

Reconciliation Action Plan

Reflect

Oct 2021 — April 2023



Acknowledgement of Country

ACSO proudly acknowledges Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past and present. ACSO recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's first peoples and the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to Australian life and how this enriches us.

ACSO embraces the spirit of reconciliation, working towards equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have come in contact with the justice system.

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	2
Artistic inspiration	4
Introduction	6
Foreword	7
Our business	8
Our RAP	10
RAP working group	13
Our partnerships/current activities	14
Our actions	16
Relationships	18
Respect	20
Opportunities	22
Governance	24

Artistic inspiration

Australian Community Support Organisation provides services across many lands down the eastern seaboard. Using two artistic pieces helps us to showcase work from the states we provide service in while recognising the connection both artists have to the criminal justice system and its impacts on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Garry Scott is a Wurundjeri man, and hails from the same lands our organisation was founded on. Sheldon's country spans across the other states ACSO provide service in. Both works were sourced through The Torch.



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Title: *The Warrior Within*
Artist: Garry Scott
Wurundjeri Lands
Cover art

Garry Scott is an emerging Aboriginal artist who has experienced many challenges throughout his life. Whilst incarcerated, Garry decided to explore and connect to his culture by making art. He uses his art and culture as the foundation to look at where he has been and where he wants to be in his life. Through painting he has found the focus and strength to change his lifestyle and walk a positive path, including passing on his newfound knowledge and skills to his children.

Description from the artist: This painting is about me - the warrior in me, the warrior that fights the urge of my addictions to alcohol, drugs, and violence. At times I sit alone in deep thoughts, struggling to fight the urges of these addictions. I look deep inside myself for a reason to stay clean and away from my violent past. My parents, my woman, my children, my brothers and sisters - they are not enough to support me. I have to look deep in me to find the warrior in me. That is the key to my sobriety. The warrior within.



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Title: *Always Was, Always Will Be*
Artist: Sheldon
Murri Country
Additional art

Description from the artist: This painting shows a place of life dreaming and first contact of our people. The three main circles with handprints show men, women and children as one, coming into their own dreaming through different stages of life and ceremony and leaving their own footprint through songlines and paintings, dancing and stories. The three different pathways represent timelines and travelling to a big meeting place to take their place in the community. The three different patterns of dots represent our country and the distances we have travelled. We stop at certain camping and ceremonial sites along the way to share our stories with each other, young and old, just like our ancestors taught us through dreaming stories and ceremonies which help us walk straight and strong through their footprints. This is my dreaming.



These artworks were created through The Torch, a not-for-profit organisation, that provides art, cultural and arts industry support to Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders in Victoria.

Introduction

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Australian Community Support Organisation to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Australian Community Support Organisation 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 over 2.3 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 Australian Community Support Organisation 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 Australian Community Support Organisation, 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

Foreword

On behalf of the Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO), we are proud to introduce our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

We take pride in the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are the oldest living cultures in the world. As Australia's First Nations peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's cared for Australia's land and waters for millennia. The survival of Australia's First Nations peoples, despite colonisation, dispossession, systematic injustice, and racism for over 200 years is testament to their resilience. The strength and richness that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures bring is an important part of our national story that needs to be told and celebrated by all of us who now share this land. In coming to an honest understanding of our history as Australians, ACSO acknowledges with deep sorrow the past injustices, the trauma that was inflicted, and the failure to understand, respect and value the cultural beliefs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This launch of ACSO's first Reconciliation Action Plan establishes our long-term commitment to action that strengthens relationships and advocates for the justice system to prioritise diverting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples away from incarceration.

ACSO's vision "A community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and prison is truly the last resort" sets the foundation for our Reflect RAP, acknowledging the significant injustices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all criminal justice systems across Australia. Rates of police arrest, incarceration and deaths in custody show that Australia has so much more to do to respect and honour the outcomes of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Muirhead Commission). Tragically, as the 30th anniversary of the Muirhead Commission passed in 2021, another 489 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody since. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprise three per cent of the Australian population but make up 30 per cent of the national prisoner population and they are six times more likely to die in custody than non-indigenous people.

Our Reflect RAP forms a key outcome of ACSO's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and is aligned with our core values: passion, belief in humanity, integrity in all that we do and innovative spirit. It also identifies tangible measures of our commitment to make a difference in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. Our Reflect RAP will require ongoing and authentic conversations, which in turn will provide us with rich learnings into the future.

We would like to thank the Reconciliation Action Plan working group members whose wisdom has guided the development of this Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, along with input and suggestions by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, non-Indigenous employees, the ACSO Board and representatives of Reconciliation Australia. This plan outlines our journey towards reconciliation.



Karen Corry
ACSO Board Chair



Vaughan Winther
ACSO Chief Executive Officer

Our business

From the organic beginnings of our founder, Stan McCormack, ACSO has grown to be a long-term partner of choice for government and industry to help break the cycle of people repeatedly entering the justice system because they lack the support to make change.

There is enormous over representation of people serving life in prison in installments when other solutions such as housing, health or employment could be used as levers to change the course of their life and reduce the economic burden of the prison system and truly allow people to change their circumstance and behaviour.

Vision

ACSO's vision is for a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, and prison is truly a last resort.

ACSO exists to strengthen the wellbeing of communities by advocating for and delivering services which divert people away from the justice system.

Our people

ACSO employs over 440 people with approximately 20 vacant positions to be filled and 10 volunteers supporting our programs and program development. ACSO has a history of supporting volunteers, students and people with a lived experience of the justice system, some of whom have gained employment with ACSO.

Currently ACSO record such details of their staffing compliment at the recruitment stage, within our program. Our TechOne recruitment model also includes an opt-in capacity to disclose Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. Successful candidates attend an onboarding activity that asks them to fill in the diversity information that includes Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander status. This is also voluntary and legacy staff will soon be aware of systems capabilities with an information update campaign.

ACSO plan to develop an annual report on the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and develop a diversity in leadership strategy to not only recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the organisation but examine the gaps of inclusion and equity within the organisation's leadership roles.

Location

ACSO works across the states of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland in both metro and regional areas. ACSO's strategy unit is working towards becoming a national service provider by 2023.

As of July 2021, ACSO had 16 office locations, 10 residential houses and one social enterprise café. Furthermore, ACSO co-locates from several prison locations across Victoria and Queensland.

Our offices are in:

Richmond	Corrimal	Churchill	Port Phillip Prison
Sunshine	Shell Harbour	Long Gully	Barwon
Dandenong	Brisbane	Preston	Marrgoneet and Karrenga in Victoria and Woodford Correctional Centre
Bendigo	Ipswich	Armadale and Noble Park. The prison and parole locations that ACSO co-locate from include Melbourne Assessment Prison	Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre
Ballarat	Inala and Beenleigh. Our residential houses are in Bendigo	Melbourne Remand Centre	Wolston Correctional Centre
Warrnambool	Golden Square	Dame Phyllis Frost Centre	Brisbane Correctional Centre
Shepparton	Ormond	Fulham	and Palen Creek Correctional Centre in Queensland.
Wangaratta	Tarraville	Dhurringlie	
Traralgon	Coburg		
Bairnsdale			

Our RAP

ACSO understands that a history of irrevocable colonisation, systematic racism, genocide, familial displacement, and loss of country continues to contribute to intergenerational trauma and disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

We are committed to equality of access to services, client-centred planning and service delivery and a workplace free of discrimination that provides equitable and accountable structures and environment for all, something that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been fighting for long before ACSO was initiated.



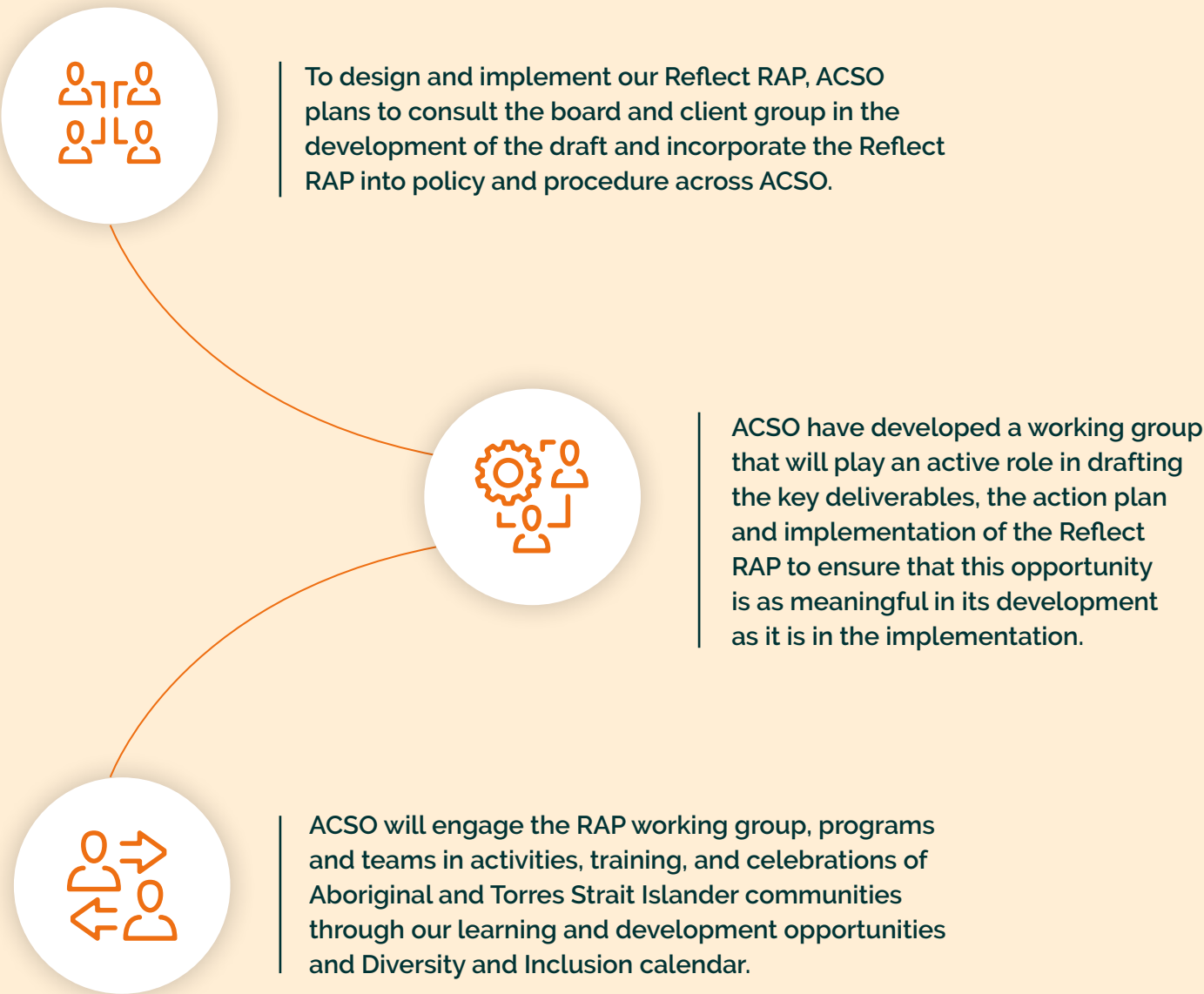
ACSO recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are arrested and placed into custody at disproportionate rates and the effects of this and the disproportionate deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody effects the entire community and contributes to systemic racism and oppression.

It is with this in mind that the organisation commits to developing a Reflect RAP to inform their future RAP's, community partnerships, client work and service impact. We also acknowledge that ACSO is the workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and creating a meaningful RAP is imperative to their happiness, safety, and wellbeing at the workplace.

The organisations reconciliation journey is just beginning. Thus far ACSO has created roles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work with community and consult with non-Aboriginal members of the organisation on care planning. Furthermore, ACSO have commissioned First Nation artists to develop a culturally appropriate logo, have a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency trainer, have in person and virtually celebrated NAIDOC week and recognised days of significance for over five years.



Design & implementation



ACSO first registered interest in developing a Reconciliation Action Plan in 2017 however, the draft plan was never submitted for conditional endorsement. Since that time, ACSO have committed to a three-year Diversity and Inclusion strategy to enhance the wellbeing of its people and enhance a meaningful client experience and have employed a Diversity and Inclusion Lead who will be responsible for multiple initiatives including the sustainable completion of ACSO's reconciliation plans. Our Diversity and Inclusion Lead has re-established the RAP working group and liaised with the CEO and senior management to commit to regular meetings that include client group representatives and, on occasion, the board.

RAP working group

The internal Reconciliation Action Plan working group / panel include:

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| Vaughan Winther – CEO, RAP Working Group Chair | Grant Harrop – Youth Development Coach, Transition to Work |
| Ainsley Aldridge – Client Representative | Anna Macklin – General Manager, Service Development and Impact |
| Larissa Daniel – Chief Strategy Officer | Fiona Boland – Client Services U, Team Leader |
| Claire Noone – RAP Champion, Diversity and Inclusion Lead | Tricia Powell – Family and Carer Program Worker |
| Aston Elliot – Program Manager, Forensic Assessment and Coordination | Karen Pearce – EA to CEO |
| Chanel Wright – Forensic Case Worker, CREST Services | |

Our partnerships/ current activities

Community partnerships

Tarina Fanning was contracted to deliver Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural sensitivity training to ACSO employees in March 2019.

Since that time, she has delivered 27 in person and virtual learning and development opportunities across Victoria, NSW and Queensland to 249 people and consulted on our branding refresh in 2020. ACSO values our ongoing partnership with Tarina Fanning Aboriginal Consultancy Training Services.

A service agreement with Gippsland East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative (GEGAC) AOD Service was established with ACSO in 2020, and as the needs of the service agreement grow, arrangements are being made to increase ACSO's presence to provide families and carers in Gippsland with resources and strategies to manage the substance use of a loved one.

ACSO will be supporting Warrigunya Inc to build an accommodation support service for Aboriginal men leaving prison on Gunaikurnai lands in Gippsland, Victoria. Once built, Warrigunya Inc will take on control of service delivery of culture and arts, training, employment, accommodation, and personal growth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men leaving prison. The service will provide accommodation for up to 12 men at a time.

Internal activities/initiatives

In 2020, ACSO committed to a three-year Diversity and Inclusion strategy to enhance the wellbeing of its people and enrich a meaningful client experience. ACSO have also employed a Diversity and Inclusion Lead until June 2023 who will be responsible for multiple initiatives including the sustainable completion of ACSO's co-designed Reconciliation Action Plan.

ACSO have since implemented an Inclusive Practice Champion group that consists of employees from across the organisation whose key function will be consulting on key deliverables in our Diversity and Inclusion strategy. The Inclusive Practice Champions will review resources and promote days of significance within the organisation to assist with community education, support and visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and how the justice system impacts those communities and the wellbeing of our team. Further to the Diversity and Inclusion strategy, the Diversity and Inclusion Lead will be implementing a Participation strategy that aims to leverage the lived experience of our client group to co-design, evaluate and recruit to our programs and services. As part of this strategy, there will be Torres Strait Islander and/or Aboriginal Identified positions within the Lived Experience Advisory Panel and ongoing advocacy opportunities.

Program staff within our CREST team have taken the initiative, with the support of our service design and strategy unit, to research, develop, trial, and evaluate a Cultural Enhancement Project. This project aims to utilise the informed consent model to work in a more culturally inclusive way. ACSO are being guided by community elders, a co-design panel with lived experience of the justice system, Queensland Corrective Services and Sunshine Coast University to begin implementing translated consent and privacy information that can be discussed as a collective, rather than completed on an individual basis.

Our Actions



01 Relationships



02 Respect



03 Opportunities



04 Governance





Action	Responsibility	Deliverable	Timeline
Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Chief Strategy Officer	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	July 2022
	Chief Strategy Officer	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	July 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Develop a partnership assessment tool that will assist ACSO in determining mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	May 2022
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	RAP working group members to participate in an external NRW event.	May 2022
	Chief Executive Officer	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May 2022
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Create an ACSO diversity and inclusion events management plan and calendar that outlines our commitment to acknowledge and celebrate key dates each year that support reconciliation and self-determination.	September 2022
	Chief Executive Officer	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	June 2022
	Chief Strategy Officer	Identify RAPs and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	July 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	July 2022
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	General Manager, Service Development, and Impact	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	August 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	July 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Develop a training package on unconscious bias in recruitment and people management.	May 2022



Action	Responsibility	Deliverable	Timeline
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Chief Strategy Officer	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights within our organisation.	September 2022
	Learning and Development Lead	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	August 2023
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Make additions to clinical supervision template that facilitates reflections on culturally responsive and inclusive practice to support practitioners critically reflect on their own cultural learning.	January 2023
	Learning and Development Lead	Provide and communicate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence training package to all employees.	August 2022
Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	March 2023
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	December 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Organise to have Acknowledgment of Country plaques at every ACSO site.	August 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Organise for a Traditional Owner or Custodian to perform a smoking ceremony for every new ACSO site.	August 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Develop an acknowledgment resources and guides to strengthen positive intent when observing cultural protocols.	August 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Each hub and residential house complete an inclusive checklist every three months or more to ensure that each ACSO location has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander map and Acknowledgment of Country Plaque visible and undamaged.	August 2022
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	July 2023
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	First week in July 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	RAP working group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2022



Action	Responsibility	Deliverable	Timeline
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	People and Culture Manager	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	September 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Develop an Inclusion and Equity policy that supports the access and equitable opportunity for employees and clients.	August 2022
	People and Culture Manager	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	July 2022
	People and Culture Manager	Annual reporting on the recruitment and retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees compared with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	August 2022
	People and Culture Manager	Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees with access to 10 days cultural leave in any period of two years for cultural, ceremonial and NAIDOC purposes. This is reflected in ACSO's leave policy	August 2022
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	General Manager – Finance	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	July 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	November 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	All hub and residential locations to display artwork commissioned by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.	January 2023
Improve service delivery by supporting inclusivity.	Chief Strategy Officer	Review service design model to prompt inclusivity throughout.	December 2022
	Chief Executive Officer	ACSO CEO and senior leaders to explore the change the date initiative, create and communicate a plan to do so.	December 2022



Action	Responsibility	Deliverable	Timeline
Establish and maintain an effective RAP working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	May 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	May 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	May 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Continue to promote the RAP Working Group across various internal communication mediums to foster Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee involvement throughout our RAP journey.	June 2022
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2022
	Chief Executive Officer	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	June 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	June 2022
Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, 2022
Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Diversity and Inclusion Lead	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	June 2023

Contact details



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