

# Innovate

## Reconciliation Action Plan

September 2022–August 2024





## Artwork

*The cover artwork depicts women in our homes and how everything around them are connected. The journey at the bottom shows the story of where we have lived along the way, and the women around us at that time. Our connection with our ancestors and history is shown above the women, connected to them both.*

Artwork and graphic design by Reanna Bono, *Wemba Wemba and Wiradjuri*.

As an Graphic Designer, Reanna has focused her career on Aboriginal design. This has given her the opportunity to create her own digital Aboriginal designs, allowing her to connect with her culture, while telling a story in a new way in this digital age that we now live in.



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## Acknowledgment

Women's Housing Limited (WHL) acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which our corporate office is located. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We also recognise the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters of other lands of the Kulin Nation and of all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations. We acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal Victorians, their communities and cultures, and the intrinsic connection of Traditional Owners to Country. Their sovereignty has never been ceded.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination is a human right, enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are committed to self-determination and to working towards a future where there is equality, justice, and strength for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Victorian Traditional Owners have practised their laws, customs and languages, and nurtured Country through their spiritual, cultural, material and economic connections to land, water and resources. Through the strength, resilience and pride of Aboriginal Victorians, their cultures, communities and economies endure and continue to grow and thrive today.

Aboriginal Victorians have long called for Treaty. The First People's Assembly is made up of proud Aboriginal leaders. All are Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria and are elected and appointed by their communities. The Assembly is working with the Victorian Government to create the Treaty Negotiation Framework. In August 2022 landmark legislation provided for establishment of the Treaty Authority that will act as an independent umpire to oversee treaty negotiations between traditional owner groups and the Victorian Government. Next steps are the Treaty Negotiation Framework and the model for a self-determination fund to support traditional owners to enter negotiations with Government.

The Assembly agreed that truth-telling must be a fundamental part of Treaty-making. As a result, the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission was formally established by the Government in May 2021. The mandate and form of the Commission were designed by the Assembly and the Government, based on consultations with Aboriginal communities across Victoria. Yoo-rrook will establish an official public record of the impact of colonisation on First Peoples in Victoria, as well as make recommendations for practical actions and reforms needed to acknowledge historical injustices and address ongoing injustices.

The First People's Assembly and Yoo-rrook inspire our work and provide context for the WHL Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) as it evolves over coming years.





## Our Vision for Reconciliation

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families will have culturally safe, secure, affordable housing choices.

## Our Principles

Safe and secure housing is a right afforded to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families

Service provision will be culturally safe and accessible to all women

Self-determination, respect and dignity underpins all service activities

A feminist philosophical framework that acknowledges the need for gender specific housing

Collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders on issues of strategic importance to homeless women

Transparent accountability in effective and efficient organisations

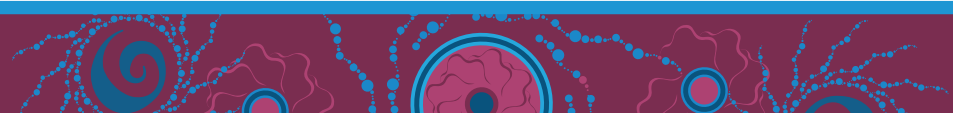
Commitment to continuous quality improvement

## Our commitment to reconciliation and self-determination

To support reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, WHL will prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, address trauma and support healing, address racism and promote cultural safety, and work to strengthen power and resources in communities.

Our commitment to reconciliation grows from our Vision and Principles and is embedded in our:

- Respect for the cultures and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Work to stop direct or indirect discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Understanding of and commitment to supporting self determination
- Commitment to delivering services that are culturally safe, effective and appropriate
- Provision of opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses
- Accountability, transparency and honesty within our organisation and with our partners, clients and communities.



# Messages from the Board Chair and CEO

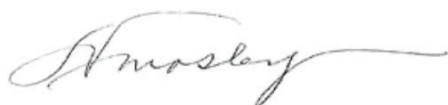
Women's Housing Limited (WHL) is proud of our journey toward reconciliation. Through the initiatives outlined in our *Innovate* Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), we will continue to develop our important and collaborative work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, partners and communities.

Most importantly we are committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children who are seeking housing and homelessness support feel welcome and are confident that our services are culturally safe.

Our *Innovate* RAP focuses on our vision for reconciliation. This vision is built upon WHL's proud history of providing housing for women and children at risk of homelessness. Our specialist expertise in the provision of community-based gender specific transitional housing has developed over the years as we have expanded our accommodation options to include long term housing and have also implemented support programs that provide the assistance needed to achieve successful, sustainable housing outcomes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's voices and experiences are central to how we ensure that our housing is culturally appropriate and provides a platform for lifelong aspirations.

Our commitment is that together we will achieve our vision of culturally safe, secure, affordable housing choices for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.



**Valerie Mosley**  
Board Chair



**Judy Line**  
Chief Executive Officer



## Reconciliation Australia CEO Statement

Reconciliation Australia commends Women's Housing Limited 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, thought-ful, 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 Women's Housing Limited to ex-pand 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, Women's Housing Limited 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.

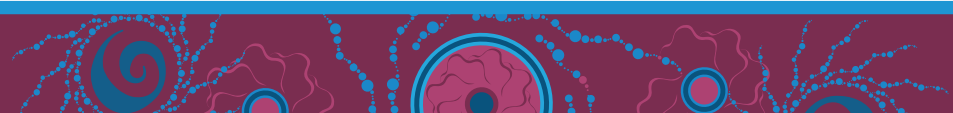
With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Women's Housing Limited is part of a strong network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Women's Housing Limited'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 Women's Housing Limited on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine  
Chief Executive Officer, Reconciliation Australia



Women's Housing Limited (WHL) is a not-for-profit organisation that provides low-cost housing to women at risk of homelessness in Victoria. We are registered with the Victorian Housing Registrar as a Housing Association.

Our office is located at 21 Cremorne St, Cremorne Victoria. The Wurundjeri people are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which our office sits.

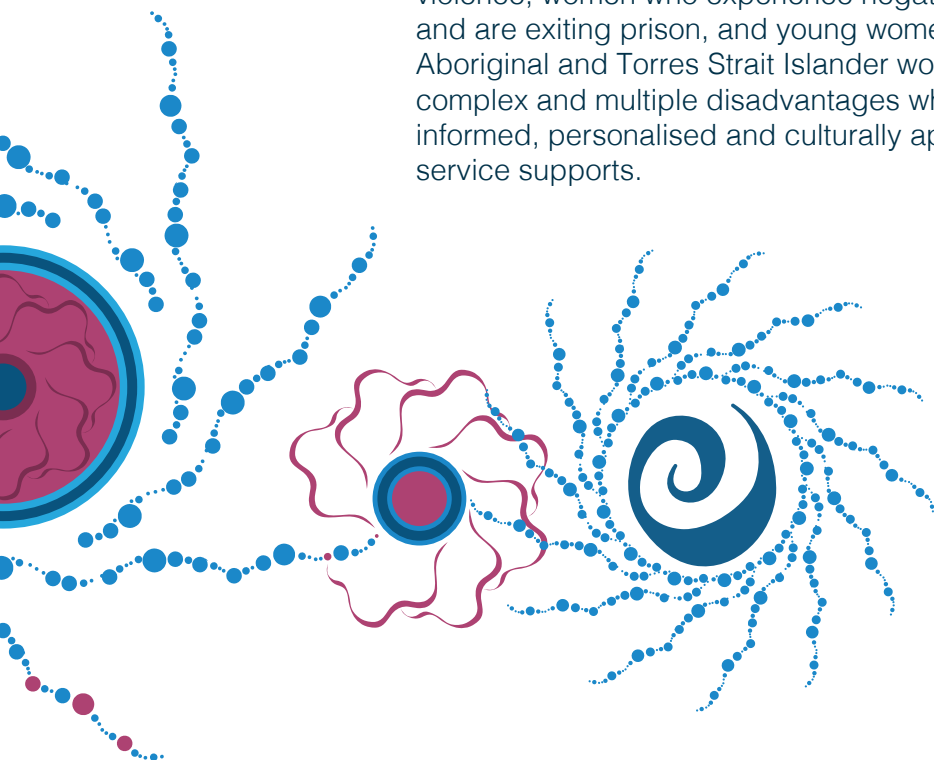
WHL has an outstanding record of meeting women's housing needs. Since our establishment in 1997, we have been listening to and validating women's experiences, and acting as their voice in the housing sector.

We are committed to a fair, just and inclusive society and consistently work to address the main drivers of social exclusion: poverty; unemployment; mental health issues; poor educational outcomes; poor health and wellbeing; lack of access to social supports; exclusion from services and discrimination.

We go beyond providing women with somewhere to live. We know that successful housing outcomes require a deep understanding of the drivers of women's homelessness and housing stress. Service support is a key ingredient of the successful housing outcomes that together with our tenants we achieve.

Women and their children make up an increasingly large percentage of those in need of social and affordable housing. Women who are most likely to experience housing stress include women over 55 and women and children who are forced to leave their home because of family violence.

The impact of colonisation and dispossession has resulted in far greater housing stress amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. This stress is experienced by groups including older women, single mothers, victims of family violence, women who experience negative contact with the justice system and are exiting prison, and young women exiting the child protection system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are also more likely to experience complex and multiple disadvantages which require carefully crafted, trauma informed, personalised and culturally appropriate housing access, provision and service supports.





Nationally, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data show that:

- Indigenous men and women were 8 and 12 times, respectively, more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to be homeless. Although nationally the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were homeless has fallen between 2006 and 2016, increases were observed in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory over the period.
- In 2017–18, 25,100 males and 40,100 females assisted by Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) identified as Indigenous. The rate of service use for Indigenous males (602 per 10,000 population) was lower than for Indigenous females, (1,003). Compared with non-Indigenous clients the rate for Indigenous males was 8.7 times higher than the rate of non-Indigenous males and for Indigenous females, 9.8 times higher than the rate of non-Indigenous females.<sup>1</sup>

In 2018 17% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria sought assistance from a homeless service:

- 44% were already homeless and the remainder were at risk of homelessness.
- Those in need of a homeless service has grown by 34 percent in 4 years.
- 10 percent of homeless Victorians are Aboriginal.
- If the mainstream sought homeless assistance at the same rate this would be equivalent to more than 1 million people.<sup>2</sup>

This over-representation plays out in our Women's Services Program which over the last two years has assisted more than 1450 clients. Of these, 183 (12%) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Other areas of our service structure have highlighted the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the criminal justice and prison systems. Between 2009-10 and 2019-20 the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women entering prison each year rose by 321%, while the number of unsentenced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women surpassed 440%. Housing instability is common among women entering prison on remand and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were less likely to be in stable housing than non-Indigenous women.<sup>3</sup>

WHL is committed to providing a culturally safe environment for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women feel welcome when they approach our organisation, knowing that our housing and support services meet their needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness, AIHW, pp 49, 50, 56. 'Indig-enous' is used rather than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander where that terminology is used in the source data.

<sup>2</sup> Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort, The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, 2020

<sup>3</sup> 'Women in the Victorian Prison System, Department of Justice and Community Safety 2019



Since becoming a Housing Association in 2018, WHL has significantly expanded and diversified its housing portfolio and housing development capacity. We have both the capacity and experience to deliver large-scale housing projects aimed at meeting the ever-growing demand.

WHL will continue to advocate for the housing needs of women and children and the growth of affordable housing stock. We will ensure that our housing is culturally safe and welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

WHL provides additional services including:

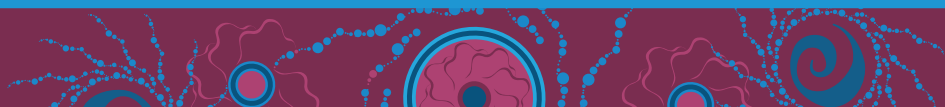
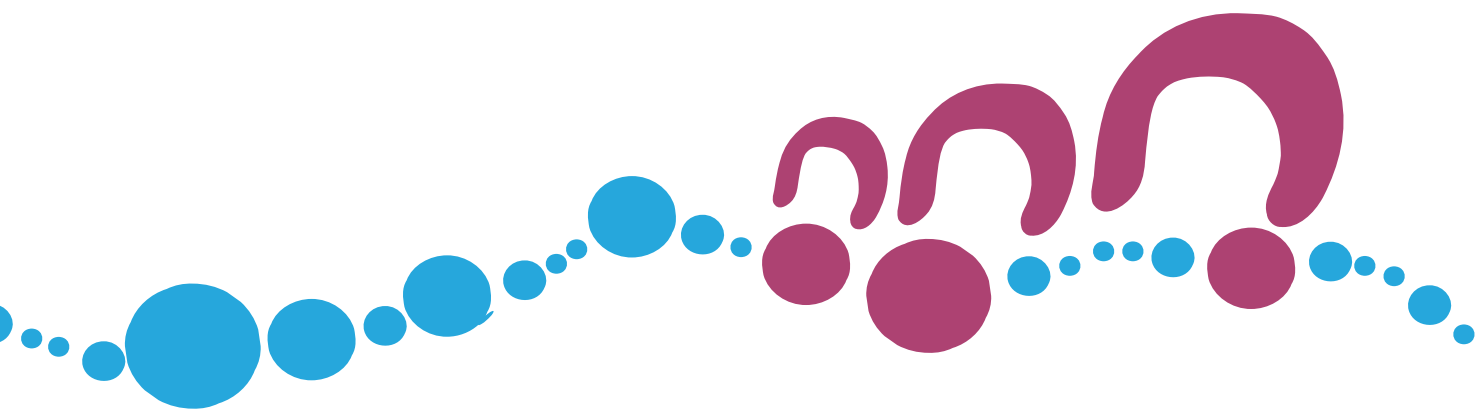
- Intake and assessment services for homeless women.
- Distributing Housing Establishment Funds to assist women experiencing a housing crisis.
- Housing assistance and referral to women exiting prison.
- Women's Justice Diversion Program.

WHL already has memorandums of understanding and working relationships with several agencies that provide housing and other support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

We aim to extend and deepen our relationships with these and other agencies to ensure that our work is culturally safe and informed by genuine collaboration.

As an employer, WHL is relatively modest in size, currently employing around 20 people with a full time equivalent of 14.2. Currently none of our staff members identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

As a part of this *Innovate* RAP, WHL will implement a range of initiatives to promote the employment and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples within WHL. We will measure the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and our RAP Working Group will evaluate our progress annually.





Our Innovate RAP establishes and advances our commitment to improved and sustained housing and homelessness outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

This Innovate RAP sets out our plan to develop respectful and equal relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and initiate more powerful strategies for meaningful change in the women's housing sector. We will thoroughly examine all our policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they are culturally safe, regularly monitor our outcomes and develop relationships that build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic and social capacity.

The WHL reconciliation journey is genuine. We have established:

- An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation Policy.
- Ongoing Cultural Safety training for the Board and staff.
- An internal Diversity Working Group and Strategy.
- A WHL Advisory Group which provides a voice for clients and renters.

We will build on our considerable strengths and experience as a provider of housing for women at risk of homelessness as we work through our journey to reconciliation. Respect for self-determination is our starting point.

Our growing housing portfolio development over recent years has also enabled us to reflect upon the possibilities for preferred procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and the RAP will consolidate this aspect of WHL business.

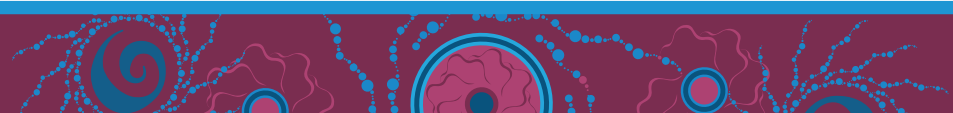
We will tackle our RAP systematically as we work to achieve our short to medium term objectives and our long-term vision.

## RAP Context

Our RAP is developed in the context of the strong and formalised partnership that the Aboriginal community has with the Victorian Government. Self-determination is the starting point for that partnership.

**Self-determination** is the guiding principle for the relationship between the Victorian Government, local Aboriginal community and the mainstream service sector. Aboriginal people must be at the heart of the decision making that affects their lives. To bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination to reality WHL is committed to progressing self-determination as it develops and implements its RAP. We recognise the need to prioritise culture, address trauma and support healing, address racism and promote cultural safety and to strengthen power and resources in communities.

**The partnership between the local Aboriginal community and the Victorian Government** is expressed in a series of inter-related policy frameworks that embed self-determination and commit to actions to improve outcomes across a range of priority areas. We respect these partnership arrangements and are guided by them.





The following frameworks directly guide how WHL will enact its RAP.

- a. **Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort, The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework**, developed by the local Aboriginal community, for the community and agreed by Government, provides a twenty-year agenda to bring Aboriginal housing outcomes up to at least those experienced by the general community.

The Framework forecasts that Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households will grow from 23,000 to 50,000 by 2036. Victorian Aboriginal people access homelessness services at the highest rate in the nation and more than 1 in 5 Aboriginal households are seeking social housing. Aboriginal women are unduly burdened by this housing stress.

To merely maintain housing at current levels will require an increase in social housing units of 5035 by 2036. All parts of the housing system will need to actively provide housing for Aboriginal people if we are to achieve fairer and more equitable housing outcomes.

Amongst its objectives, **Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort** aims to achieve a capable system that delivers Aboriginal housing needs, including a culturally safe mainstream housing and homelessness system and a system based on partnership between local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and mainstream housing and homelessness agencies.

In response to the Framework recommendations, the Community Housing Industry Association, Victoria (CHIAVic) has developed the Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework (2020) as a tool to assist community housing providers to work toward Aboriginal cultural safety.

- b. **Dhelk Dja - Safe Our Way: Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families** is an Aboriginal led agreement with the Victorian Government to address family violence in Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Dhelk Dja is clear that:

*"Family violence has a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal people, particularly women and children; and responses need to ensure there is a strength based and gender-informed approach for people who experience and use violence. Aboriginal people's experience of family violence is compounded by other factors deeply rooted in the impacts of invasion and violent dispossession of land, culture and children, with trauma accumulating across generations. It is important to have appropriate responses to address*





*the impact of family violence on all Aboriginal people, including children, women and men. The policies, social norms, structures and systems of today continue to create social conditions that result in some having power and privilege and others experiencing discrimination, racism and oppression. This shapes the ways in which people experience inequality, disadvantage and violence. Aboriginal people also experience intersectional forms of inequality and discrimination relating to culture, gender identity, sexuality, ability, spirituality, age and class. Intersectional discrimination creates additional barriers to accessing services and compounds experiences of exclusion, power imbalance, control and violence.” Djelk Dja p25*

Djelk Dja ensures that Aboriginal peoples lead in providing family violence support services, prevention programs, and other innovations that are culturally safe and underpinned by Aboriginal informed design and research. It takes a strengths-based, gender informed approach that provides the building blocks for preventing, responding to and healing from family violence.

**c. Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja, the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA)**

**Phase 4** is a long-term partnership between the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the Victorian Government. Each phase of the AJA has built upon its predecessors to further improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja recognises that the experiences of Aboriginal people involved in the criminal justice system not only negatively affect the individuals involved but significantly impact on their families and the communities to which they belong.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Victoria are a fast-growing cohort of prisoners with a high number of repeat offenders.

There is a complex relationship between family violence, child removal, criminal offending and ongoing engagement with the justice system. A growing number of Aboriginal children are experiencing increased exposure to offending risk factors. Eighty-seven (87) % of all Aboriginal women in custody are survivors of sexual, physical or emotional abuse with most having suffered abuse in multiple forms.<sup>4</sup>

Homelessness and sub-standard and inadequate housing impact on incarceration rates and barriers to gaining employment and housing are two of the greatest risks to successful reintegration into the community.

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<sup>4</sup> Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4, page 21





- d. **Korin Korin Balit-Djak** the Victorian Government's Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2017-2027) provides an overarching framework for action to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians now and over the next 10 years. The purpose of the strategy is to realise the vision for 'Self-determining, healthy and safe Aboriginal people and communities in Victoria'. It commits to providing support and transitional help to those leaving the justice system, prioritising the needs of young Aboriginal people leaving out of home care, expanding housing and homelessness services for Aboriginal people and culturally informed drug and alcohol treatment services.
- e. **Uluru Statement from the Heart.** While the practical concerns of the Uluru Statement about an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice to Federal Parliament are well beyond the core business of WHL, the spirit of the statement about truth-telling, justice and self-determination will inform our RAP process.

WHL will work within these established frameworks to guide our work so that we are better able to deliver outcomes that make substantial inroads into the housing stress that far too many Aboriginal women experience. WHL is committed to learning from Aboriginal people, communities and organisations and forming partnerships that will strengthen our knowledge and our housing and service support in an environment of continuous growth and learning.



WHL will continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to achieve sustained culturally appropriate outcomes. Our Housing Outreach Programs are an example. We work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre to create housing and support exit plans, referral pathways and housing options that are culturally safe and inclusive. One of the program's objectives is to improve the housing, support and criminalisation outcomes for Aboriginal women to reduce their over-representation in prison. The Outreach Team have specific referral pathways with legal and support agencies that work with Aboriginal women to ensure that their clients have access to our programs.



## Board leadership and commitment

WHL'S governing board is fully committed to our Reconciliation Action Plan.

A **WHL RAP Working Group** has been established. The RAP Working Group is chaired and supported by Jenny Samms who is a former CEO of Aboriginal Housing Victoria and has led the development of major reforms of Aboriginal housing and homelessness in Victoria.

We are also fortunate that Professor Jacinta Elston has agreed to join and advise us.

Jacinta is a highly regarded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leader with particular expertise in health and higher education and is a major contributor to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, research and policy development.

She is greatly respected for the unique and informed perspective she brings to mainstream Australian affairs, issues and conversations.

The full membership is as follows

### WHL RAP Working Group

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Jenny Samms (Chair) | Advocate and consultant                     |
| • Valerie Mosley      | Chair of WHL Board                          |
| • Erica Edmands       | WHL Board member/ RAP Champion              |
| • Jacinta Elston      | Indigenous Strategic Adviser                |
| • Judy Line           | CEO, Women's Housing Limited                |
| • Lindy Parker        | WHL Operations Manager                      |
| • Paul Ryan           | WHL Asset & Development Manager             |
| • Sarah Sheppard      | WHL Women's Services Manager/ RAP Champion  |
| • Laura Tucker        | WHL Policy and Project Officer/RAP Champion |
| • Lena Tomkinson      | Executive Support                           |
| • Chris Arnold        | Policy Research & Writer                    |

The breadth and substance of these positions is indicative of WHL's strong commitment to the RAP.

The RAP Champions group consists of a representative from the WHL Board, the Women's Services Manager and the Policy and Project Officer., They will reinforce the continuing forward movement of the RAP and, among other things, will strive to ensure that the Group receives adequate resources to achieve its aims.

The ongoing developmental and strategic tasks of the RAP Working Group will also be supported by external consultants working on an as needs basis.



The **WHL Women's Advisory Group** (WAG) provides advice on WHL service delivery, allowing renters' voices to be heard in the operation of the organisation. This group will include at least two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members.

The Group's role is to:

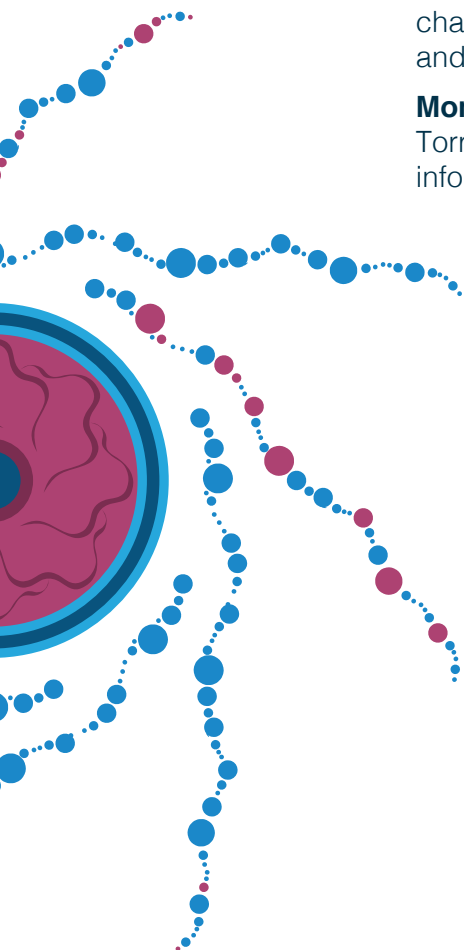
- Provide advice on policies and procedures that impact service delivery to renters.
- Provide advice on and assist with planning and development of service provision for renters.
- Explore opportunities for sharing of ideas.
- Provide guidance on communication strategies.
- Provide particular advice on how the RAP can be implemented to provide the most benefit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander renters and clients.

**Strategic and business planning** – we will embed the RAP in strategic and business planning.

**Internal Policies, Procedures and Practices** – we are working through all our policies, procedures and processes to ensure they are culturally safe.

**Partnerships and relationships** - the RAP will drive ongoing consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisational policy changes, professional partnerships, staff training, and more internal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and involvement at all levels.

**Monitoring and Continuous Improvement-** feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and stakeholders is integral to the project and will inform the RAP. In turn the RAP will inform stakeholders.





The RAP *Innovate* Action Plan sets out the actions that WHL will take to redefine how we work and partner with and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges, and cultures will inform our organisation and improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. We are proud to embark on this journey.

## Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

September 2022– August 2024

### Relationships

Women's Housing, as a provider of women's services and housing to women at risk of homelessness, has recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are under-represented within our client population compared to their comparative need.

Turning this around starts with strong and respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

As an organisation we need to be more culturally aware and better informed. We need to build genuine, strong and effective partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, in particular those who provide housing, homelessness services and family violence support, and we need to hear the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and hear directly from them about their housing needs.

	Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
Relationships	1.1 Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify and document Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence that may connect with WHL on our reconciliation journey.	RAP Working Group Chair	Sept 2022
		Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement	Operations Manager	March 2023
		Develop and implement an engagement plan that explores the various ways in which WHL can engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, organisations and communities	Policy & Project Officer	March 2023





## Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
<b>1.2</b> Build relationships through celebrating and participating in National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	RAP Champion(s)	27 May – 3 June 2023, 2024
	Register all WHL NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	Executive Assistant	April – 2023, 2024
	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to WHL staff, board members and volunteers.	RAP Champion(s)	27 May – 3 June 2023, 2024
	Ensure the WHL RAP Working Group members participate in an external NRW event.	RAP Working Group Chair	27 May – 3 June 2023, 2024
	Encourage and support WHL staff and board members to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	RAP Working Group Chair	27 May – 3 June 2023, 2024
<b>1.3</b> Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	Collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation. (e.g., community housing providers; family violence and justice services)	CEO & Operations Manager	Sept 2023
	Identify opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes	CEO	June 2023
	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce	Operations Manager	Dec 2022
	Publicise the RAP and publicly communicate our commitment to our reconciliation journey.	CEO & Operations Manager	Dec 2022 Dec 2023
	Publish a public statement and logos on our website about WHL's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, rights, and reconciliation.	Executive Support	Dec 2022
	Review all WHL policies and operations to ensure that they are culturally safe.	Operations Manager	August 2024





## Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
<b>1.4</b> Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and advisors to develop, implement and communicate a WHL anti-discrimination policy.	Operations Manager	Sept 2023
	Develop, implement and communicate an anti discrimination strategy for our organisation.	RAP Working Group Chair and RAP Champions	August 2023 August 2024
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	RAP Working Group Chair and RAP Champions	August 2023 August 2024
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	Operations Manager	August 2024

## Respect

We commit to promoting and encouraging a culturally safe workplace that respects, acknowledges and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories and cultures.

We believe it is important for all to understand the histories and context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. We must also publicly acknowledge these histories. This is a critical step towards reconciliation

To deliver high quality and culturally appropriate services in local communities, we must develop an understanding and respect of and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, and histories.

We aim to ensure that as an organisation, respect is reflected in the language we use, the actions we take and the work we do.

## Respect

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
<b>2.1</b> Promote Cultural Safety across all WHL operations	Develop and implement a detailed plan to integrate the CHIA Vic Community Housing Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework across all WHL operations and activities, to systematically work through all aspects our business to ensure a culturally safe and welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	RAP Working Group Chair	Dec 2023
	Invite prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to advise WHL on the development and implementation of our Cultural Safety Plan.	CEO	Jan 2023
	Organise for all staff and Board Directors to attend relevant Cultural Safety training delivered by a recognized and respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander company.	Operations Manager	March 2023 March 2024

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
<b>2.2</b> Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy.	CEO	July 2023
	Conduct an internal review of cultural learning needs.	RAP Working Group Chair/RAP Champions	Feb 2023
	Develop and implement a cultural learning strategy for our staff.	RAP Working Group Chair/ Operations Manager	Dec 2023
	Ensure that all WHL staff are provided with learning resources and training opportunities to develop awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements with a particular emphasis on cultures and practices of Traditional Owner groups in the areas that WHL operates.	Operations Manager	March 2023
	Provide culturally specific leadership training opportunities for the RAP Working Group, senior management team and Board members.	CEO/Operations Manager	March 2023
	Provide support for on-going cultural awareness and safety within team meetings.	Operations Manager	Jan 2023
<b>2.3</b> Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	RAP Champions	Sept 2022
	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	RAP Champions	July 2022
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	CEO	Sept 2022
	Include an Acknowledgement to Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	CEO	Sept 2022



## Respect

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
<b>2.4</b> Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	Ensure RAP Working Group participates in at least one external local NAIDOC Week event.	RAP Working Group Chair	First week in July 2023, 2024
	Host an internal NAIDOC Week event.	CEO/RAP Working Group Chair	First week in July 2023, 2024
	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to and support and encourage all staff to participate in NAIDOC week.	Operations Manager	Jan 2023
	Distribute information amongst all staff and tenants about NAIDOC Week and encourage staff to participate.	RAP Champions	June 2023, 2024
<b>2.5</b> Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by supporting and promoting the Uluru Statement from the Heart	The RAP Working Group will research ways in which the Uluru Statement from the Heart can be promoted within the sphere of WHL activity.	RAP Working Group Chair/Policy & Project Officer	Sept 2023
	The RAP Champions will invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to speak at WHL events about the Uluru Statement from the Heart.	RAP Champions	Sept 2023
	With the appropriate permissions, the Uluru Statement from the Heart will be placed on the WHL website and displayed within WHL offices.	Operations Manager/Executive Assistant	Nov 2022
	Distribute information amongst all staff and tenants about the Uluru Statement from the Heart.	RAP Champions	Sept 2023

## Opportunities

We recognise and value the diverse and extensive knowledge, skills and experiences Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees can bring to WHL. We also recognise the absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in our organisation. We aim to increase opportunities for professional and personal development. We are committed to setting greater targets for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.

Opportunities	Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
	3.1 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace to improve employment outcomes.	Operations Manager	April 2023
		Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	Operations Manager	Sept 2023
		Develop and actively support recruitment, career development and career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.	Operations Manager	August 2024
		Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workplace	Operations Manager	August 2024
		Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	Operations Manager	April 2023
		Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	Operations Manager	July 2023
		Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	RAP Working Group Chair/ Operations Manager	Aug 2024
		Conduct annual review of recruitment and career development activities to analyse the participation level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants and the outcomes	Operations Manager	Aug 2023, 2024



## Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
<b>3.2</b> Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop, communicate and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy including promoting opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	CEO/Asset and Development Manager	Sept 2023
	Remove internal barriers to procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers and businesses.	CEO/Asset and Development Manager	Jan 2024
	Provide opportunities for procurement, from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	CEO/Asset and Development Manager	Jan 2024
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	CEO/Asset and Development Manager	Mar 2024
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	Operations Manager	Feb 2024
	Rewrite WHL's Aboriginal Participation Policy to incorporate provisions about procurement and the RAP.	RAP Working Group Chair	March 2023
	Work with Supply Nation to establish membership and procurement opportunities.	CEO/ Asset and Development Manager	Feb 2024
<b>3.3</b> Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to culturally safe housing	Consult and involve Aboriginal community members in the design and maintenance of WHL housing.	Asset and Development Manager	Feb 2024
	Incorporate Aboriginal design principles into WHL new housing builds.	Asset and Development Manager	Feb 2024
	Align housing maintenance policies and operations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family and cultural needs.	Asset and Development Manager	Feb 2024
	Partner with contractors with strong cultural safety frameworks that underpin their practice when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.	Asset and Development Manager	Feb 2024
	Provide induction materials and ongoing education for staff and subcontractors on cultural safety when conducting inspections and maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.	Asset and Development Manager	Feb 2024

## Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
<b>3.3</b> Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to culturally safe housing (continued)	Research and develop opportunities for collaborative projects between WHL and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations	Operations Manager	July 2023
	Develop a complaints policy and procedure that is accessible, appropriate and flexible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander renters.	Operations Manager	Sept 2023

## Governance

Sound governance structures with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation and input is fundamental to WHL's achievement of its reconciliation vision.

We have developed a RAP Group with a wide and deep membership and skills.

## Governance

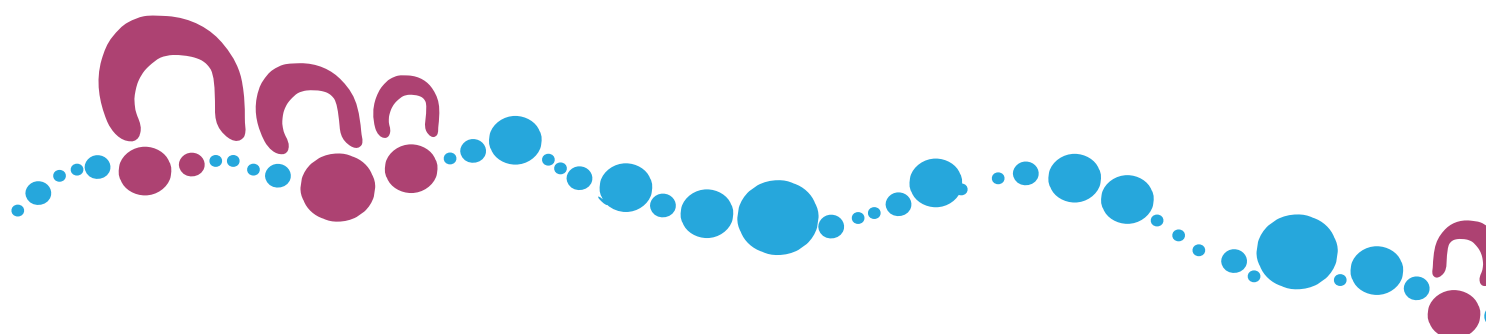
Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
<b>4.1</b> Establish and maintain a WHL RAP Working Group to oversee and drive the RAP goals and objectives	Maintain an internal RAP Working Group (RWG) to initiate development of WHL RAP and govern implementation.	CEO/Operations Manager	August 2024
	Establish the RWG as a Board Committee with Board representation.	CEO/Board	October 2022
	Ensure the RAP Working Group has the support and involvement of the WHL Board and the Operations Management Group (OMG).	CEO/Board/OMG	Dec 2022
	Establish and apply Terms of Reference for the RWG.	RAP Working Group Chair	October 2022
	RWG to meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	RAP Working Group Chair	Sept, Dec 2022 March, June, Sept, Dec 2023 March, June 2024
	Develop and maintain strong representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the RAP Working Group together with employees and community members.	CEO/RAP Working Group Chair	Aug 2023 Aug 2024

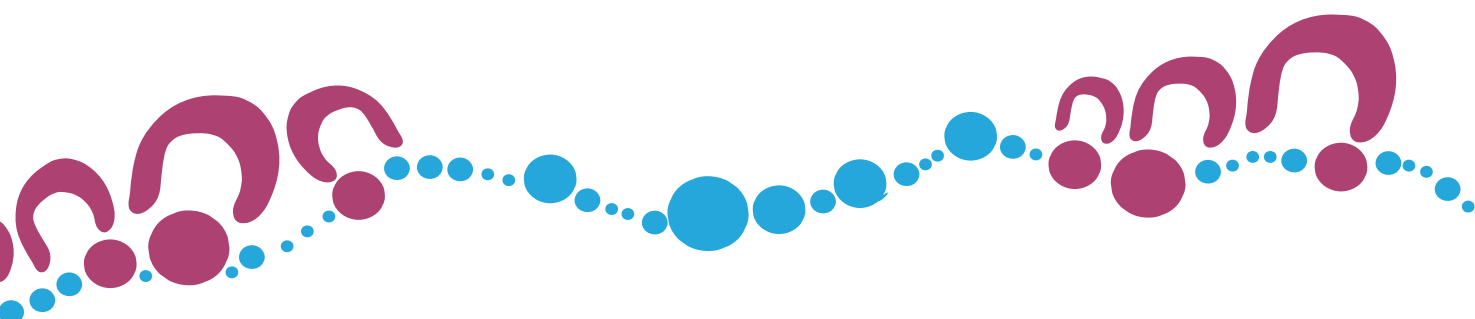


## Governance

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
4.2 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	RAP Working Group Chair CEO/CFO/Board	Nov 2022
	Implement best practice in engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and groups that can provide guidance on the WHL RAP implementation.	RAP Working Group Chair	Jan 2023
	Provide appropriate support – financial and otherwise – to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to the WHL RAP.	CEO/CFO/Board	Dec 2022
	Engage senior managers and Board members in the delivery of RAP commitments and the provision of adequate resources.	CEO/CFO/Board	Nov 2022
	Maintain RAP Champions from within the organisation, including senior management and the Board, to influence and drive implementation of the RAP.	CEO/RAP Working Group Chair	Aug 2024
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Policy & Project Officer	March 2023
	Integrate RAP actions into strategic, business and performance planning and monitoring and evaluation.	CEO	June 2023
	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.	RAP Working Group Chair	June 2023, 2024
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	RAP Working Group Chair	1 Aug 2023, 2024
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	CEO	Aug 2024

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
<b>4.3</b> Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	RAP Working Group Chair	Sept 2023, 2024
	Review and report RAP progress to all staff, managers and Board members every three months.	RAP Champions	Dec 2022 March, June, Sept, Dec 2023 March, June 2024
	Publicly report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings annually.	CEO	Dec 2023, 2024
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	Operations Manager	April 2023
<b>4.4</b> Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	Operations Manager	March 2024





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