

INNOVATE

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

January 2025 – December 2026

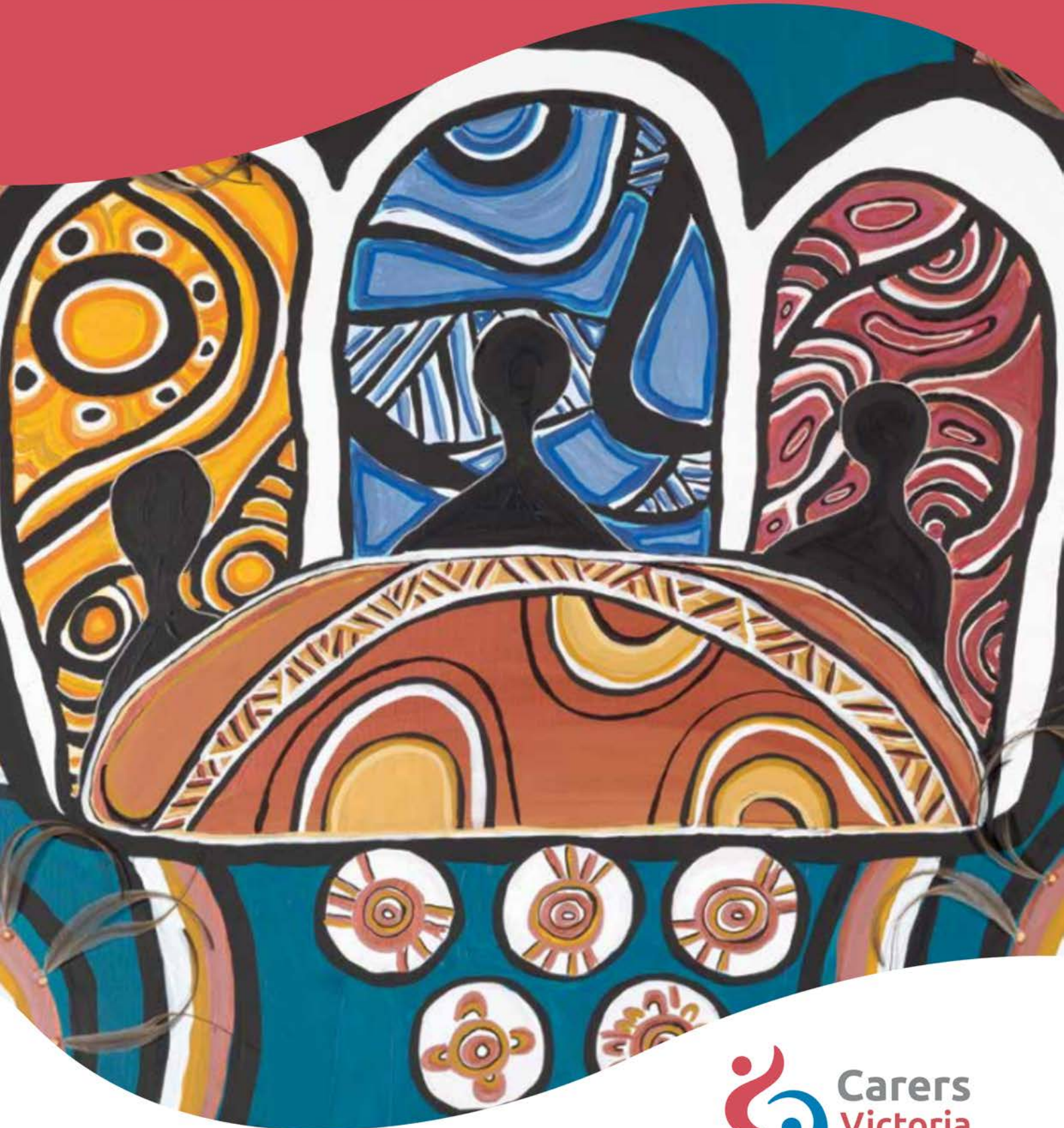


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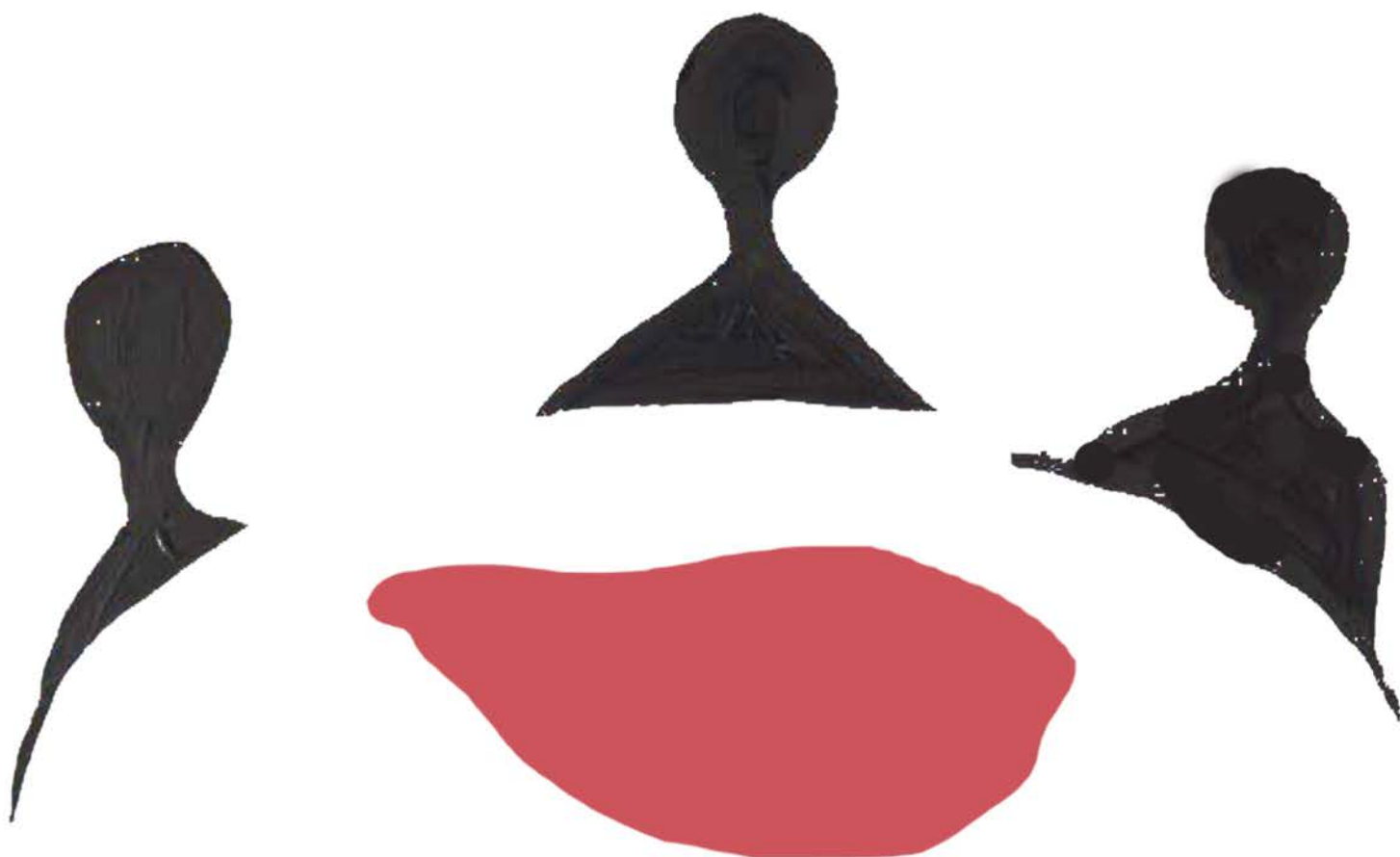
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Context

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail aged. Indeed, a greater proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population are carers compared with that of the rest of the Australian population (12.4% and 10.5% respectively).¹

Carers Victoria acknowledges both the cultural contexts in which caring may occur in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and the history of (intergenerational and individual) trauma and the impact this legacy still has upon the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities today.



1. carersaustralia.com.au/about-carers/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-carers/

Our Vision

Our vision is for a future in which Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples with caring roles feel recognised, valued, supported, and treated with respect and dignity. They are able to access culturally appropriate and safe information, support and feel they have a voice about issues of importance.

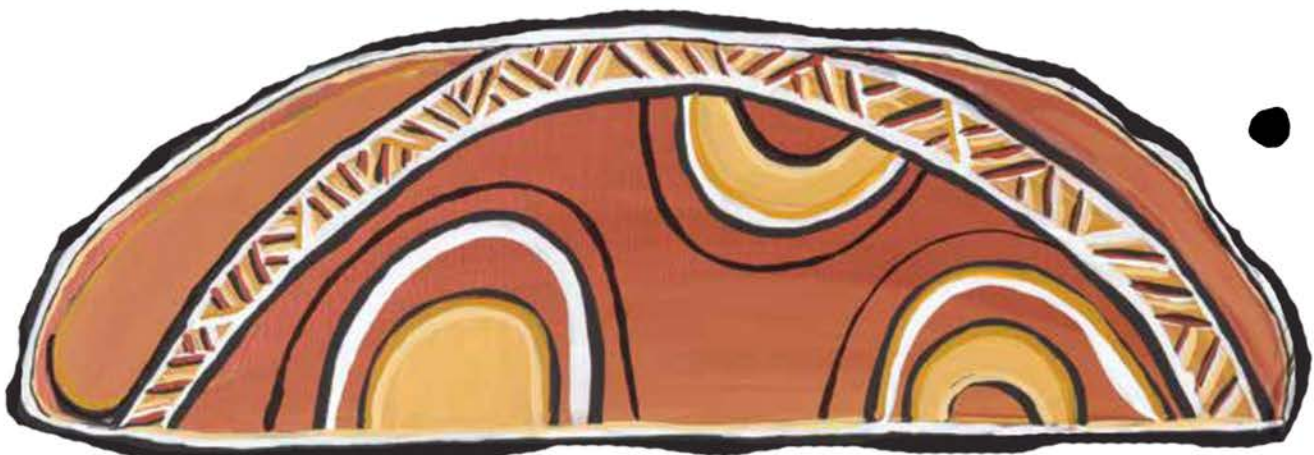
Carers Victoria is committed to working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Victoria to work towards this future.

To achieve this, we will strive to:

- advance understanding of Victoria's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander unpaid carers and improve their access to culturally safe and appropriate assistance;
- build meaningful partnerships with relevant Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and groups, in which we explore the most appropriate model that supports carers in community; and
- be an organisation that is a strong and proactive ally for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whether they are carers, employees, or working in partnership with us.

We recognise that ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and other community members feel safe when engaging with Carers Victoria staff and to know that their cultures are valued, and the experiences and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their impacts are understood.

We also acknowledge that, as an organisation, we have much to learn. We therefore see our RAP as part of our ongoing commitment to learn, to grow, to foster key relationships that help us achieve our vision for a united Australia within the scope of our work.



Our Work

Carers Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation working in collaboration with families, friends and other supporters who provide care and support for people they know living with disability, mental health concerns, addiction, age-related challenges or other significant health issues.

Utilising both state and federal government funding, our organisation works to ensure carers throughout Victoria are supported maintain and improve their health, wellbeing, knowledge, resilience, financial security, and social connections. To achieve this and empower carers, Carers Victoria provides a range of education workshops, programs, events, respite and advice to carers across the state.

We also conduct research and advocate to ensure carers needs are recognised in government policy, and often work in partnership with relevant government agencies, NGOs, service providers (e.g. Carer Gateway, NDIS, My Aged Care), Councils, health providers and other organisations as appropriate to improve services, systems and supports for carers.

Carers Victoria seeks carer input in shaping both the policy we develop, and the services we provide, so that they appropriately reflect – and are responsive to – the changing and diverse needs of carers across the state.

Carers Victoria employs over 50 staff members. An internal Diversity Atlas survey conducted in 2022 showed 3.6% of our staff identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our physical office (primarily a staff hub) in Latrobe Street, Melbourne.



Our Reconciliation Journey

Carers Victoria's reconciliation journey commenced around 2012, with our early work guided by the patience and support of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff in various roles from a mix of organisations at the time including HealthWest, Djerriwarrh Health Services and Wyndham Aboriginal Community Centre.

Our Reflect RAP – released in 2021 – was the first time Carers Victoria took a coordinated organisational approach to reconciliation. Led by a RAP staff Working Group and overseen by our Board, Carers Victoria sought to progress development of relationships with Aboriginal organisations and community groups while focusing on staff education, awareness-raising and exploring ways to make our organisation and services culturally safe and responsive. This occurred during a challenging time, when the state of Victoria was heavily impacted by pandemic lockdowns and the flow on effects of these for communities.

Through the actions identified in our Reflect RAP, we laid the foundations for an embedded and systematic approach to progressing genuine reconciliation across the organisation.



This included:

- Identifying key stakeholders and building relationships (e.g. VACCA, Aboriginal-led centres)
- Staff training to lift universal understanding of and engagement with reconciliation
- Establishment of celebrations and other activities to recognise and promote National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week annually, featuring an Aboriginal cultural tour in Melbourne for our caring community
- Review and updates to our HR policies, practises and other organisational materials to reflect our genuine commitment to reconciliation.
- Board approved changes to use of language around 26 January (informed in part by strong support from staff), with cessation of the use of the term "Australia Day" across the organisation and a public Board statement in support of the Voice to Parliament.

We are proud to have completed all actions in our Reflect RAP and this Innovate RAP paves the way for the next steps towards achieving our vision.



Learnings from Our Reflect RAP



While we accomplished our RAP actions, we also encountered challenges. These challenges led to learnings which, in turn, influenced our Innovate RAP.

These can be summarised as falling into the pillars of Governance, Relationships and Respect as follows.

Reflect

Pillar	Challenge	Impact	Key Learning(s)
Governance	In addition to natural attrition, organisational change further impacted membership of our RAP Working Group.	Before the RAP was complete, the entire Working Group had disappeared, along with its expertise and insights.	Governance structures are crucial to ensure that the Working Group remains sustainable in the face of organisational restructure. Our new RAP therefore explicitly requires oversight from a senior sponsor, with regular reports to the CEO, Executive Leadership Team and Board to monitor.
Relationships	RAP Working Group members held key relationships, which unfortunately needed to be renewed as staff changed.	Carers Victoria has had to work hard to re-establish connections gained, such as with Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA) and the Aboriginal Services Network of the West.	Relationships requires risk management and succession planning. Having multiple people within the organisation hold relationships reduces this risk and helps ensure relationship continuity as staff change. For example, our Innovate RAP has the CEO as being the new relationship holder for VACCA, while the Sector Engagement team holds relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations, and the RAP Champion represents the organisation on the Aboriginal Services Network of the West.



Reflect

Pillar	Challenge	Impact	Key Learning(s)
Respect	Despite several attempts we had trouble engaging with carers who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Those who were willing to engage were primarily seeking kinship support, while others did not see themselves in the western construct of being a 'carer'. Others again did not wish to engage.	This was a new experience to our organisation as we have had success building relationships with other culturally and linguistically diverse communities, who we found to be more open to meeting with us.	<p>Our RAP Champion together with a RAP Working Group member attended training which shed insights, which again are picked up in our new RAP. These include demonstrating and earning respect by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending more time building meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations, and being visible in community activities where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples are present • Learning more about Aboriginal cultures, to inform our approach, e.g. exploring kinship and how this may present an opportunity to partner such as to lay a foundation for culturally safe and appropriate carer services into the future • Listening more to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their representative bodies.



Our Innovate RAP

This RAP has been developed by a RAP staff working group under the leadership of a senior staff member who identifies as an Aboriginal person and with the sponsorship of the General Manager Impact and Engagement and the CEO.

Active input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives has been sought in line with Carers Victoria's commitment to genuine partnership and co-design² and we have been able to engage several Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in care relationships that are going to help guide this work going forward.

This Innovate RAP sets out an integrated set of concrete actions to continue building and maturing relationships in line with our learnings (above), embed meaningful governance processes, and build partnerships that help us work towards our vision of respect and partnership.

In progressing this journey, we remain humble, recognising that we still have much to learn. We continue in our efforts to actively engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our RAP, while recognising the cultural load they carry; our role must first and foremost be as an active ally.

With this in mind, we acknowledge the importance of minimising cultural load whilst providing appropriate and consistent opportunities to engage, working alongside relevant organisations in the sector, to progress our vision of reconciliation.

We also commit to actively managing and being accountable for our progress.

To this end:

- Carers Victoria staff members will lead implementation of this RAP under the guidance of senior management, seeking advice and guidance from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations; and
- The Carers Victoria Board and its Governance Committee will maintain oversight of this implementation, given its commitment to progress reconciliation not just through words but through actions across the organisation.



2. Footnote – at end May 2024, this work towards active engagement was ongoing

RAP Working Group

RAP Sponsor	General Manager, Carer Networks and Impact	Andrew Lyall
RAP Champion		
HR Representative		
MarComms Representative		
Carer Services Representative		
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives	<u>Wadawurrung</u> Country	Elizabeth Anders



Relationships

Our work and our vision cannot be fully realised in isolation. Providing a statewide voice for carers, for example, requires strong working relationships with a range of people including diverse groups of carers, related agencies, and government. Similarly providing carer education and services requires a complex network of relationships. Nurturing relationships has been identified by our Board as a strategic priority.

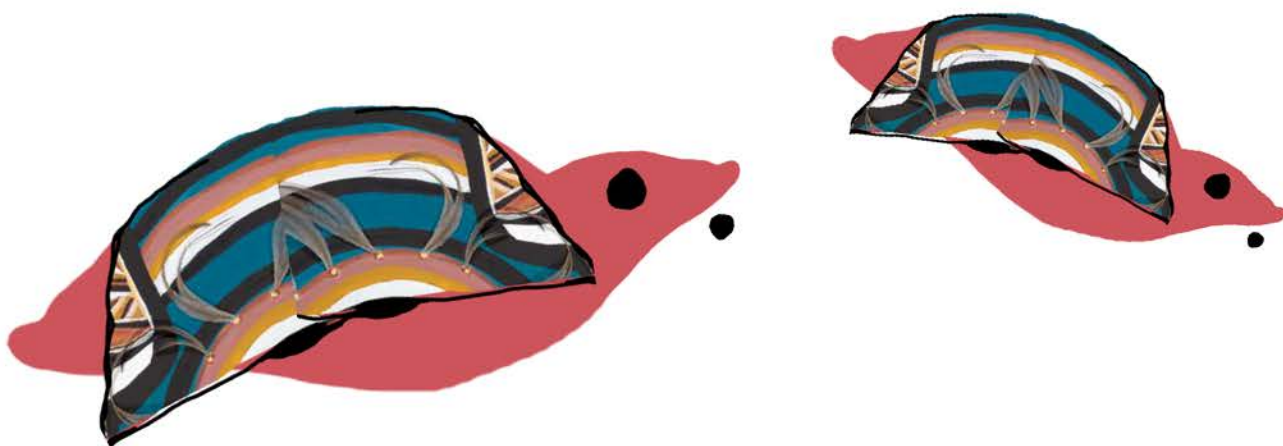
As much as we use partnerships in other parts of our work, our first RAP identified that the approach we have used with building partnerships in other communities were not as successful with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.

While our various attempts to engage community were genuine, and we truly desired to listen, we found that the approaches that have been successful with other communities did not yield the same results with/for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our Innovate RAP therefore puts relationships front and centre, seeking to work in partnership with other organisations already engaged:

- To minimise the cultural load wherever possible (recognising that Carers will also have a further load around the caring role);
- Innovating how we reach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with caring roles, with the intention of not adding to cultural load, and being respectful of the time limitations Carers are known to experience
- To build partnerships in which we try to reimagine carer services such as to embed culturally safe and appropriate supports within Community led organisations

Our intention is to try to build mutually respectful relationships in which we can partner to explore how to best support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have caring roles. We seek conversations that help identify Carers Victoria's role (e.g. as a supporting service to Community led organisations, or that of a partnership).



Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Establish a productive and impactful relationship with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health organisation, in recognition of its key role in supporting community-controlled health organisations across the state with a view to trying to work together to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with caring roles in a respectful and culturally safe manner.	February 2025	CEO
	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement to guide the work above.	June 2025	GM, Carer Advice, Response and Innovation
	Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations, again with a view to partner to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with caring roles in a respectful and culturally safe manner.	June 2025 (develop by) Dec 2026 (Implement by)	Develop: GM, Carer Advice, Response and Innovation Implement: Executive Leadership Team
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	April/ May 2025 & 2026	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	June 2025 & 2026	RAP Sponsor
	Create opportunities for other staff to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	June 2025 & 2026	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	May/June 2025 & 2026	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website	May 2025 & 2026	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	March 2025 (develop by)	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Implement agreed communications strategy to promote public position on reconciliation both internal and external to organisation	May 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	December 2025	GM, Carer Advice, Response and Innovation
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	December 2025	Lead: RAP Champion, Support: RAP Sponsor
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	March 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	April 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff on opportunities to enhance current organisational policies and practises	March 2025	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Educate all staff and Board/Committee members on the effects of racism.	May 2025	CEO and GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships

Respect

Respect is one of the five core values held by Carers Victoria. We pride ourselves in being respectful and united in our differences, and mindfully reach out to various diverse communities to see how we may work together to best achieve the best outcomes for ALL carers.

We recognise that, historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have not always been treated with respect and that collective, intergenerational trauma has a lasting legacy to this day that plays out in individual lives, and has led to reduced outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples compared with the wider population.

In keeping with our values, Carers Victoria seeks to respectfully work with communities using a strengths-based focus, achieving better outcomes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers.



Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Commission an external review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	March 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy.	March 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff.	May 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members and other key staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	December 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	February 2025	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Enhance organisational practise in this area by implementing concrete strategies that provide deeper opportunities for staff to understand and connect with Traditional Owners and their cultures.	June 2025	Executive Leadership Team, RAP Sponsor
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	Checkpoints: October 2025, October 2026	GM, Carer Advice, Response and Innovation
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	Checkpoints: June 2025, June 2026	RAP Working Group Guidelines: GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Review Acknowledgement of Country guidelines to ensure they remain current and aligned with best practice.	Checkpoints: June 2025, June 2026	RAP Working Group Guidelines: GM, Carer Networks and Impact

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2025 & 2026	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	May 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	First week in July 2025 & 2026	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
8. Demonstrate respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with caring responsibilities by inviting feedback about issues and concerns they have as carers, within the wider "Carer Voice" program.	Work with community-controlled partner organisations to ensure there are meaningful mechanisms for giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations a voice regarding their care roles and issues, and those of their communities.	June 2025	GM, Carer Advice, Response and Innovation
	Compile and report on data and insights captured via the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Carer Voice mechanism and embed this in internal reporting.	July 2025 January & July 2026	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Report findings and any relevant recommendations to the Executive Leadership Team to inform planning.	July 2025 January & July 2026	RAP Sponsor
	Report findings from this mechanism to the Board at least annually, and to the governance committee quarterly.	July 2025 July 2026	CEO
	Report on key activities and data as part of Carers Victoria's annual year in review.	August/ September 2025 & 2026	CEO

Opportunities

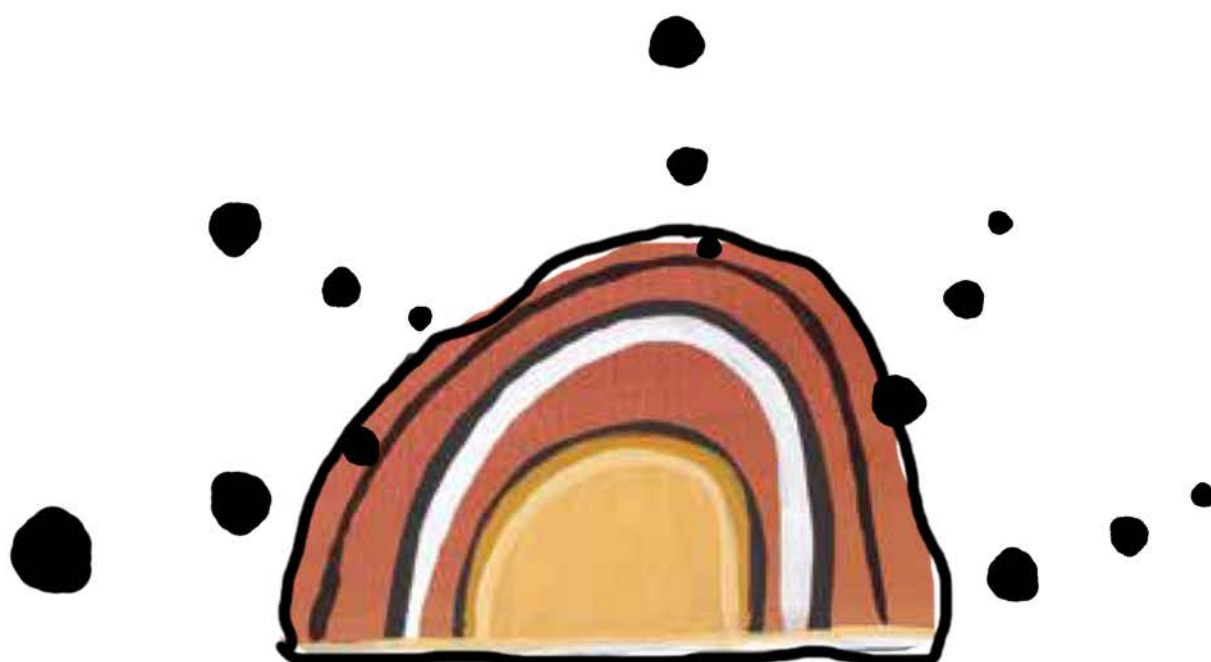
Carers Victoria is committed to reaching and supporting carers from diverse backgrounds. We see our Innovate RAP as an ideal opportunity in which to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers across Victoria, to ensure they receive appropriate and culturally safe support in their caring role.

This is also an opportunity for us to grow as an organisation, becoming more culturally rich from increasing employment outcomes and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers. By taking these opportunities, we strive to support improved economic, employment and social outcomes.



Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities through Diversity Atlas survey.	January 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	March 2025	Senior Manager Corporate Services
	Develop and implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategies.	April 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	May 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	May 2025	GM, Comms, Policy and Partnerships



Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Identify opportunities to procure goods from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled organisations and/or First Nations Businesses.	March 2025	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	March 2025	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	April 2025	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Develop and implement staff information/training to support updated procurement approach	May 2025	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	June 2025	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers	August 2025	GM, Carer Networks and Impact



Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to oversee and provide advice on implementation of the RAP.	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Check ins annually in February (to align with review of ToR per next item)	RAP Sponsor
	Conduct annual review of Terms of Reference and membership of the RWG.	Check in: February 2025, 2026	GM, Carer Networks and Impact
	Meet at least four times per year to review and document progress in implementing RAP.	Meet in months of March, June, August, November 2025 & 2026	RAP Working Group
12. Provide clear oversight of RAP implementation progress to management and Board.	RAP Sponsor engages quarterly with other members of the Executive Leadership Group to a) report on progress against RAP, and b) ensure engagement from senior leaders and other staff to ensure sustainability of the RAP being implemented across the organisation.	reports within 4 weeks of RAPWG mtg. (i.e. Dec, Apr, Jul, Sept 2025 & 2026)	RAP Working Group
	Provide six monthly reports to Board and its Governance Committee on progress against RAP.	June & December annually	CEO Support from GM, RAP Sponsor
	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	January 2025	CEO



Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Build accountability and transparency through communication of RAP achievements, learnings and challenges.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June annually	RAP Sponsor
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August annually	RAP Sponsor
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	RAP Sponsor
	Incorporate advice on progress with RAP implementation in annual Year in Review.	October annually	CEO
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	April 2026	HR Coordinator
	Develop traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	November 2026	RAP Sponsor
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2026	RAP Sponsor



Contact Details

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With acknowledgement and special thanks to Aboriginal Artist **MANDI BARTON** for creating this beautiful artwork for Carers Victoria.

