



**CANBERRA
COMMUNITY
LAW**

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

November 2020 to November 2022





Canberra Community Law acknowledges and thanks Wiradjuri man TJ Freeman for use of his artwork 'Prison Dreaming'. The artwork depicts TJ's feelings about being in prison. As he says "I have been through dark times but I can still see the good things I have to look forward to when I get out."

CEO Statement from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia commends **Canberra Community Law** on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Commencing an Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build strong foundations and relationships, ensuring sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for **Canberra Community Law** to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff, and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, **Canberra Community Law** will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of *relationships, respect, and opportunities* emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process, as well.

With over 2.3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. **Canberra Community Law** is part of a strong network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals **Canberra Community Law's** readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations **Canberra Community Law** on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Our vision for reconciliation

Canberra Community Law acknowledges the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples within our society and wishes to continue to contribute to the realization of equity, justice and positive partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the ACT and region. Our vision is to foster a culturally safe environment for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and clients. Such an environment will allow us to build lasting relationships that will enable us to learn and evolve as an organisation while empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to lead and participate in decisions affecting them and their community. We aim to do this by harnessing positive relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who play a vital role in educating and leading the way in becoming trusted advisors and advocates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Our business

Canberra Community Law (CCL) is a community legal centre providing legal services to people on low incomes or facing disadvantage in the ACT and region. We employ 15 people including 2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander solicitors. We deliver our services to clients where they feel comfortable which may include their own home. Our office is located in Canberra and we provide outreach services at a number of locations including the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal, The Early Morning Centre, St Johns Care, the Junction Youth Health Service, Woden Youth Centre, Toora Women, Onelink and the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

We prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients access to the Centre and its various specialist services which include Street Law, Disability Discrimination Law Service, Housing Law, Night Time Legal Advice Service, Public Housing Duty Law Service and Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program.

In addition to providing legal services to clients we conduct community legal education in various locations on various areas of law, we undertake law reform and policy work at a local level in our areas of expertise and we partner with the Australian National University to run a Community Law Clinical Program which enables law students to work under the supervision of our lawyers for a semester. We also have partnered with the University of Canberra to provide internships for students studying law and justice courses.

Our Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program (Dhurrawang) was developed and launched in 2017 to provide legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Canberra and the surrounding region. Dhurrawang was gifted the name by the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. Dhurrawang means 'light'- when gifting us this name the United Ngunnawal Elders council said "UNEC sends Ngunnawal Blessing, we wish your program much success in spreading 'Dhurrawang' through your Aboriginal Human Rights Program".

One of the identifiers of our service is the 'Fresh Life After Rain' artwork developed for CCL by Wiradjuri woman, Leanne Pope. The artwork tells the story of the Yellow Crested Black Cockatoo – 'Often you will hear the Black and Yellow Crested Cockatoo call and fly over the cityscapes of Canberra just before it rains. The green gum leaves and gum nuts represent new life that blossoms around our city after the rain. Our Spiritual Ancestors dance with rain drops nourishing the country.'

Dhurrawang provides legal advice and representation in the following areas of law: Human Rights, Public Housing, Tenancy, Social Security and Race Discrimination. Our services are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner, are provided through a human rights framework and informed by the human rights principles of participation, inclusion and self-determination.

We also engage in law reform work on issues impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in our community and strive to make the legal system fairer for those most in need.

As a human rights jurisdiction, we advocate for human rights and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural rights to be given priority consideration by decision makers by utilising the legal protections in the ACT *Human Rights Act 2004 (Human Rights Act)*.

Our RAP

CCL developed its first RAP to contribute to the realization of equity, justice and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the ACT and region and to reflect our commitment to improving our service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. We acknowledge that in order to achieve the desired outcomes in our RAP we must develop strong and genuine relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples built on trust and mutual respect. We endeavor to do this through a human rights informed practice that has at its core the principles of participation, inclusion and self-determination.

Our RAP is championed by the RAP champion who is a member of our Board and the working Group consists of both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous staff.

Our RAP Working Group membership is increasing. At present our RAP working group is comprised of solicitors working across a range of different legal services within CCL including: Street Law, Dhurrawang Aboriginal Human Rights Program and Tenancy and Social Security Law.

The invitation to join the RAP working group is extended to all staff members within CCL and membership is voluntary. There are members of staff at CCL who identify as Aboriginal people and who are part of the RAP Working group. We also consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in the community on the way to conduct our business, develop our RAP and provide services to the community.

Since the inception of our Reflect RAP in October 2017 we have progressed in a number of areas including in the delivery of legal services, in developing knowledge within our workforce and in raising awareness about issues impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the ACT and beyond:

Delivery of Legal Services:

- We have prioritised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients across all our legal services ensuring that they receive legal assistance in a timely manner.
- Our Dhurrawang Program has become more established within the community. An indication of its success is reflected in the number of referrals the program receives from former clients.
- We have achieved approximately 94% positive outcomes for our clients at Dhurrawang which has developed and solidified our reputation within the community.
- By actively utilising the Cultural Rights provisions with the ACT Human Rights Act 2004, we have helped to emphasise to ACT Government agencies the importance of these rights and how they interact with government business.

Developing knowledge within our workforce:

- We mark and celebrate important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates and events such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. Staff are encouraged to participate in an event to expand their knowledge. Information about these events are shared internally and externally through our social media platforms.
- We organise cultural awareness training for staff on an annual basis.
- We engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to share knowledge and make and receive referrals.

Raising awareness about the issues impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in the ACT and beyond:

- Through Dhurrawang, CCL has engaged in several law reform initiatives on strengthening the legal mechanisms that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- We have established and participated in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subcommittee through the ACT Law Society. Through this mechanism we advise the ACT Law Society and raise awareness in the legal community and beyond.
- We have published articles in ACT and national publications on the way Housing laws impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT.
- We have spoken with the ACT Government and the Commonwealth Government about the way laws impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with the goal of changing these laws to improve the lives of the people impacted.
- We have spoken at the National Community Legal Centre's conference on how to develop a RAP.
- We have spoken at several forums within the ACT on our work in relation to human rights advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

One of the challenges arising out of our Reflect RAP was CCL's voluntary Board members being available to attend RAP events and the progression of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Board member.

Relationships



Building bridges between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians is important to our organisation and our core business activities because our goal is community development through access to justice and we believe that this is only accomplished when those impacted by laws have a seat at the table and an opportunity to meaningfully participate in relation to the laws and decisions that impact them and their community. Self Determination is a principle that informs our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and we believe that we can assist in the realisation of this principle by building positive relationships with First Nations Australians and ensuring that their voices are heard by those in power.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	• Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	February 2021	Program Manager, Dhurrawang
	• Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	January 2021	Program Manager, Dhurrawang
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	• Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	27 May – 3 June, 2021 and 2022	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
	• RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 June, 2021 and 2022	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
	• 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	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
	• Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May – 3 June, 2021 and 2022	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
	• Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website .	27 May – 3 June, 2021 and 2022	Solicitor, Dhurrawang

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement strategies to engage our staff in reconciliation. 	January 2021	Social Security and Tenancy solicitor representative on RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly. 	November 2020	Social Media Team Leader
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes. 	December 2020	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation. 	May 2021	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in external panels and seminars on matters of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. 	Review December 2020, 2021	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare best practice guidelines for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in consultation with other organisations for use within the ACT Law Society. 	June 2021	Program Manager, Dhurrawang
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the ACT Law Society in promoting positive race relations through participation in the work of the Access to Justice Committee and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Committee. 	Review December 2020, 2021	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	September 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, update and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation. 	September 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy. 	September 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism. 	March 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group

Respect



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights are important to our organisation and its core business activities because they tell the story of the land on which we live and work. The stories and knowledge help us to understand our country, its lands and waters. This knowledge helps us to understand our place and our role in relation to country and community. By engaging and drawing on the knowledge of Traditional Custodians we are learning how to engage with our community in a meaningful way.

We are mindful of the legacy of our colonial history and believe that through our work and by using the language of human and cultural rights we can ensure that the voices of our clients and the community that supports us, is heard. This is an area where we continue to learn and grow as an organisation.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. 	February 2021	Chair, RAP working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy. 	February 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our staff. 	February 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning. 	February 2021	Chair, RAP working Group

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	Review September , 2021, 2022	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, update and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. 	February 2021	Solicitor, Dhurrawang
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year. 	Review October 2021, 2022	Program Manager, Dhurrawang
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings. 	Review October 2021, 2022	Executive Director
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	First week in July 2021, 2022	Chair, RAP Working Group.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week. 	September 2021	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff. 	First week in July 2021, 2022	Executive Director

Opportunities



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work. They are the keepers of the stories and history that informs the evolution of this country. Our organisation holds deep respect for this knowledge as it informs the way we engage with our community.

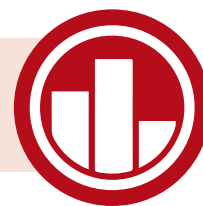
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are our colleagues and our clients. Their experiences and their voices shape the way in which we conduct much of our business.

Our business is to give voice, to advocate, to facilitate access to systems and processes and to empower our clients to tell their stories and to shape the changes that improve their lives. We have taken a decision to focus our business on delivering services through a human rights framework to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Their experiences and their input- both as colleagues, as community partners and as clients are paramount to determining the direction and focus of our work.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
8. Improve employment outcomes 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.	December 2020	Executive Director
	• Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	December 2020	Executive Director
	• Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	December 2020	Executive Director
	• Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	Review November 2020, 2021	Executive Director
	• Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	December 2020	Executive Director
	• Attempt to increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce.	Review November 2020, 2021	Executive Director
	• Engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to stand for election on the CCL board.	March 2021	Executive Director

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy. 	Review October 2021, 2022	Executive Director
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Supply Nation membership. 	Review October 2020, 2021	Finance Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff. 	Review October 2021, 2022	Finance Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. 	April 2021	Finance Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses. 	Review October 2021, 2022	Finance Manager
10. Increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities for a paid cadetship program. 	March 2021	Program Manager, Dhurrawang
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander law students about opportunities for work experience within CCL by engaging with Law Schools in Canberra about internships and legal placements. 	March 2021	Program Manager, Dhurrawang

Governance



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG. 	Review February, 2021, 2022	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG. 	Review February, 2021, 2022	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation. 	November, 2020, January, April, July and October 2021, January, April, July 2022	Chair, RAP Working Group
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define resource needs for RAP implementation. 	Review March, 2021, 2022	Secretary, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments. 	Review March, 2021, 2022	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. 	Review March, 2021, 2022	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management. 	November 2020	Secretary, RAP Working Group
13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. 	30 September 2021, 2022	Secretary, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly. 	March, June, September, December 2021. March, June 2022	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually. 	December, 2020, 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer. 	Review May 2022	Secretary, RAP Working Group
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. 	April 2022	Secretary, RAP Working Group



Contact details for public enquiries about our RAP

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