



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN
INNOVATE



UNITING
COMMUNITIES

JUN 2020 – MAY 2022



ABOUT THE ARTIST

The artwork for Uniting Communities Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan titled 'The Coorong' was completed by Ngarrindjeri – Kurna – Yunkanytjajara Allan Sumner.

It symbolises that reconciliation begins by recognising we are all in this together. Allan's painting reminds us that reconciliation occurs when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people meet and develop respectful relationships.

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OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

Uniting Communities builds compassionate communities and great lives for all who are part of our South Australian communities. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as significant members of that community, together we will work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to overcome racism and disadvantage by embracing diversity, valuing fairness and pursuing justice. This will be attained when we acknowledge and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enduring relationship with the land and value the opportunity to learn from our histories.

To do this:

We will understand and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to fulfil their goals. We will develop and implement a strong cultural safety policy which supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers.

By bringing the values and principles of reconciliation into Uniting Communities we will be in a better position to offer an opportunity to empower and mentor young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers into leaders and into leadership roles.

Supporting Statements

Uniting Communities acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians, occupying this country thousands of years before colonisation. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the past, present and future are the Traditional Custodians of this land. We respect the enduring spiritual relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies have with the land and sea. We accept this relationship is important to the physical, psychological and spiritual health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise that the knowledge, language and customs of First Australians passed down through generations continues to be an important and central part of the Australian heritage

At Uniting Communities we that acknowledge that past wrongful policies and practices by the Australian Government and Churches, including the Uniting Church, resulted in disempowerment and disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It caused intergenerational trauma that continues to impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and ongoing discrimination resulting in the dispossession of lands, children and kin, languages and cultural identity.

On this basis, Uniting Communities hopes that through it vision for reconciliation it can assist;

- in promoting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to control their destinies through self-determination and achieve greater healing and justice
- achieve stronger recognition of the diversity and significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories within Uniting Communities and the broader South Australian community
- in keeping with Uniting Communities Core Values and the values of the Uniting Church assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples overcome disadvantage and marginalisation through better access to culturally appropriate community services
- achieve stronger relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- continue to strengthen collaboration and consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in relation to delivering cultural appropriate community services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

OUR BUSINESS

Uniting Communities is a significant not-for-profit community service and social justice organisation within South Australia with over 900 staff and 600 volunteers. It offers multi-dimensional services across the State that includes community support services, health services, financial counselling, youth services, aged care and mental health services, relationships counselling, legal and disability support services.

With strong values, vision, a committed staff and volunteer group, Uniting Communities enhances the lives of many through community strengthening, quality service delivery and advocacy.

We provide social services from 20 rural sites and 47 metropolitan Adelaide sites. We currently employ 23 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within our organisation.

Our purpose is to build strong and supporting communities and help people realise their potential and live the best life they can.

Our strategic objectives stretch from 2018 to 2022 and includes;

- To ensure our customers experience the best service possible
- To impact on social policy to improve wellbeing and reduce inequality
- To improve the mental fitness and wellbeing of the communities and customers we serve and for all Uniting Communities staff
- To successfully leverage all of the opportunities U City offers to create a sustainable and highly functional community
- To increase benefits for our customers by creating more flexible and improved ways of working

- To enhance our presence and value to the communities we serve
- To increase and diversify our revenue and customer base to ensure our sustainability

Our Reconciliation Journey

- Uniting Communities' journey toward reconciliation formally began in October 1997 when we recognised and apologised for our role in relation the Stolen Generation and in particular for the impacts of dislocation on children from Croker Island who were placed at Lentara Children's Home. At this time our board apologised "to all of the Aboriginal people impacted by this decision and for our failure to prevent the destruction of family life and dispossession of the Indigenous nations."
- Uniting Communities has an established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Governance Committee (ATSIGC). It is comprised of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, non-Indigenous staff, the Chief Executive and Executive Manager of our People and Culture. Uniting Communities commitment to establishing an Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan ('RAP') is formally progressed through this committee by the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RWG).
- The aim of the ATSIGC is to strengthen collaboration between management, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and also the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to ensure our actions in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are culturally informed and appropriate.

- The first task of the ATSIGC was to establishment the Uniting Communities Aboriginal Forum. The Forum provides a regular opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to raise issues and concerns and contribute to improving cultural practice within Uniting Communities. It is also an important mechanism for strengthening connection and accountability to Aboriginal Communities.
- We recognise achieving our RAP goals is a shared responsibility for all employees and requires commitment across our organisation.

What we learnt from 2017-2019 RAP

- We initially underestimated the work we were going to do with the resources we have been provided for this task. Much of our internal work for the RAP was completed by our own staff who have the skill and interest in this work. This resulted in our work moving at a slower and more intentional pace.
- In the first half of the period the ATSIGC received results from our internal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survey. This review gave us the information we needed to make a decision to prioritise a focus on induction, training and internal culture. Most of our work in the second half of this period has gone into using our own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in the development of training for induction and manager training. This training component has been well received but it remains in pilot phase. There is still work to do on the level 3 manager coaching part of this project.

OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

By seeking reconciliation and working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Uniting Communities aims to assist in moving more strongly towards healing, justice, self-determination and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Through our RAP Uniting Communities will seek to improve relationships, respect and opportunities for Uniting Communities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and increase access to culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and strengthen connections to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In this respect, our RAP seeks the following fundamental goals;

- To improve access to culturally appropriate communities services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Strengthen collaborative partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Achieve stronger employment and professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees within Uniting Communities

Our RAP is championed by our Chief Executive Mr Simon Schrapel.

The development and monitoring of the progress of our RAP is undertaken by the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Governance Committee (ATSIGC). The ATSIGC is the formal body which brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff representatives together with Chief Executive and Executives of Uniting Communities.



RELATIONSHIPS



At Uniting Communities we recognise that having strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is important to our core business of delivering services to disadvantaged and marginalised people and to ensure delivery of culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Governance Committee and Aboriginal Staff Forum play a central role in building stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	1.1 Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	Jun 20	Chief Executive
	1.2 Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Dec 20	Chief Executive
	1.3 Prepare an organisational policy position on how and when we run services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and when we consider devolving them to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed organisations.	Feb 21	Chief Executive
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	2.1 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	Apr 21, Apr 22	Executive Advocacy
	2.2 Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. RAP working group to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June, 2021 & 2022	Executive Advocacy
	2.3 Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May - 3 June, 2021 & 2022	Executive Advocacy
	2.4 Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	Apr 21, Apr 22	Executive Advocacy

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	3.1 Implement strategies to engage our staff in reconciliation including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide updates in our bulletin and intranet • include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff organisational induction 	May 21, May 22	Executive Advocacy
	3.2 Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	May 21, May 22	Chief Executive
	3.3 Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	Jul 20	Chief Executive
	3.4 Collaborate with other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation.	Jul 20	Chief Executive
	3.5 Encourage other NFPs to develop a RAP.	Jul 20	Chief Executive
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies	4.1 Conduct a review of People and Culture policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions (bullying and harassment) policy.	Apr 21	Executive People and Culture
	4.2 Communicate an anti-discrimination (bullying and harassment) policy.	Apr 21	Executive People and Culture
	4.3 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination (bullying and harassment) policy.	Jun 20	Executive People and Culture
	4.4 Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism by hosting a screening of the Final Quarter for staff and facilitate a discussion following the film using the associated resources http://www.sbs.com.au/learn/reconciliationfilmclub	Jun 21	Executive Advocacy

RESPECT



Uniting Communities acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia. We further acknowledge and respect the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise it is integral to Australian society. Our core business of delivering community services to disadvantaged and marginalised groups is underpinned by a commitment to embrace and support cultural diversity. In this respect, Uniting Communities is committed to achieving a compassionate, respectful and just society in which all people participate and flourish. Accordingly, we actively encourage and support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to participate in cultural events and we acknowledge the significance their lived experiences and celebration of their culture brings to our organisation.

At Uniting Communities, we recognise that respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and shared learnings is critical to delivering culturally appropriate and safe services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Uniting Communities is also committed to strengthening respect for the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning	5.1 Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Dec 20	Executive People and Culture
	5.2 Consult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy.	Jun 20	Executive People and Culture
	5.3 Identify and monitor options to deliver training in a variety of ways with different training delivery modalities (for example, face to face, on-line or cultural immersion opportunities) to increase access to cultural training for employees on specific or relevant cultural areas and for those unable to attend cultural training workshop.	Jun 20	Executive People and Culture
	5.4 Develop, implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our staff.	Jun 20	Executive People and Culture
	5.5 Ensure 100% attendance by Uniting Communities employees at the UC mandatory training workshop re introduction to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This does not apply to Aged Care programs unable to attend because of rostering challenges. Aged care staff will be given the opportunity to attend when not on roster.	Dec 20, Dec 21	Executive People and Culture
	5.6 Provide opportunities for ATSIGC members, HR managers and other key leadership to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	Dec 20	Executive People and Culture
	5.7 Distribute the Share our Pride link via MuUC intranet to all Uniting Communities employees to increase awareness and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures throughout Uniting Communities. http://www.shareourpride.org.au/	NAIDOC Jul 20, Jul 21	Executive Advocacy

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols	6.1 Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Jun 21	Executive Advocacy
7.	7.1 Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	Jun 21	Executive Advocacy
	7.2 Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at any significant events each year.	Feb 21, Feb 22	Chief Executive
	7.3 Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	Dec 20, Dec 21	Chief Executive
8. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	8.1 ATSIGC to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in Jul 20, Jul 21	Chair ATSIGC
	8.2 Review People and Culture policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	Mar 21	Executive People and Culture
	8.3 Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	First week in Jul 20, Jul 21	Executive People and Culture
	8.4 Promote to staff a movie from SBS NITV in the lead up to NAIDOC week eg The Australian Dream https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfxvcZafUPI	Jun 20, Jun 21	Executive Advocacy

OPPORTUNITIES



Uniting Communities is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop opportunities that increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's access to community services and employment across all levels of our organisation. It is central to our core business of improving the lives of disadvantaged and marginalised groups. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees have special importance to ensuring we effectively connect with and deliver culturally appropriate community services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our community. Uniting Communities further recognises that creating increased opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate more equally within our society is central to achieving reconciliation.

Our ATSIGC is actively committed to implementing strategies to increase professional development and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development	9.1 Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	Jun 20	Executive People and Culture
	9.2 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	Dec 20	Executive People and Culture
	9.3 Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	Mar 21	Executive People and Culture
	9.4 Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	Jun 20	Executive People and Culture
	9.5 Review People and Culture recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	Jun 20	Executive People and Culture
	9.6 Identify and promote traineeships for potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees within corporate services.	Jul 20	Executive People and Culture
	9.7 Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in our workforce to 3.5% (2.8% as at Feb 20).	Jan 21, Jan22	Chief Executive
	9.8 Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees working within Uniting Communities in support services, administration and infrastructure roles. (Currently staff = 0).	Jan 21, Jan22	Executive People and Culture
	9.9 Ensure the voluntary turnover rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is similar to the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff (Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander = 16.15% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander = 26.47% Data: 2019 voluntary turnover data).	Jan 21, Jan22	Executive People and Culture
	9.10 Recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Development Officer role to expand services to external clients and strengthen Uniting Communities links to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	Jan 21, Jan22	Chief Executive

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes	10.1 Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	Jun 20	Executive Corporate Services
	10.2 Investigate Supply Nation membership.	Jun 20	Executive Corporate Services
	10.3 Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	Aug 20	Executive Corporate Services
	10.4 Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Jun 20	Executive Corporate Services
	10.5 Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Dec 21	Executive Corporate Services
11. Increase accessibility of UC services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	11.1 Develop a mentoring program which assists service managers to identify systemic barriers and program barriers to good service provision to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Jun 20	Executive Corporate Services
	11.2 Track and report on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in community services to ATSIGC. (5.81% on average across 2019)	Jun 20	Executive Corporate Services
	11.3 Ensure that each service sets a target in their annual business plan which contributes to item 9.7 target.	Aug 20	Executive Corporate Services
	11.4 Track and report on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients with community aged care packages. (2019 ave 4.46 packages)	Jun 20	Executive Corporate Services

GOVERNANCE



Uniting Communities maintains an ongoing commitment to internal monitoring and publically reporting its RAP outcomes. This enables us to celebrate achievements and ensure Uniting Communities maintains an ongoing commitment to internal monitoring and publically reporting its RAP outcomes. It also allows us to utilise learnings to improve the working lives of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and ensure services delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are always culturally appropriate.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12. Establish and maintain an effective ATSIGC to drive governance of the RAP	12.1 Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the ATSIGC.	Jan 21, Jan 22	Chief Executive
	12.2 Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	Jun 20	Chief Executive
	12.3 Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	Nov 20, Nov 21	Chief Executive
13. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments	13.1 Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Jun 20	Chief Executive
	13.2 Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Jun 20	Chief Executive
	13.3 Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Jun 20	Executive Advocacy
	13.4 Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	Jun 20	Executive Advocacy

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
14. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally	14.1 Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	Sep 20, Sep 21	Executive Advocacy
	14.2 Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	Jun 20- Mar 22	Executive Advocacy
	14.3 Include goals in annual plans for all services for reducing barriers and improving client services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Jun 20, 21	Chief Executive
	14.4 Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	Nov 20, Nov 21	Executive Advocacy
	14.5 Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	Feb 22	Executive Advocacy
	14.6 Establish internal guidelines for reporting of RAP achievements against goals from community service and infrastructure to Uniting Communities board.	Jun 20	Executive Advocacy
	14.7 Report RAP goals and achievements to the board in 6 monthly reports.	Jun 20	Executive Advocacy
15. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP	15.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	Sep 21	Executive Advocacy

Contact

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