

# Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2024 – June 2025



# Acknowledgment of Country

Women's Legal Service Victoria acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our offices are located.

We also acknowledge all Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' continuing connection to land, place, waters and community.

We pay our respects to them, their heritage and cultures; and to Elders both past and present. Sovereignty was never ceded. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.



# About the art and artist



Madison Connors is a proud and strong Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung and Gamilaroi woman, mother and artist. She was born and grew up in Kanny-Goopna (Shepparton), Victoria though now calls Naarm (Melbourne) home.

Madison's identity is what drives her - her experiences as an Aboriginal woman have shaped her ambitions and perspectives on the world, which in turn translates into her visual representations. Her artwork celebrates the strength of community and Aboriginal culture.

The piece she has created for Women's Legal is called **Balitj duroyi**, which translates to - strong woman in Dja Dja Wurrung language.

This artwork beautifully depicts the deep-rooted connections within the community, showcasing the resilience and fortitude of women on their journeys. At its core, the silhouette of a woman is embraced by a circle symbolising unwavering support.

The "u" shaped symbols surrounding her represent individuals offering their solidarity and lifting her up in her path. This expression of unity echoes outward, embodying the collective empowerment and interconnectedness within the community.

The arrows surround the green community symbols, representing emu footprint, which embody wisdom, strength, guidance, and protection—reminders of the enduring power present within our community. The rainbows, symbolising hope in the face of adversity, encapsulating the essence of resilience and strength.

Together, these elements capture the profound bonds that unite communities, reflecting the resilience and interconnectedness that define their spirit.

## Legend/Key of motifs/ Aboriginal systems

Community ...



... Upside down 'u' represents people. These people are supporting community member in need

... Emu footprints representing strength and protection



... Rainbow



... Communities and connections



# A message from our leaders

Jane Welsh (Chair) and Claudia Fatone (CEO).  
Women's Legal Service Victoria

Achieving our vision of a Victoria where every woman is safe relies on us supporting self-determination, wellbeing and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This Reconciliation Action Plan is our public commitment to take action.

Our first step is to cultivate meaningful relationships with First Nations communities and organisations. We want to partner with community, not act on behalf of it. Trusting relationships are key to inclusive services for all.

Everyone at our organisation will have the opportunity to listen and learn about the wealth of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge and rights. This includes acknowledging historical and systemic injustices and our commitment to making amends, as well building an understanding of the strengths and cultural practices of Victorian communities. This work will help us explore what works and what we can do differently.

In doing so, we want to create opportunities for First Nations women to work and thrive at Women's Legal. Yes, there is a lot of work to do. We will prioritise this work because building a culture of respect is core to our purpose.



Claudia Fatone CEO



Jane Welsh Chair



# Statement from Karen Mundine

Chief Executive Officer,  
Reconciliation Australia



**Reconciliation Australia congratulates Women's Legal Service Victoria on continuing its reconciliation journey by formally endorsing Women's Legal Service Victoria's second Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).**

Through this plan, Women's Legal Service Victoria continues to play an important role in a network of more than 2,500 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate – allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP continues the journey and primes the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

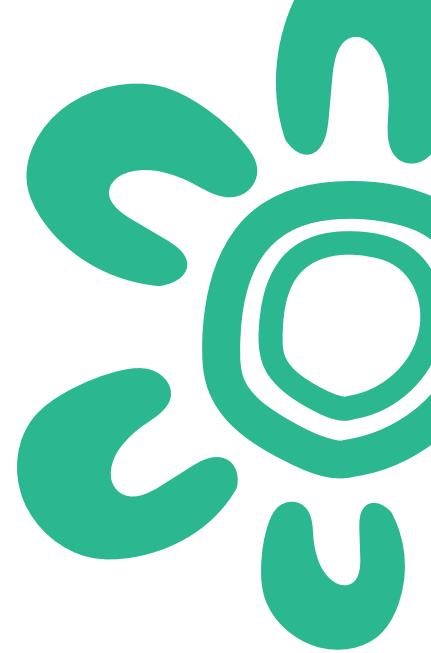
The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also to increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Women's Legal Service Victoria to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Women's Legal Service Victoria on your second Reflect RAP, and I look forward to following your continuing reconciliation journey.



# Our business

Women's Legal Service Victoria (Women's Legal) is a specialist community legal centre providing legal, financial, counselling and social work support to women from across Victoria who are experiencing family violence.

Each year we support thousands of women, about 3 per cent are First Nations women. We train many Victorians working with family violence victim survivors, so they understand the law and provide trauma-informed support. And we use our knowledge and experience to advocate for safer laws and systems for women and children.

It is through a feminist lens that we deliver high quality services to our clients and support each other as colleagues.

We are based in Melbourne and have a team of over 80 women who work across a number of courts and from our office in the city centre. We don't currently have Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees or board members.





# Our Reconciliation Action Plan

**We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right to self-determination and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. Our vision is for an Australia where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women can thrive, and live healthy and safe lives.**

Our expertise in family law, family violence and child protection forms the foundation for us to develop the partnerships and knowledge to advocate for better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. We will work to improve the state and national justice systems to be culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, ensuring safety, self-determination and informed decision making.

We know that there is significant overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who experience family violence and in the justice system and are committed to changing this. Meaningful change requires acknowledging the systematic injustices and experiences of the past that continue to impact the community.

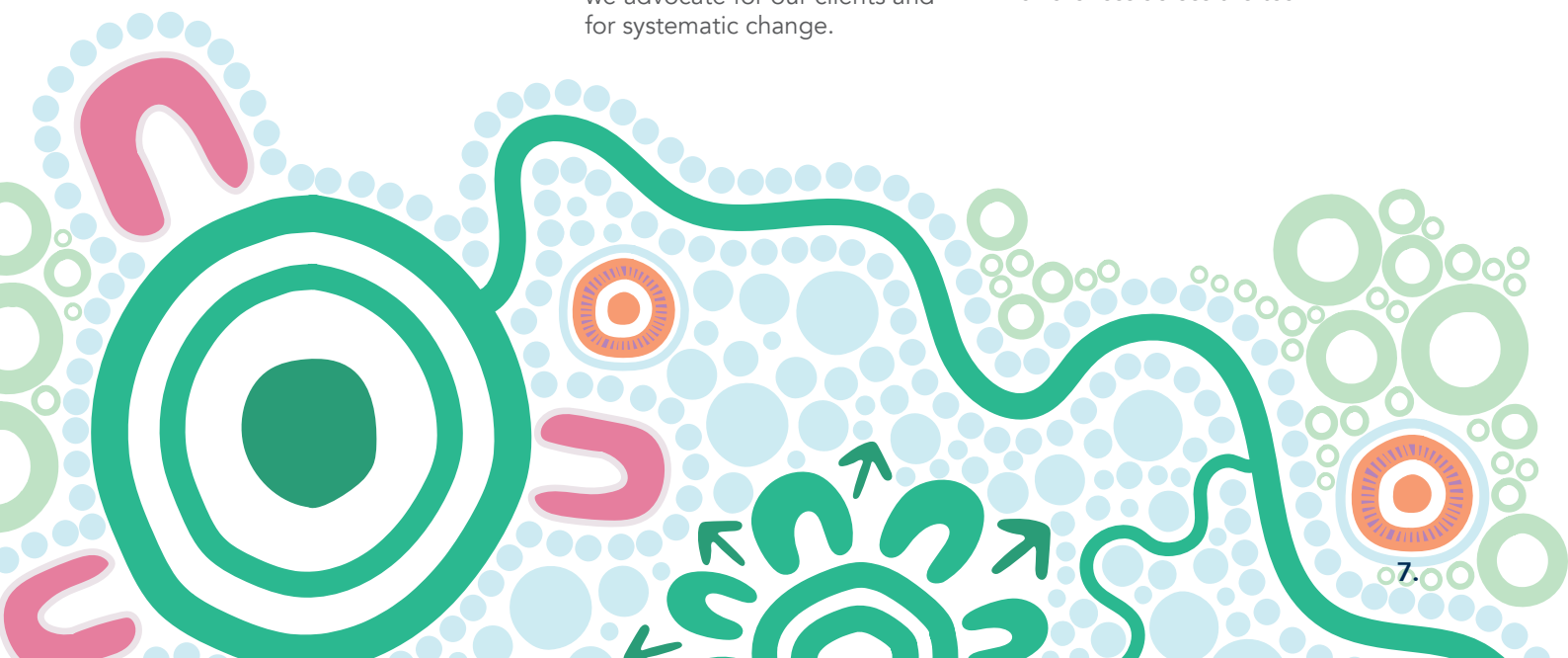
We will learn from the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children as we advocate for our clients and for systematic change.

As we build our knowledge and build our partnerships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals, we will listen and work collaboratively to continuously adapt our frameworks and ways of working to positively contribute to reconciliation.

We understand that this journey demands critical examination of barriers, including cultural safety and systemic discrimination within Women's Legal, as well as persistent effort, patience, and humility.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to take meaningful steps toward reconciliation each day, with the aim of creating a more inclusive and just legal system.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan is integral to achieving our objectives and will be championed by our CEO, driving engagement and awareness across the team.



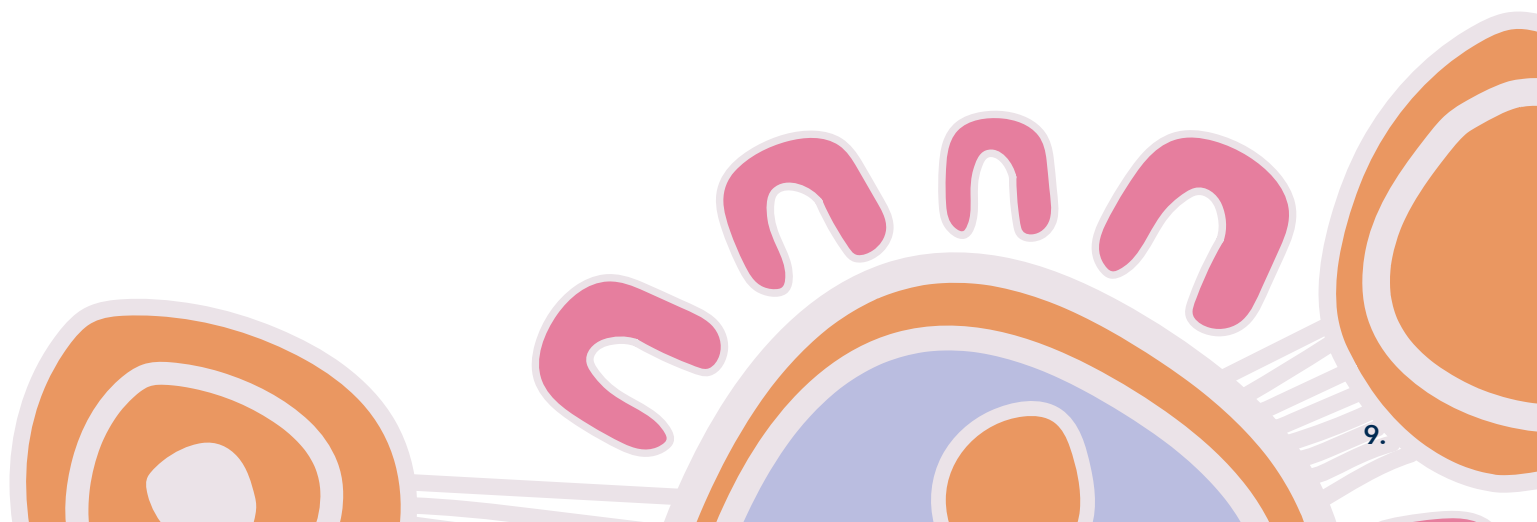
# Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or within the legal, family violence and child protection sectors.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Director, Policy, Advocacy & Comms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Director, Policy, Advocacy & Comms
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.</li> </ul>	May 2025	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.</li> </ul>	27 May – 3 June 2025	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</li> </ul>	27 May – 3 June 2025	Director, Operations
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.</li> </ul>	July 2024	Director, CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify external stakeholders especially within the legal, family violence and child protection sectors that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Director, Policy, Advocacy & Comms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.</li> </ul>	August 2024	Director, Policy, Advocacy & Comms
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.</li> </ul>	January 2025	Manager, Human Resources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.</li> </ul>	January 2025	Manager, Human Resources



# Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	> Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	August 2024	Director, Operations
	> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	September 2024	Manager, Human Resources
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	> Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	August 2024	Director, Operations
	> Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	August 2024	Director, Operations
Build respect for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	> Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	July 2024	Director, Operations
	> Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2024	Director, Operations
	> RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	7-14 July, 2024	Director, Operations





# Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	> Develop a business case for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	February 2025	Manager, Human Resources
	> Build understanding of current Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	April 2025	Manager, Human Resources
Increase Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	> Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	May 2025	Finance Manager
	> Develop a list of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander suppliers.	May 2025	Finance Manager

# Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	> Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	August 2024	Director, Operations
	> Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	August 2024	Director, Operations
	> Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	August 2024	Director, Policy, Advocacy & Comms
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	> Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2024	Director, Operations
	> Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2024	CEO
	> Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	July 2024	CEO
	> Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	July 2024	Director, Operations
Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	> Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June 2025	Director, Operations
	> Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August 2024	Director, Operations
	> Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, 2024	Director, Operations
Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	> Register via Reconciliation Australia's <a href="#">website</a> to begin developing our next RAP.	April 2025	Director, Operations



# Women's Legal Service Victoria

Help for women experiencing family and sexual violence to find safety and get legal advice.

Our lawyers, social workers and financial counsellors work with you to make sure that you have what you need to make decisions for yourself and your children, gain independence and financial stability.

Call us: 03 8622 0600 or 1800 133 302

Fill out the online enquiry form: [womenslegal.org.au/get-help](https://womenslegal.org.au/get-help)

We welcome feedback. See our website to share your feedback or complaint: [womenslegal.org.au](https://womenslegal.org.au)

For more information about our Reconciliation Plan contact:

Sharon Rayner

Email: [admin@womenslegal.org.au](mailto:admin@womenslegal.org.au)

Phone: 03 8622 0600



Women's Legal Service Victoria is located on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' continuing connection to land, water and community and pay respect to their Elders past and present. Sovereignty was never ceded.



Women's Legal Service is committed to providing safe and inclusive support.



women's legal  
service victoria

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RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT