



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

ASYLUM SEEKERS  
CENTRE



# REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN ASYLUM SEEKERS CENTRE

JULY 2022 - JULY 2023



# REFLECT

***We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Asylum Seekers Centre (ASC) stands, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and the Wangal and Wategoro People of the Darug Nation, and their continuing connection to land, waters and community.***

The Asylum Seekers Centre is a place of welcome and community. Since 1993 we have provided practical support and services to people seeking asylum. We recognise our shared humanity within a culturally rich and diverse Australia, which begins with the First Nations people who are the original inhabitants of this land and custodians of land, waters, customs and culture.

As we extend our respect, provide support and say 'welcome' to people seeking asylum arriving in Australia, we do so in a deep acknowledgement and recognition of First Nations people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands in which people seeking asylum seek safety.

As a human rights organisation, our work affirms the basic human rights of people to freedom from persecution, violence and fear. We strongly advocate against systemic injustices that prevent people from determining their own lives and future. We recognise the disempowerment of First Nations people along with violence and trauma, racism, loss of home and sense of belonging.

We seek justice and fairness for people seeking asylum and demand they be treated with respect. We cannot do this without also standing in solidarity with First Nations people who must also be respected and authentically recognised on their own land as custodians of one of the longest living cultures on earth. First Nations people must have justice, self-determination and a constitutional voice to Parliament and other decision-making bodies. We seek to create a community where all people feel a sense of safety and belonging, and are valued as human beings. Our guiding values of compassion, connectedness, being people-centred, collaboration and innovation underpin our work and we are deeply committed to becoming an ally and champion of reconciliation commitments.

Through our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), we aim to use our sphere of influence in our sector to promote respect and unity between First Nations people and the people we support who are seeking asylum in Australia. In doing so, we will use our plan to ensure First Nations voices, cultures and history are included and respected in our practices as an organisation. This cultural understanding is critical as we support people seeking asylum to feel a sense of belonging while they rebuild their life in a new community, far from the home that they fled from.

Through our RAP, our goal is to inspire and facilitate people seeking asylum to have a deeper understanding of Australia's history of colonisation and the dispossession of First Nations people, to broaden their cultural connections with First Nations people and through these connections assist them to experience the importance of being welcomed by the Traditional Custodians of the lands where they now live.

# STATEMENTS

## FRANCES RUSH OAM, CEO, ASYLUM SEEKERS CENTRE



The Asylum Seekers Centre is a place of welcome for people coming to Australia seeking safety and freedom from persecution.

While we welcome people seeking asylum to this country, we recognise that we operate on lands never ceded by the First Nations people of Australia. We must also acknowledge that for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Australia is not a place of safety and freedom from persecution.

I am honoured to be able to commit the Asylum Seekers Centre in taking the next important step in working towards a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan.

This plan is made in a spirit of reconciliation and a recognition that we have much to learn as we engage with First Nations people.

Our ASC values of being collaborative, people-centred, innovative and compassionate will guide our team as we build relationships, promote reconciliation, create opportunities and demonstrate respect for First Nations people in our community.

I want to thank our team of staff and volunteers who have developed our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan and also thank Reconciliation Australia for their guidance and leadership.

2022 is an important year for Indigenous action and reflection in Australia and we are committed to be playing our part. The RAP will be a living document as the ASC Board, staff and volunteers work together with Indigenous stakeholders towards the goal of justice for Australia's First Peoples.

# STATEMENTS

## KAREN MUNDINE, CEO, RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA



Reconciliation Australia welcomes Asylum Seekers Centre to the Reconciliation Action Plan program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP. Asylum Seekers Centre joins a network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

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

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes. These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance. It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

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

Congratulations Asylum Seekers Centre, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

# OUR BUSINESS

Established in 1993, ASC was the first organisation in Australia to specifically address the needs of people seeking asylum in the community. We provide practical and personal support to people from over 92 different nationalities and living across Greater Sydney, NSW. We deliver a range of services and programs by working alongside people with respect for their needs, aspirations and goals.

Our services include emergency financial relief and accommodation, a primary health clinic, food support, employment assistance, education and recreational activities. The impact of our everyday work is to assist people seeking asylum in Australia to thrive in their new communities.

We recognise and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we operate; the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and the Wangal and Watagoro People of the Darug Nation, as well as to the Traditional Custodians of the all the lands on which we meet, work and share stories.

As a not-for-profit organisation with a voluntary Board of Directors, the strength of our organisation has always been our links to the community. In addition to a dedicated team of 38 professional staff, we rely on a network of volunteers to undertake our work along with partnerships with other organisations, businesses and employers. We are enabled to make an impact by philanthropic grants, individual donations and some local and state government support.

We currently do not have staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. As we begin our reconciliation journey, we are committed to learning about how we can increase representation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples within our organisation.





# OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The development of our first Reconciliation Action Plan begins a formalisation of the ASC's existing respect and recognition of First Nations people. With this plan we commit to improving our own practices and exploring additional ways we can extend our understanding and solidarity. Our Reflect RAP is a first step in this journey.

The Asylum Seekers Centre has created a RAP Working Group (RWG) which meets fortnightly to learn about and understand the RAP requirements, purpose and framework. During this time, the Asylum Seekers Centre as a whole has integrated an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of every meeting and event to pay our respects to the Traditional Owners of the land where we're located. This is also done in all official staff and volunteer email signatures and on our website.

In addition to incorporating Acknowledgement of Country, we have also been working on boosting dialogue between the people seeking asylum that our organisation supports and First Nations people by respectfully inviting Aboriginal community leaders to attend events like our annual Refugee Week and our Human Rights Day events and to provide Welcome to Country. We are also sharing information, events and news regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with staff and volunteers via internal communications like our daily morning news email and newsletters. We have recognised and promoted local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and messages in National Reconciliation Week, on 26 January & in NAIDOC week.

Our RWG currently consists of staff members, members of the Executive Leadership team and volunteers. As an organisation that is volunteer-powered, it is important that we have volunteers as members in our RWG. ASC staff members and volunteers in the RWG collaborate to implement critical actions towards building meaningful relationships and to promote respect for the cultural diversity of First Nations communities. We recognise how important these actions are to make people seeking asylum feel at home in Australia.

The Chair and Co-Chair are responsible for coordinating meetings, acting as point of contact, holding members accountable, assigning tasks/timeframes and responding to enquiries. The Champion roles raise the profile of reconciliation across the organisation (internal and external), are the 'face' of the RWG, speak at staff meetings and lead by example by actioning commitments within the organisation and the community of people seeking asylum that we support.

- **Chair RWG - Oscar Mussons (Volunteer Program Manager)**
- **Co-Chair RWG - Kristine De Guzman (Head of Services and Engagement)**
- **Champion RWG - Lucy Smith (Communications and Digital Marketing Coordinator)**
- **Champion RWG - Erika Rodriguez (Project Management Coordinator)**
- **Member RWG - Stella Egan (Volunteer)**
- **Member RWG - Glynis Johns (Volunteer)**

# OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

## RELATIONSHIPS



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	July 2022	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	July 2022	Co-Chair RWG: Head of Services and Engagement
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW) (27/5 - 03/06/23).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2023	Champion RWG: Communications Coordinator
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2023	Chair RWG with all members of RWG
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June 2023	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	July 2022	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	July 2022	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	September 2022	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager

# OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

## RELATIONSHIPS



4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	July 2022	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
	Conduct a quarterly review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	October 2022, January, April, July 2023	Co-Chair RWG: Head of Services and Engagement in collaboration with Head of People and Practice

## 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.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	January 2023	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	January 2023	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and 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.	July 2022	Champion RWG: Communications Coordinator
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	July 2022	Champion RWG: Project Management Coordinator



# OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

## RESPECT



7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week (3-10 July 2022 & 2-9 July, 2023).	Raise awareness and share information among our staff and volunteers about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	July 2022 & July 2023	Champion RWG: Communications Coordinator
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2022 & July 2023	Champion RWG: Communications Coordinator
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2023	Chair RWG with all RWG members
8. Build recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures among people ASC supports.	Raise awareness and share information among people ASC supports.	July 2023	Chair RWG with RWG
	Introduce people ASC supports to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2023	Champion RWG: Communications Coordinator
	Facilitate opportunities to participate in and increase awareness of activities related to Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal cultures.	July 2023	Champion RWG: Communications Coordinator
	Facilitate focus groups to understand what knowledge people currently have, what they're interested in learning about and what activities they would like to participate in.	December 2022	Champion RWG: Communications Coordinator

# OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

## OPPORTUNITIES



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	March 2023	Champion RWG: Project Management Coordinator
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	March 2023	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	January 2023	Chair and Co-Chair RWG
	Identify local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	August 2023	Champion RWG: Project Management Coordinator

## GOVERNANCE



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	RWG to meet regularly to govern RAP implementation.	Fortnightly from July 2023	Chair RWG with RWG
	Apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	July 2022	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager

# OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

## GOVERNANCE



	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	March 2023	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2023	Chair RWG with RWG
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	October 2022, January, April, July 2023	Co-Chair RWG: Head of Services and Engagement
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	August 2022	Chair and Co-Chair RWG in consultation with RWG
	Plan an off-site working day to complement biweekly meetings to give more time to complete tasks.	August 2022	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
	Explore hosting a workshop to present RAP commitments to key community stakeholders.	August 2022	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
	13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	August 2022
Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.		September 2022	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	June 2023	Chair RWG: Volunteer Manager

# OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

## CONTACT DETAILS

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*Artwork at the ASC  
upstairs hall, created  
by Kelly Wallwork &  
other volunteers*

