunteering Australia convenes a Reconciliation Practice Group with different members of the state and territory Volunteering Peak Bodies every two months. We invite First Nations representatives to share their perspectives and insights, as well as organisations that work closely with First Nations peoples on various advocacy issues. Through the Reconciliation Practice Group, Volunteering Australia is enacting a journey of learning and unlearning with and through First Nations peoples. It is also furthering stakeholder engagement and providing a space for internal reflection on the differentiated journeys of the state and territory Volunteering Peak Bodies to promote their respective Reconciliation Action Plans.

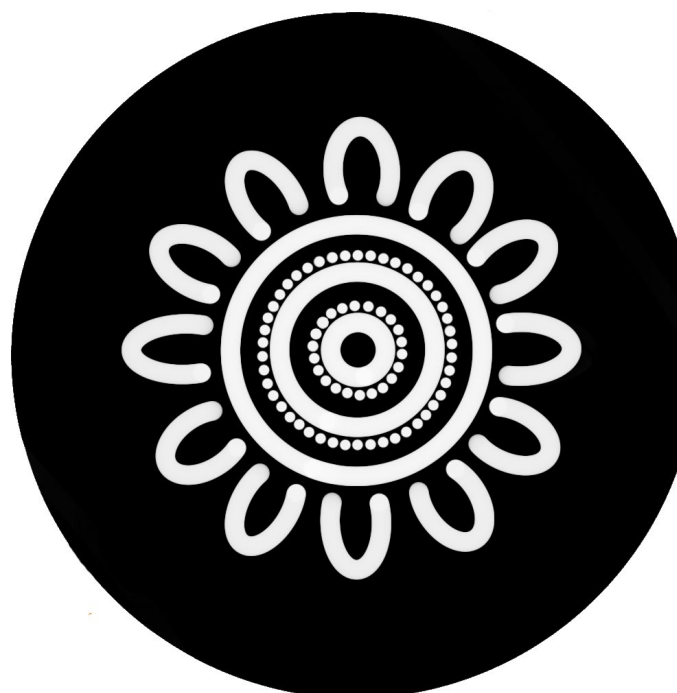
To reflect our solidarity with First Nations peoples in Australia, Volunteering Australia also recognises the multiple meanings of 26 January (Australia Day) as Survival or Sovereignty Day. Staff members are encouraged to engage in these alternative commemorations, if they so choose, and take leave (for public holiday) on another day in lieu of 26 January. As a part of our commitment to economic justice, Volunteering Australia endorses ethical consumer practices that privilege and support First Nations artisans, manufacturers, and businesses. We are actively pursuing a policy of using First Nations services and products for internal and external events.



## 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.	September 2023	Policy Officer
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	September 2023	Policy Officer
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2024	Communications Manager
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2024	Communications 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 2024	Communications Manager

3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	September 2023	Governance and Operations Manager
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	December 2023	Policy Officer
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	January 2024	Policy Officer
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	October 2023	Policy Officer
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	October 2023	Governance and Operations Manager





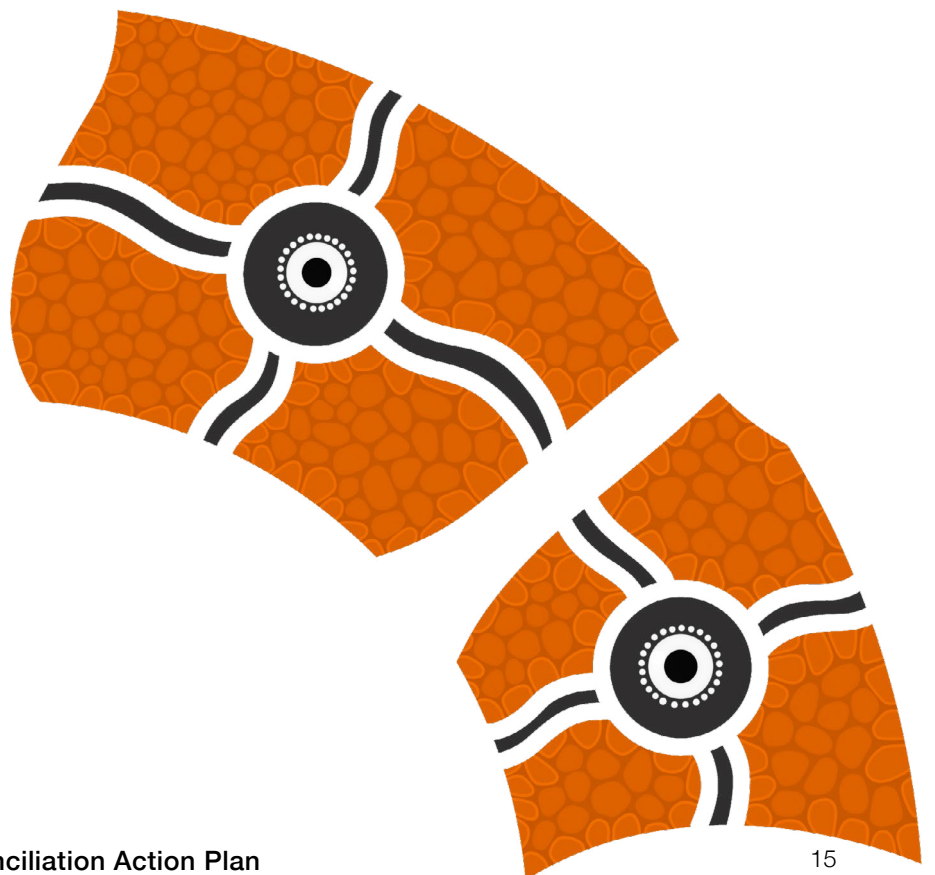
## Respect

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.	January 2024	Governance and Operations Manager
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	February 2024	Policy Officer
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	October 2023	Policy Officer
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	January 2024	Governance and Operations Manager
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	May 2024	Communications Manager
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2024	Communications Manager
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2024	Communications Manager



## 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.	March 2024	Governance and Operations Manager
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	March 2024	Governance and Operations 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.	April 2024	Governance and Operations Manager
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	April 2024	Governance and Operations Manager





## Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	August 2023	Governance and Operations Manager
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	August 2023	Governance and Operations Manager
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	November 2023	Governance and Operations Manager
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2023	Governance and Operations Manager
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August 2023	Governance and Operations Manager
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	August 2023	Governance and Operations Manager
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	August 2023	Governance and Operations Manager



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 2024	Governance and Operations Manager
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August 2024	Governance and Operations Manager
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2024	Governance and Operations Manager
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	May 2024	Governance and Operations Manager





## About the artist

**Artist: Leah Brideson (Kamilaroi)**

Leah is an Aboriginal woman born in Canberra, ACT. Leah's mob are Kamilaroi from her Grandmothers country in the Gunnedah region. Leah is a self-taught Contemporary Aboriginal Artist and began painting at a very young age. She has been painting in a professional capacity for over 10 years, she is mother of two and a Cultural Integrity Coordinator in ACT Public Schools.

Art is such an important platform to share Leah's culture with the wider community. Leah's art is like a 'visual yarn', connecting people with the stories and meaning behind the work. A great deal of Leah's artistic vision and inspiration comes from the changing landscapes in her hometown, on Country and from journeys to ocean country and beyond. She uses layers of fine dotting, line work, colour gradients, Aboriginal symbolism and her signature style of 'cracked earth' landscape throughout her paintings.

## About the artwork

### **Title: 'wuu-rri' (means 'give' in Gamilaraay language):**

This artwork is a visual representation of Volunteering Australia's commitment to Reconciliation. The artwork brings together Volunteering Australia's values and goals, whilst acknowledging that volunteering and community participation have been part of First Nations peoples cultures for tens of thousands of years.

The trees are reflective of Volunteering Australia's growth and stance through Reconciliation, along with their commitment and outlook for the road ahead. Volunteering Australia's staff and community are symbolised in the central meeting place. As the national peak body for volunteering, their aim is to foster stronger synergies between collaborative research, advocacy, and inclusive language within their reconciliation journey. This is reflected throughout the concentric circles.

Continually learning, connecting to community and reflection are symbolised through the pathways, and the meeting places depict community participation, along with acknowledging the diverse First Nations peoples and cultures across the Country.

Throughout the artwork are artefacts, including woven baskets, coolamons, spears and clasticks. Volunteering Australia acknowledge that they are small part of the extensive and valuable traditions of volunteering, sharing and community contribution practices. In acknowledging this, a representation of the unwavering work and passing down of knowledge of First Nations Elders and Ancestors before us holds the piece together.



**Heba Al Adawy, Policy Officer**  
**Volunteering Australia**

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