

Reconciliation Action Plan

Queensland Alliance for Mental Health

February 2023 – December 2023



Reflect: CEO Statement



The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, learn and work and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures; and to Elders both past, present and emerging.

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Queensland Alliance for Mental Health joins a network of more than 2,200 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 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 Queensland Alliance for Mental Health 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 Queensland Alliance for Mental Health, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



About the Artwork



EMBARKMENT

This piece acknowledges QAMH's Reflect RAP journey as well as their leadership role within the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector.

QAMH's four strategic pillars are represented in this piece using the larger red circle symbols:

- Share Expertise – Learning from and teaching one another about our own thoughts, beliefs, and culture.
- Facilitate Connection – Providing opportunities and resources for community to connect with each other, and to First Nations culture.
- Foster Innovation – Guiding and influencing members to consider new and different ideas.
- Lead & Influence – Focusing on improving future outcomes.

These four pillars lead into the importance, and the inclusion of First Nations Peoples voices within the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector (large pink symbol).

The Koala footprints and the Cooktown Orchid have been used to acknowledge QAMH's state-wide work, and their members right across Queensland.

The mountains in this piece represent the coming together of all people, from all different walks of life, where each person is acknowledged as an important and valuable individual. While the handprints acknowledge the impact that any Human can have on another, as well as on their community.

The animal tracks represent journey and travelling – any journey that has lead to this point in time, as well as a journey into the future.

Finally, the colour scheme of this piece was selected as a reflection of the humour and friendliness within the QAMH team, and their commitment to working towards reconciliation.

About the Artist



CHLOE WATEGO

Chloe Watego is a Gubbi Gubbi-based woman with a passion for sharing and celebrating her culture through art.

As a self-taught artist, Chloe uses painting for creative expression and to aid in healing as she continues to explore her family's heritage.

Born and raised on Yugambah land, Chloe is of South Sea Islander descent and through her Grandmother has ties to Torres Strait Island and the Bundjalung Nation.

Her Grandfather was removed from mob due to the Stolen Generations, causing a hurtful disconnection to heritage and culture for him and the following generations of his family.

It was while on this journey to identify her Grandfather's Country, tribe and language that Chloe first started painting.

Chloe's artworks are a means to shine a light on her family's enduring ties to the land while also illuminating the path forward for her children and future generations of her family.

I pay my respects to the Gubbi Gubbi people and their Elders, on whose lands I reside with my family.

I acknowledge the ongoing sovereignty and custodianship of First Nations peoples throughout Australia and their enduring connections to Country.

Always was. Always will be.

Our Business



The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health is the peak body for the state’s Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector. We represent more than 100 organisations and stakeholders involved in the delivery of Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Services throughout Queensland.

From our office at Stones Corner Meanjin (Brisbane), on Jagera and Turrbal lands, we work to reform, promote and drive community mental health and wellbeing service delivery for all Queenslanders, through our influence and collaboration with our members and strategic partners.

At a national level, we have a formal collaboration with Community Mental Health Australia and provide input and advice to the work of Mental Health Australia and the National Mental Health Commission where appropriate. Locally, we work alongside our members, government, the Queensland Mental Health Commission and other stakeholders to add value to the sector and act as a strong advocate on issues that impact their operations in Queensland communities.

QAMH is primarily funded by the Queensland state government, but also receives funding from membership and through grants available from both state and federal agencies. With this funding, QAMH employs approximately 8 full-time equivalent staff, working in policy, project, membership, communications and administrative roles. It currently has no staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Our RAP

QAMH takes its role as leader in the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector seriously, and we believe that we need to lead by example. Embarking on a reconciliation process resonates strongly with our sense of social justice and working towards a fair and equal society. We hope that initiating this RAP journey will encourage our member organisations to do the same. We have nominated our RAP Champion to be the Director of Advocacy and Communications.

We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are often over-represented in mental health statistics. An estimated 24 per cent report having a diagnosed mental health or behavioural condition. From 2004–05 to 2018–19, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults reporting ‘high or very high’ levels of psychological distress increased from 27% to 31%¹. The suicide rate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is twice that of the non-Indigenous population, and suicide occurs at much younger ages. Suicide is the number one cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders aged 15-35 years².

Concerningly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples report that they are often treated poorly in mental health systems which are not delivering culturally appropriate models of care. Historical and ongoing colonisation, including the forced removal of children, lack of self-determination and structural racism contribute to this. We believe, as the peak body representing the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector in Queensland, we have an obligation to be part of the process of righting these historical wrongs by:

- Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their self-determination to establish community-controlled organisations
- Ensuring mainstream services are delivered in a culturally safe manner
- Engaging in important cross-cultural learnings about different approaches to mental health and wellbeing

QAMH should also participate in the vital discussion which will be occurring over the term of this federal Government around treaty, truth telling and voice to parliament. This needs to be whole of community business as we are embarking on a long overdue journey together.

We have a deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures which, despite so many adversities, has continued to be a source of strength for its people. We believe that non-Indigenous cultures and systems, including the mental health system, would be enriched if it could learn lessons from this ancient and enduring culture.

1. Indigenous Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Clearinghouse Mental health - AIHW Indigenous MHSPC
2. Queensland. Queensland Mental Health Commission. (2019). Every Life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019-2029, p9.

In July 2021, QAMH published our *Wellbeing First* report which outlined our strong belief that there is an urgent and compelling need for change in the mental health system. We are advocating for a shift in focus from managing illness to actively supporting wellbeing, which we define as a combination of a person’s emotional, psychological and social health factors that is strongly linked to life satisfaction, self-acceptance and a sense of belonging to a community. We envisage a future where community wellbeing services offer a direct entry point without medical intervention and provide programs for people that foster wellbeing. The social and emotional wellbeing approach that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities take, with its focus on a multi-dimensional concept of mental health, encompassing connection to Country, culture, spirituality, ancestry, family and communities, aligns with our *Wellbeing First* model. For example, yarning circles and Indigenous programs that focus on the interconnectedness of culture, identity and wellbeing echo our view that human distress does not always need a medical response and that there are life-changing benefits to connecting people with their community. While we fully support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their self-determination and establishment of community-controlled support services, we are also hopeful that there may be many opportunities for mainstream services to learn from these ancient cultures.

This is not a process we have embarked on lightly. We have deeply considered the ramifications and how it will not only enhance our organisation but also contribute to Queensland’s path to reconciliation. We are enormously proud to be a part of this process. We have broad support from our leadership team including the CEO and Board members. We have already started this journey by:

- Forming a Working Group which will meet monthly to ensure deliverables are enacted
- Regularly scanning First Nations websites such as the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, the Lowitja Institute and the Indigenous Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Clearinghouse for research and reports that are relevant to our members
- Advocating for improved funding and services for First Nations peoples in our submissions.

We feel we are ready to formalise this commitment by developing a Reflect RAP and hope to create enduring relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that can assist us in this journey.

Our Partnerships

For many years, QAMH has enjoyed an informal partnership with Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC), one of our member organisations. However, we feel that there is potential to explore this partnership further to foster greater sharing and learning opportunities leading to mutually beneficial outcomes. We also have a number of member organisations who deliver services specifically in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Current Activities

One of the roles performed by QAMH is keeping up to date with academic research and policy developments related to mental health and wellbeing. As part of this process, we scan literature and forward relevant articles and reports to our member organisations via our weekly newsletter. We regularly include First Nations reports and research, which we believe enriches our members’ understanding of best practice and policy developments in this area.

We also keep up to date with conferences, webinars and forums that are relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and advertise these to our member organisations.

Finally, when making submissions to government, we ensure that a diversity of perspectives are included, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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.	March 2023	Project and Policy Officer Membership, Communications and Design Advisor
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	March 2023	Project and Policy Officer
2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2023	Executive Assistant
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June 2023	Director of Advocacy and Communications
	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	CEO
3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	February 2023	CEO
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	March 2023	Director of Sector Engagement and Development
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	June 2023	Director of Sector Engagement and Development
4 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	December 2023	Project and Policy Officer
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	December 2023	Business Manager

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.	March 2023	Project and Policy Officer
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	December 2023	CEO
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.	December 2023	CEO
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	December 2023	CEO
7 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2023	Director of Advocacy and Communications
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2023	Director of Advocacy and Communications
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2023	Director of Advocacy and Communications

Opportunities

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
8 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.	December 2023	Business Manager
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	December 2023	Business Manager
9 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.	December 2023	Business Manager
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	December 2023	Business Manager

Governance

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
10 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	February 2023	Director of Advocacy and Communications
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	February 2023	Director of Advocacy and Communications
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	December 2023	Director of Advocacy and Communications
11 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	February 2023	CEO
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	March 2023	Director of Advocacy and Communications
	Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.	February 2023	CEO
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2023	Director of Advocacy and Communications
12 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.	July 2023	Project and Policy Officer
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	August 2023	Project and Policy Officer
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2023	Project and Policy Officer
13 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	October 2023	Project and Policy Officer



Queensland Alliance for Mental Health Limited

ABN: 23 216 177 453

ACN: 615 817 251

Telephone: 07 3394 8480

Email: admin@qamh.org.au

Website: www.qamh.org.au

433 Logan Road,
Stones Corner QLD 4120

Reflect RAP Contact

Emma Griffiths

Director - Advocacy and Communications

Phone: 07 3394 8480

Email: egriffiths@qamh.org.au