

# Reconciliation Action Plan

2023-2023

Aboriginal and/or Torres  
Strait Islander people  
should be aware that this  
document may contain  
images and names of  
persons who may be  
deceased.

we can **together**





# WORKING TOGETHER TO CLOSE THE GAP

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**5,011**

OUR ABORIGINAL  
&/OR TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER  
CATCHMENT  
POPULATION  
CENSUS 2016

**5,971**

OUR ABORIGINAL &/OR  
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER  
ACTIVE PATIENTS  
JAN 2020

**119.2%**

OF TOTAL ABORIGINAL &/OR  
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER  
POPULATION ARE THE FOUNDATION  
ACTIVE PATIENTS

**31.9%**

PATIENTS WITH  
ABORIGINAL &/OR TORRES  
STRAIT ISLANDER  
HEALTH PLANS  
(2019)

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**We live and work on the lands of the  
First Australians. We pay our respects  
to Elders past, present and emerging.**



## **GAMILARAAY**

Dhayn ngiyani winangaylanha NSWga ganunga-waanda yanaylanha,  
dhaymaarr ganugu-waanda nhama ngarrangarranmaldanhi

## **WIRADJURI**

Ngiyani Yindyamali Aboriginal Mayiny Murrubandhda Mayinny galangga  
NSW Ngangaagi

## **ENGLISH**

We respect Aboriginal peoples as the First Peoples and custodians of  
NSW.





## Message from the CEO

I am proud to lead an organisation that is committed to health equity for all Australians, regardless of where they live or their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

I live on the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri Nation who have nurtured the land for more than 50,000 years.

The Wiradjuri Nation is defined by its three rivers - the Galari, the Wambool and the Murrumbidgee.

The history of seizure and occupation of the Wiradjuri lands is a sorry part of our national story.

The War that was fought between the invading colonists, and the Wiradjuri people, took a heavy toll on life and land.

Following a protracted war, the Wiradjuri leader Windradyne walked to Parramatta with the words 'Peace' embroidered onto his cap seeking an armistice with the occupying British power ending this phase of a brutal and costly period of dispossession.

Whether we reside within the traditional lands of the Wiradjuri, Wongaibon, Gamilaraay, Wailwan, Barranbinya, Gunu, Bandjigal or Barundji we cannot allow the deep wound that our forebearers visited upon our fellow Australians to fester. We must acknowledge and reconcile with our history of dispossession, suffering, sorrow and violence and address these darkest hours in our history.

Over the last half-century many steps towards reconciliation have been taken including the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution, the passage of the Racial Discrimination Act and the upholding of native title.

Reconciliation is progressed by acts, but must be measured by outcomes. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people still have a lower life expectancy compared to other Australians, and child mortality rates remain too high.

In a just, equitable and reconciled Australia, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children will have the same life chances and choices as non-Indigenous children, and the length and quality of a person's life will not be determined by their racial background.

Reconciliation is not reparation, it is a journey to a shared future that must be built together through listening, hearing, sharing and understanding.

That was the goal for which the Foundation was established twenty years ago in 2001, and remains our mission today. We recommit through this Plan to a shared vision of a Healthy Rural and Remote Australia for all Australians.

Mark Burdack  
**Chief Executive Officer**



In June 2020 the Board of The Healthy Communities Foundation Australia Ltd was proud to join with our management to endorse the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The delivery of improved health outcomes in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities relies on trust between patients and practitioner, patients and practice.

the Foundation recognises that there remains a deep wound flowing from the dispossession of the sovereign rights of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians to their lands, water and country.

The Board and management of the Foundation are committed to contributing to the best of our ability to address this historic wrong and create a new platform of trust that is essential to our work and the future health of our communities.





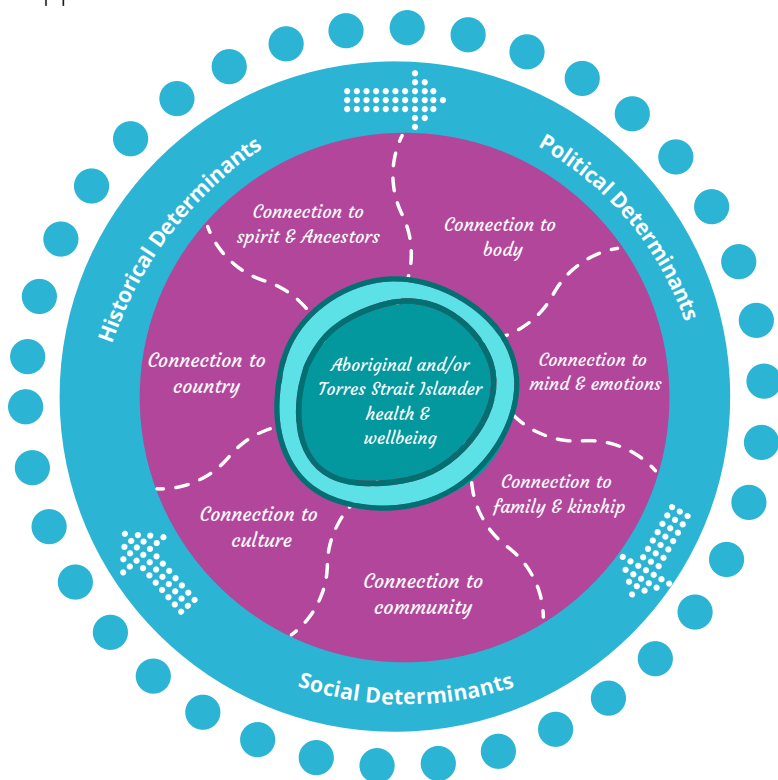
# Our Vision for Reconciliation

Guided by our Values (We care, we listen; We act with integrity; We support diversity; We are agile and innovate; We believe in working together), our Vision is for a future where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples are recognised as being the First Nations people of Australia.

Where all Australians embrace the Elders past, present and future for the wisdom and knowledge they hold and share.

Where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples receive equitable access to culturally appropriate health care.

And where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples receive education and employment opportunities.



To support our Vision, the Foundation commits to working in harmony with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to reduce disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality and health outcomes.

In our work our Vision is for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples to have access to high quality health care and support for improving the health outcomes within their communities.



## Our Charity

The Healthy Communities Foundation Australia Ltd (the Foundation) was established in 2001 as a not-for-profit charity by a group of dedicated doctors working with Aboriginal Medical Services, local government and others in response to the ongoing rural doctor crisis that was threatening many rural and remote communities with the loss of local health services.

The Foundation works in and with rural and remote communities to support them to understand their health needs, develop place-based plans and support communities to operate their own community health centres.

The Rural and Remote Medical Services Practice Support Program (RARMS) we have helped 17 disadvantaged communities to establish and maintain 24/7 on-the-ground primary health care services supporting more than 25,000 people over 20 years.

The Foundation helps communities by supporting them to acquire premises, employ nurses and health support staff, buy equipment and supplies and recruiting doctors on behalf of the community.

By helping doctors and staff live in rural and remote communities, we have been able to build a deep understanding of the needs of the community and grow the relationships necessary for successful health improvement.

100 percent of the revenue we generate goes back into supporting local health services in rural and remote communities. the Foundation currently employs 145 practice team support staff and 99 permanent and rostered rural GPs.

The Foundation prides itself on providing local employment in the towns in which we operate, and surrounding areas, and are working to engage local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth in trainee positions in the Foundation facilities.



## Our Approach

Our RAP is about working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People to maximise their potential while building our capacity to work towards providing better health outcomes by developing an understanding of, and recognising their culture, family ties and kinships. We aim to identify and create career development opportunities within our organisation for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

As an organisations working closely with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities throughout rural and remote NSW, the Foundation believe it is important to actively work towards and contribute to the Closing the Gap strategy. The Foundation is seeking to develop structure around the way we approach the three pillars of reconciliation – Respect, Relationships, Opportunities.

We have established a Reconciliation Action Plan working group to ensure that we gain input from various personnel across the organisation as well as external advisors from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities. We will work as a group to develop strategies and activities to achieve the deliverables set out in the RAP and integrate these activities into the the Foundation strategy and ongoing operations.

Our approach involves working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities on strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

An example of this in the Foundation' work to date includes our recent work with the Galariibaraay (Collarenebri) community.

Our connection with Collarenebri was led by community members reaching out to us to work together to build a better future for the community.

Over the last 3 years we have worked together with the local Aboriginal community to co-design a Community Plan that places Aboriginal health and self-determination at the centre of our joint planning.



This work is an example of the approach we are taking to ensure that Aboriginal people have control over the identification of priorities for their communities, and our work is guided by addressing those needs.



# The Foundation Team Pledge

'I pledge that in my leadership of the Board I will ensure that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander views and perspectives are heard and reflected in our decision making and that we work as a Board team to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples'.

**Richard Anicich AM, Chair of the Board**

'I pledge to work respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues, communities and partners to fulfil the Foundation' vision to create and maintain effective and culturally safe services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Jane Gray - Director**

'I pledge to ensure that we work with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People and patients to understand their needs and to ensure all our strategies, policies and services are culturally responsive and deliver better health outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians'.

**Mark Burdack, Chief Executive Officer**



In October 2020, Rural and Remote Medical Services Ltd signed an agreement with the Human Rights Commission to join the 'Racism. It Stops With Me' campaign.

As the largest provider of charitable primary and hospital care services in rural and remote communities in NSW we know that racism and discrimination contribute to depression, anxiety and poor health. Racism is a social determinants of health and the Foundation is committed to stopping racism in all its forms.





## Relationships

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities are based around relationships and therefore building relationships and trust is a critical process in achieving outcomes in reconciliation.

The needs of the communities that the Foundation services are at the forefront of our organisational strategy and we aim to develop strong relationships built on trust and mutual respect with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

The Foundation Staff are committed to building relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities to improve the access to and quality of care to these communities, and employment and development opportunities.

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	1.1 Identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.  We will engage with local Elders, local Land Councils, Aboriginal Health Workers, Aboriginal Liaison Officers & leaders of Community Development Programs in our communities.	December 2023	Mark Burdack
	1.2 We will research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	December 2023	Mark Burdack



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW), National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week and National Sorry Day	2.2 Members of staff will participate in an external NRW event.	27 May-3 June 2023	Croydon Dowley
	2.2 Members of our staff will participate in an external NRW event.	27 May-3 June 2023	Croydon Dowley
	2.3 We will 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	Croydon Dowley
	2.3 Circulate NAIDOC poster and information to staff.	4 - 11 July 2023	Croydon Dowley
	2.4 We will encourage participation of practices and staff in NAIDOC Week celebrations in their local communities with the assistance of the RAP Working Group members.	4 - 11 July 2023	Croydon Dowley
	2.5 We will encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one celebration during NAIDOC Week	4 - 11 July 2023	Croydon Dowley





ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	2.6 As an organisation we will recognise National Sorry Day	26 May 2023	Croydon Dowley
	3.1 We will communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	March 2023	Croydon Dowley
	3.2 We will Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey, including local mens' and womens' groups.	December 2023	Croydon Dowley
	3.3 We will identify Reconciliation Australia and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	December 2023	Croydon Dowley
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	4.1 We will research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	December 2023	Croydon Dowley
	4.2 We will conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	December 2023	Croydon Dowley



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
5. Promote healthy relationships by acknowledging the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community connection to land and water.	5.1 All staff will complete cultural awareness training at induction and every 3-years which will include a local Elder with the aim to work towards cultural safety.	December 2023	Croydon Dowley
	5.2 We will recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and their connection to family and kinships in our daily actions.	Ongoing	Croydon Dowley





# Respect

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
7. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	7.1 Develop a policy on increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	November 2023	Croydon Dowley
	7.2 We will conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation & organise training for all staff where required.	December 2023	Croydon Dowley
8. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples by observing cultural protocols.	8.1 We will develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	June 2023	Julia Faulkner
	8.2 We will work to increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	June 2023	Croydon Dowley



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
9. Build respect for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	9.1 We will raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	July 2023	Sue Jenkins
	9.2 We will introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2023	Sue Jenkins
	9.3 Our RAP Working Group will participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2023	Croydon Dowley
10. Create a culturally respectful workplace for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff members and stakeholders.	10.1 Cultural Awareness training mandatory for all employees with regular reviews conducted as to its effectiveness to build a culturally safe environment.	Ongoing	Carl Mason
	10.2 A local Elder from the local community to be involved with all face-to-face Cultural Awareness training including exploring the appointment of cultural mentors in every community	Ongoing	Carl Mason
11. Create a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.	11.1 We will schedule in regular reviews on cultural practices and strategies to ensure a culturally safe environment.	Ongoing	Carl Mason





# Opportunities

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
12. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	12.1 We will develop a business case for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment including: the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander designated positions</li> <li>• Advertising job opportunities on relevant job seeker websites and in designated</li> <li>• Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Publications (e.g. Koori Mail.</li> <li>• Succession Planning</li> <li>• Promoting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment</li> <li>• Career path planning</li> <li>• Aboriginal Health Workers</li> <li>• School based traineeships – working with Regional Training Organisations (RTOs)</li> <li>• Participating in School Career Information Days.</li> <li>• Attaining 20% Aboriginal employment rate by 2023</li> </ul>	September 2023	Mark Burdack
	12.2 We will build understanding of current Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples staff to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	September 2023	Mark Burdack



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
	<p>We will do this through the following strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the 1000 jobs grant &amp; possible opportunities.</li> <li>Community engagement.</li> <li>Survey staff to establish which staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.</li> <li>Identifying those who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander on staff ID cards to celebrate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff.</li> <li>Coordinate culture support for Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander staff/Aboriginal support groups/meetings.</li> </ul>	September 2023	Croydon Dowley
13. Increase Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	13.1 We will develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	December 2023	Croydon Dowley
	13.2 We will Investigate Supply Nation membership.	December 2023	Croydon Dowley
14. Commit to working in partnership with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to address health inequality and improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.	14.1 We will build and maintain networks, partnerships, and contacts with key Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and individuals as a mechanism to effectively engage with communities on their goals and priorities for health.	Ongoing	Mark Burdack





# Governance

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
15. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	15.1 We will form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	Complete	Mark Burdack
	15.2 We will draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	Complete	Mark Burdack
	15.3 We will establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG	Complete	Mark Burdack
16. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	16.1 We will define resource needs for RAP implementation.	June 2023	Croydon Dowley
	16.2 We will engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	June 2023	Croydon Dowley
	16.3 We will define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	June 2023	Croydon Dowley
17. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	17.1 We will complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	November 2023	Croydon Dowley
18. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP	18.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	ASAP	RAP Working Group



**167,374**

Number of primary care consultations with rural, remote and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients in 2019/20.

**21,003**

Number of hospital ED services provided by the Foundation Doctors in 2018/19.

**7.4**

The average number of Medicare services received by the Foundation remote patients

**-65.0%**

Reduction in the number of low acuity presentations to local EDs resulting from increased access to primary care.

**\$2.85M**

Charitable reserves for investment in continuity of medical workforce in rural and remote communities.

For more information about the Foundation Reconciliation Act Plan 2023-23, or to discuss how the Foundation can work better towards reconciliation, please contact:

**Chief Executive Officer**

The Healthy Communities Foundation Australia Ltd

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