

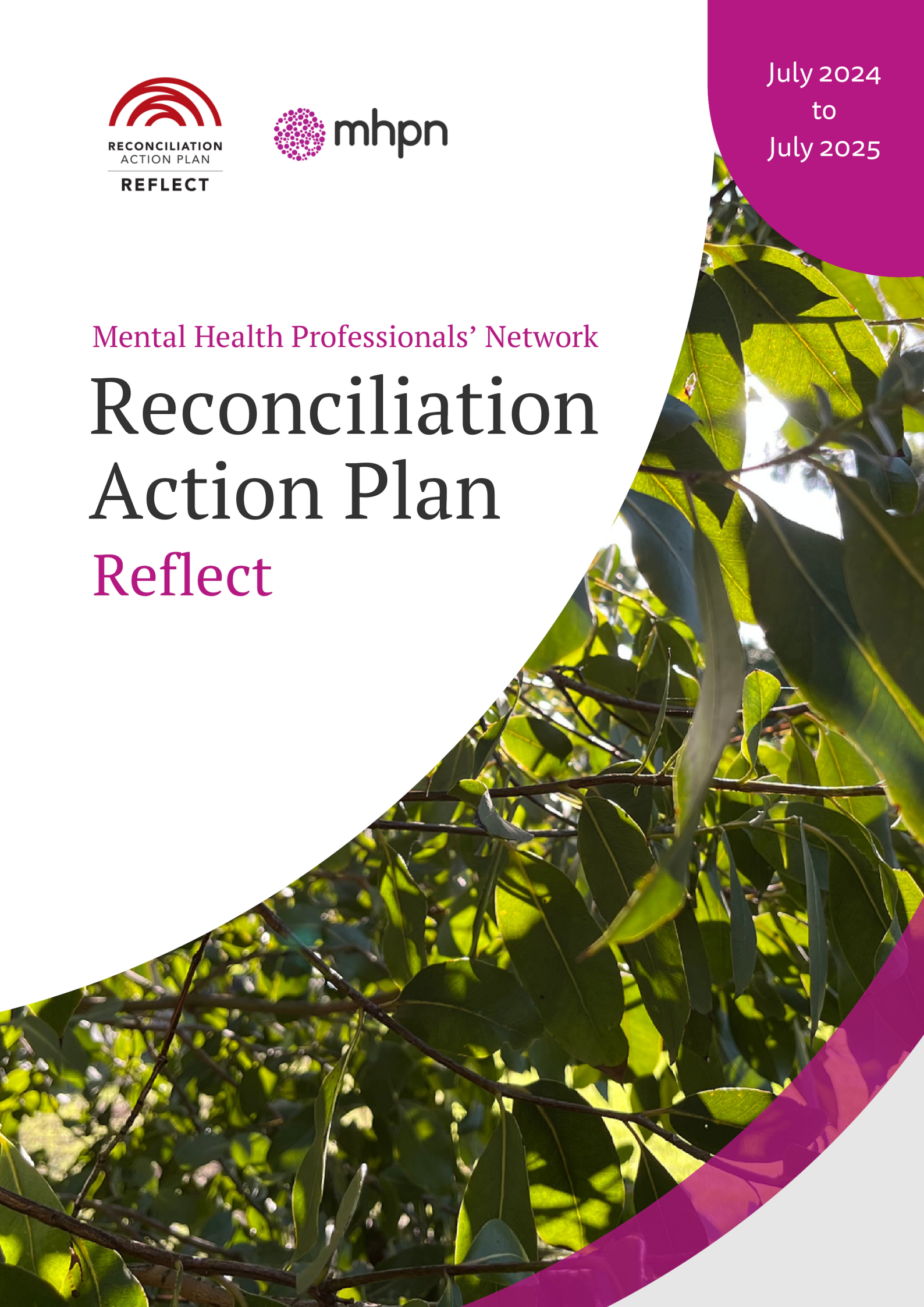


July 2024  
to  
July 2025

Mental Health Professionals' Network

# Reconciliation Action Plan

## Reflect



# Acknowledgement of Country

The Mental Health Professionals' Network (MHPN) respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri and the Bunurong people of the Kulin nation, the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which our office is situated. We extend this respect to the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia where our networks are located. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, river and seas and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

All photographs used in this document were taken by members of the MHPN RAP working group, of native eucalypt trees growing on Wurundjeri lands.





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# Statement from the Chair of the Board



John Rasa | Chair of the Board, MHPN

MHPN is committed to an ongoing journey of reconciliation to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Our first Reconciliation Action Plan is the start of a process of deep listening, learning and reflecting on the role our organisation can play in acknowledging and addressing the disproportionate impact of mental illness and psychological distress on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We value the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their connection to lands and waters, to family and kinship, and as custodians of the World's longest living culture.

As an established provider of programs to support multi-disciplinary practice in mental healthcare, we welcome the opportunity to build meaningful and enduring relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health professionals and the communities that they are a part of.

Through our Reconciliation Action Plan, we will strive to enrich the broader mental health workforce through learning and connection to encourage collaboration in providing culturally safe practice.



# Statement from Reconciliation Australia



**Karen Mundine | Chief Executive Officer, Reconciliation Australia**

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Mental Health Professionals' Network to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Mental Health Professionals Network joins a network of more than 3,000 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 Mental Health Professionals Network 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 Mental Health Professionals Network, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.



# Our Business

The Mental Health Professionals' Network is an established program funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, with a 14-year history of providing proven benefits to the mental health workforce through the delivery of programs that support interdisciplinary peer support, networking opportunities and professional development.

Since its inception, MHPN has engaged with individual health practitioners, professional healthcare associations and like-minded organisations to successfully deliver its three key programs: Interdisciplinary networks, webinars and podcasts.

The National Networks Program supports over 360 Interdisciplinary Practitioner Networks that operate locally, state-wide or nationally, across metropolitan, regional and remote areas of Australia. The Webinar and Podcast Programs produce and deliver online professional development activities designed for an interdisciplinary audience, where mental health professionals can participate from all parts of Australia.

There are a limited number of people who engage with webinars and podcasts from outside of Australia. At times, MHPN partners with other organisations to produce webinars and podcasts, and in some instances set up networks.

MHPN currently employs approximately 20 staff, none of whom identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. MHPN has one office located on Wurundjeri country in Melbourne,

Victoria. Staff work in the office 50% of the week and at home for the remainder, on Wurundjeri and Bunurong country, as well as Wadawurrung country to the west of Melbourne.





# Our RAP

To date, MHPN have informally taken some steps to understand and partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. As an organisation, we are ready to formalise our commitment to reconciliation with a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

We believe that a RAP endorsed by Reconciliation Australia will provide us with a clear framework to most effectively make positive contributions to reconciliation in Australia.

In creating and implementing a RAP, MHPN aim to better understand the cultures, traditions and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and improve the way in which we engage with First Nations people and organisations. By embedding processes within our organisation that facilitate regular reflection and improvement, we will increase our accountability to systematically and continuously establish and improve our relationships and partnerships with First Nations people, and work towards better outcomes for all.

Specifically, MHPN are committed to utilising our position in the Australian mental health landscape to contribute wherever possible to positive change in the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We aim to achieve this by providing high-quality, evidence-informed, community (i.e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities) led, professional development and networking opportunities for Australian

mental health practitioners to upskill in best practices and understand the key considerations for providing mental health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Being a small organisation, MHPN intends to take a 'whole organisation' approach to implementing our Reflect RAP. Driven by our RAP champion, Julie Middleton (Manager, Webinar Program), and the RAP Working Group, all MHPN programs and staff will be involved in reflecting on our current practices for engaging and representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in our work, and the identified deliverables will span all primary MHPN programs (networks, webinars and podcasts). The RAP Working Group consists of members: Dr Daisy Brooke (CEO; RAP Chair), Emma Ussing (Project Officer), Geoff Ward (Data and Systems Improvement Manager), Julie Middleton (Manager, Webinar Program; RAP champion), Manibha Malla (Project Officer) and Tessa Harrison (Communications & Digital Marketing Officer), none of whom identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

This RAP is an opportunity for growth for MHPN as an organisation and for



# Our RAP

## Continued...

individual staff. We know we can do better, and our RAP will provide us with the information and planning we need to adequately allocate resourcing to complete our deliverables and grow as an organisation, while providing staff with opportunities for personal and professional growth in the area of cultural awareness and reconciliation.

Additionally, establishing and publishing an endorsed RAP holds MHPN accountable to our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, and making these values and commitments transparent to all staff, board members, partner organisations,

presenters, Network Coordinators, members and viewers.

MHPN's reconciliation journey within our webinar, podcast and networks programs is detailed in the Our partnership/current activities below. In addition, MHPN staff have undertaken a number of internal activities, also detailed below.

A deliverable of our 2023-26 funding agreement with the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, one that was proposed by MHPN, is to embark upon a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.





# Our Partnerships and Current Activities

Prior to commencing this Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, MHPN have taken informal steps to engage with reconciliation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and peoples across our three core programs: networks, webinars and podcasts.

## Webinars

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MHPN's webinars are produced under two streams, those funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care and those funded by partnering with other organisations.

### **Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care Funded Webinars**

MHPN designs and delivers seven webinars every year as part of its Commonwealth Funded webinar program, all of which commence with an Acknowledgement of Country.

In 2016 MHPN's webinar program developed relationships with First Nations practitioners who are considered elders and leaders within their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and consulted with them on priority mental health topics affecting First Nations people and suitable panellists to present on the webinars.

MHPN continues to maintain relationships and consult with these practitioners, when developing webinar content to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing.

Webinars developed in this stream with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations:

- Working collaboratively to support the social and emotional well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in crisis (February 2017)
- Do you have what it takes to engage with Indigenous people? (September 2019)

### **Partnership Webinars**

All partnership webinars involve a financial partnership with like-minded organisations to deliver webinar content developed in collaboration with those organisations in their area of specialty.

In 2017, MHPN partnered with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to deliver a webinar to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCHOs), and Aboriginal Medical Services staff. The webinar focused on 'Reducing the mental health impact of Indigenous incarceration on people, communities and services'. Since this time, MHPN has emailed NACCHO and ACCHOs directly to invite their



# Our Partnerships and Current Activities

## Continued...

members to MHPN webinars focussing on the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations' people.

In 2018 MHPN commenced an ongoing partnership with Emerging Minds to produce a series of six webinars per financial year focussed on infant and child mental health. The webinar series embeds the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the inclusion of specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander webinars which has allowed MHPN to grow further relationships that have benefited the webinar program and other online professional development programs in MHPN.

Emerging Minds partnership webinars:

- Aboriginal children and the effects of intergenerational trauma (May 2020)
- Cultural considerations in the social and emotional wellbeing support provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and families (November 2021)
- Decolonising mental health when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families (June 2023)

In July 2020 and December 2022 MHPN partnered with Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to deliver a series of six webinars

on supporting older Australians' mental health. All six webinars included learning outcomes on culturally responsive practice and two included panellists who identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. One webinar in this series included a focus on trauma-informed care for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

PHN partnership webinar:

- Trauma informed care with older Australians (November 2021)

In early 2022, MHPN commenced a relationship with Black Rainbow. The purpose of this ongoing partnership is to deliver webinars in the Queeroboree webinar series that focus on LGBTIQA+SB mental health and wellbeing.

As at October 2023, three webinars have been delivered and the partnership series will continue into 2024. The live broadcasts have been very well attended, and high numbers of views of the subsequent recording has highlighted the strong appetite for professional development relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people amongst MHPN's practitioner base.

July 2023's webinar gave practitioners the



# Our Partnerships and Current Activities

## Continued...

opportunity to express interest in joining or establishing interdisciplinary networks that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing. This has enabled MHPN to gather strong leads for the Network team to commence work establishing Networks in this space.

Black Rainbow partnership webinars:

- The impact of Covid 19 on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB community (August 2022)
- Breaking the Silence: Inclusive practice for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB people (November 2022)
- Suicide related behaviour among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB people (July 2023)

## Podcasts

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From March through May 2023, MHPN's podcast program released a four-part series: 'A Conversation About.... Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, Climate Change and Covid 19'. The series explored why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are, at the same time, both a strength and a priority in our response to the climate crisis and the COVID 19 pandemic.

The series was co-hosted by and produced in collaboration with three mental health practitioners, two of whom identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

## Networks

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As at December 2023, there have been 35 network meetings centred around interdisciplinary collaboration to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, with a total of 515 attendances by mental health practitioners across these meetings.

With MHPN's existing leads and partnerships, the Network program is currently working on establishing specific-interest interdisciplinary practitioner networks to help practitioners work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.



# Our Partnerships and Current Activities

Continued...

## Internal activities

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In August 2018, MHPN staff participated in an Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training Program.

Since June 2020, MHPN have included an Acknowledgement of Country at the start of every Monday all staff meeting. Every few months MHPN management call for volunteers from the entire team to Acknowledge Country at this meeting. Each staff member who Acknowledges Country is invited to share information they have learnt about the Traditional Owners of the land where they are situated (MHPN's office and/or home office), or about a relevant topic that interests them.

Staff have shared information about the traditional lands and a broad range of topics including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander footballers, artists, films and musicians, as well as the local seasons.

Following this, an Acknowledgement of Country was also included in the agenda of the MHPN Board meetings and Board committees, on the MHPN website and in all staff email signatures.

Additionally, MHPN creates social media posts during NAIDOC week and Reconciliation Week.





# MHPN's Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2024 - July 2025





# Relationships



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
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.	July, 2024 ongoing	Manager, Webinar Program
	Sharing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholder list with all staff at MHPN so that connections within these stakeholder organisations can be proactively built.	July 2024	Manager, Webinar Program
	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations with specific relevance to the MHPN local, state-wide and national networks program, through a process of national stakeholder mapping.	July 2024 ongoing	Lead: Manager, Webinar Program Support: Networks Team Leader
	Research best-practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	August 2024	Manager, Webinar Program
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2025	Communications Manager
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June, 2025	RAP Chair
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June, 2025	Communications Manager
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Develop a plan covering internal and external communications regarding MHPN's RAP and RAP deliverables.	August 2024	Communications Manager
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff through regular updates at team meetings.	December 2024	RAP Chair
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	February 2025	Manager, Webinar Program
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	March 2025	Manager, Webinar Program
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best-practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	January 2025	CEO
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	April 2025	CEO



# Respect



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
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.	July 2024	RAP Chair
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	August 2024	CEO
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 local area.	Sept 2024	Networks Team Leader
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols, referencing traditional lands and waters including in Zoom calls.	October 2024	CEO
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.	July 2024	Communications Manager
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2025	Communications Manager
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2024	RAP Chair



# Opportunities



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
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 and volunteering within our organisation.	September 2024	Lead: CEO Support: Networks Team Leader
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	March 2025	CEO
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health workforce to help inform provision of professional development.	April 2025	CEO
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.	November 2024	Finance Manager
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	August 2024	Finance Manager



# Governance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	July 2024	CEO
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	July 2024	RAP Chair
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	August 2024	RAP Chair
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2024	RAP Chair
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2024	RAP Chair
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	July 2024	RAP Chair
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	July 2024	RAP Chair
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 annually	RAP Chair
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	RAP Chair
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	RAP Chair
Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	March 2025	RAP Chair



# Contact details

**Dr Daisy Brooke**

Chief Executive Officer

1800 209 031

[d.brooke@mhpnp.org.au](mailto:d.brooke@mhpnp.org.au)

