



# Reconciliation Action Plan

May 2021 - May 2022



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT



**ConnectGroups**  
helping support groups & individuals



## *About the Artwork*

The artwork was created by St Catherine's College Dandjoo Darbalung students in collaboration with St Hilda's School for Girls. Students and Staff participated in a range of workshops run by Dandjoo Darbalung students over the week. They discussed the importance of family while learning about the 6 Nyoongar seasons. Each student created their own interpretation of what family meant for them before recording it on the canvas. Together they then created the giant canvas symbolising the importance of community on Whadjuk Nyoongar Boodja and the sharing of knowledge.

ConnectGroups, Dandjoo Darbalung, and St. Hilda's work and support the traditional custodians of country on Nyoongar land. Additionally, the three organisations represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Western Australia. Dandjoo Darbalung, which means "*mixing together*" in Nyoongar, is committed to progressing reconciliation and providing opportunity pathways for young Aboriginal people, as is ConnectGroups as part of our first Reconciliation Action Plan.



## *Acknowledgement of Country*

ConnectGroups acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of this land and its waters. We wish to pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge the adverse effects of colonisation. This includes the destruction and breakdown of culture, experiences of racism, and impacts of government policies, such as the Stolen Generations. Having a comprehensive understanding of our history provides the rationale as to why improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is important and needs to be considered in all aspects of the design and delivery of health services.

ConnectGroups also acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Western Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We further acknowledge the traditional carers of the land upon which our office stands, the Whadjuk Nyoongar people, and pay our respect to them and their cultures; and to Elders past, present, and emerging.





## Message from our CEO

Antonella Segre



I am very pleased to present ConnectGroups' first Reconciliation Action Plan; the Plan has been developed in consultation with our Board, staff and stakeholders. Our decision to develop a RAP is an acknowledgment of our commitment to social justice and reconciliation in alignment with ConnectGroups' values and mission of contributing to connected and thriving communities.

Through the implementation of this Reflect RAP over the next twelve months, we will begin a journey that will have ConnectGroups take both symbolic and practical strides towards operationalising our vision for reconciliation: being part of a cultural shift that supports the broader reconciliation movement ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same opportunities available to all Australians.

Our commitment is also to strengthen our connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across WA through our *Dream it Forward* program, to foster cultural awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, experiences and rights.

We are excited to begin this journey and to use our RAP goals to influence actions and behaviours and build pathways to reconciliation.

Antonella Segre

# Message from Reconciliation Australia

Karen Mundine, CEO

Reconciliation Australia welcomes ConnectGroups to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP. ConnectGroups 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 over 2.3 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 ConnectGroups 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 ConnectGroups, 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 ConnectGroups

ConnectGroups is based in Perth and is the Peak body for peer Support Groups in Western Australia, empowering and sustaining community-based peer Support Groups and the wider community for over 38 years through sector development activities, capacity-building, resourcing, and advocacy. ConnectGroups consults with peer Support Groups across the State to assess and respond to immediate and emerging needs within their communities. ConnectGroups is a small not-for profit employing 9 staff, most of whom work part-time and manages an active volunteer program.

Peer Support Groups provide support on a broad range of issues including chronic and genetic conditions, trauma, mental distress, and social isolation. Groups play a key role in the promotion of social, emotional and physical wellbeing, community inclusion, demonstrate the value of lived experience, and provide a sense of hope. ConnectGroups is a not-for-profit with a strong track record of responding to identified needs with collaborative practice and innovative service delivery.

ConnectGroups delivers a number of unique services aimed at addressing service gaps in the community, including mental health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, isolated seniors, suicide prevention, and chronic health. Respecting the principles of co-production, strengths-based capacity-building, and place-based solutions, ConnectGroups also manages innovative grants programs across a broad range of stakeholders representing the most vulnerable populations in the community. The grants programs push the boundaries of grant management to be more flexible and responsive to its stakeholders.

ConnectGroups' reach through its *Dream it Forward* program is state-wide and has been successful at engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in most regions and has brokered funding for more than 100 projects from Kalumburu to Albany since 2014. ConnectGroups is committed to building connected, thriving, resilient communities, to disrupting risk factors, to strengthening culture, and to giving communities a voice in their own healing.

## *Our Reconciliation Action Plan*

ConnectGroups is committed to advocating for social justice, for the reduction of over-representation in rates of incarceration and out-of-home care, for self-determination, for the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration, for the adoption of the Uluru Statement of the Heart, and for Australia's First Peoples' voices to inform the development of policy, the implementation of reform, and at every level of society beginning with our own.

This Reflect RAP will drive ConnectGroups to ensure cultural competency, cultural safety, social justice principles and evidence-based practice is implemented across all service provision, providing a framework for the organisation to support the national reconciliation movement.

The RAP journey is internally championed by ConnectGroups CEO Antonella Segre supported by the Board of Management Chair Peta Wootton. The Board has seconded a member to the REFLECT RAP development and implementation to support the organisation's Program Manager who will drive the RAP activities and obligations.

ConnectGroups commits itself to the path of reconciliation and to reflect and progress it in our daily work and in the values that underpin what we do. Our commitment is real and inspired by the Uluru Statement from the Heart – to walk alongside our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters in a movement of the Australian peoples for a better future.





# Our Reconciliation Action Plan

## Our Reconciliation Journey

ConnectGroups has engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities across WA for six (6) years since launching the *Dream it Forward* program. The Dream it Forward model is a partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities grounded in its decolonisation methodology by recognition of the impact of underlying trans-generational grief and trauma caused by colonisation, dispossession, and successive government policies which have resulted in persistent disadvantage and distress.

ConnectGroups operates throughout Western Australia and we listen and learn through respectful engagement and dialogue with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as they have generously shared their unique stories, histories, and experiences with us.

We are progressing cross-cultural awareness and operationalising cultural competency across all service areas of the organisation. Beyond the operational imperative of managing *Dream it Forward* within a culturally-competent context, we have extended our interest, learning, and advocacy, becoming active in reform, supporting Indigenous thought leaders and progressing social justice outcomes while ensuring implementation of evidence-based best practice within our core business and across all program arms.

ConnectGroups is an active member of the coalition of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Not For Profits which make up Social Reinvestment WA (SRWA), a coalition working together for an effective and connected approach to justice in Western Australia. SRWA advocates for a social reinvestment approach, centred on smarter justice, healthy families, and safe communities which makes both social and economic sense.

ConnectGroups has also aligned with the direction recommended in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Evaluation Project (ATSISPEP) Final Report and is committed to building partnerships and alliances with organisations which advocate for a model of place-based locally-led solutions, strengths-based empowerment, and community-based microenterprise development.

As an organisation operating within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural space, it is paramount that our services are delivered in a way that improve outcomes, while also ensuring stakeholder satisfaction and trust in the process. *“Cultural competence is more than cultural awareness – it is the set of behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together to enable a system, agency, or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.”*<sup>1</sup> This recognition is driving our reconciliation journey.

1 AIHW 2015 Closing the gap clearinghouse – Cultural competency in the delivery of health services for Indigenous people



# Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1.0 Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	1. Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	June 2021	<u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> Board seconded member
	2. Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	June 2021	<u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> Board seconded member
2.0 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	1. Encourage ConnectGroups staff and Board leadership to attend a NRW event, and understand the significance of the 1967 referendum and Mabo decision: 27 May 2021 and 3 June 2021	May 2021	<u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> CEO
	2. Prepare Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and materials to circulate to staff during NRW.	May 2021	Program Manager
	3. Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to all staff during NRW.	May/June 2021	Program Manager
	4. RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June 2021	CEO
	5. Promote NRW through ConnectGroups social media channels.	May/June 2021	Media and Comms Officer





# Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3.0 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	1. Maintain internal marketing calendar to promote important days through ConnectGroups social media channels to further promote inclusivity and reconciliation.	June 2021	<u>Lead:</u> Media and Comms Officer <u>Support:</u> Program Manager
	2. Identify external stakeholders that ConnectGroups can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	June 2021	<u>Lead:</u> CEO <u>Support:</u> Program Manager
	3. Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff about specific RAP commitments.	May 2021	<u>Lead:</u> CEO <u>Support:</u> Program Manager
	4. Brief staff on progress of RAP at weekly staff meetings, seek feedback.	May 2021	Program Manager
	5. Develop and implement a plan to engage and inform key stakeholders about our RAP and associated responsibilities.	July 2021	<u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> Board seconded member
	6. Raise awareness of ConnectGroups' RAP with Mental Health Commission, Department of Communities, Ministers/Shadow Ministers Mental Health, Community, Peaks, community sector NGOs, WAPHA, Dream it Forward stakeholders.	July 2021	<u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> CEO
4.0 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	1. Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	September 2021	Board seconded member
	2. Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	September 2021	Finance and Business Systems Manager







Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
2.0 Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	4. Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	September 2021	<u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> Board seconded member
3.0 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	1. Raise awareness and share information amongst ConnectGroups staff and volunteers of the meaning of NAIDOC Week. 2. Encourage ConnectGroups staff to participate in NAIDOC Week by promoting community events in our local area. 3. Ensure Working Group participates in an external NAIDOC Week event.	June 2021  June 2021  July 2021	Program Manager  CEO  <u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> CEO
4.0 Publicly recognise and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories	1. Include more images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in official ConnectGroups marketing collateral. 2. Ensure all marketing collateral artwork is authentic and representative. 3. Develop signage acknowledging Traditional Owners of the land within the central office space.	June 2021  June 2021  May 2021	Media and Comms Officer  Media and Comms Coordinator  Media and Comms Coordinator





Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1.0 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation including limited-term consultation, Elders remuneration, and engagement with traditional owners.</li> <li>2. Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.</li> <li>3. Add commitment to encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to all staff recruitment advertising.</li> </ol>	November 2022  February 2022  May 2021	CEO  CEO  <u>Lead:</u> CEO <u>Support:</u> Finance and Business Systems Manager
2.0 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an understanding of the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.</li> <li>2. Explore using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses, eg Kuditj Kitchen, Bindi Bindi where possible, and absolutely for Aboriginal-focused initiatives. Ensure practice is documented via internal policy.</li> <li>3. Explore incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned suppliers where economically feasible ensuring that all staff are aware of relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander providers and the State government's "Small Business Development Centre's Aboriginal Business Directory".</li> <li>4. Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. Investigate Supply Nation membership.</li> </ol>	October 2021  October 2021  October 2021  November 2021	<u>Lead:</u> CEO/ <u>Support:</u> Finance and Business Systems Manager  Finance and Business Systems Manager  Finance and Business Systems Manager  Finance and Business Systems Manager



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1.0 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Begin recruitment of an operational RAP Working Group to support the implementation of our RAP, comprising of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and decision-making staff from across our organisation.</li> <li>2. Develop Terms of Reference.</li> <li>3. Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.</li> <li>4. Schedule two meetings across the year to monitor and report on RAP implementation.</li> </ol>	<p>May 2021</p> <p>May 2021</p> <p>July 2021</p> <p>July 2021</p>	<p><u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> Board seconded member</p> <p><u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> Board seconded member</p> <p><u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> Board seconded member</p> <p>Program Manager</p>
2.0 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define resource needs for RAP implementation.</li> <li>2. Engage CEO in the delivery of RAP commitments.</li> <li>3. Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.</li> </ol>	<p>June 2021</p> <p>May 2021</p> <p>August 2021</p>	<p>CEO</p> <p>Program Manager</p> <p><u>Lead:</u> Program Manager <u>Support:</u> Finance and Business Systems Manager</p>



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3.0 Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	1. Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2021	Program Manager
4.0 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	1. Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	January 2022	<u>Lead:</u> RWG <u>Support:</u> Program Manager





For more information about ConnectGroups *Reconciliation Action Plan*, contact:

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