



Mission Australia
Reconciliation Action Plan

Mission Australia's vision for reconciliation is that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this country will be restored to a place of equity, dignity and respect. We long for the healing of our national soul as we see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures fully valued, broken relationships restored and social inequalities eradicated. Our *Reconciliation Action Plan* or *RAP* is an agreed strategy of how Mission Australia (MA) intends to contribute to the huge task of reducing the disturbing gap in living standards between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal Australians.

Mission Australia's RAP has emerged after a lengthy process of consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues, our own staff, other stakeholders and with enormous encouragement from Reconciliation Australia. Our RAP has been developed under the auspices of Reconciliation Australia's RAP program and follows the recognised guidelines under which commitments to action follow the well established themes of *relationships, respect and opportunities*. These themes align well with our own organisational values of *respect, compassion, integrity, perseverance and celebration*.

Relationships

As we have entered into conversation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from within and beyond our organisation, we have become aware that trusting relationships are necessarily the beginning of whatever we might plan to do. Though this phase may be breaking new ground, its deep and lasting value is something we are learning from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters. The fulfilment of targets indicated will depend enormously upon the effectiveness of this networking and relationship building. We will develop relationships at every level of our organisation – nationally, state-wide and locally – wherever our work is based. While our leaders and our managers will be prepared to be initiators they will listen more than speak. They will adopt a spirit of humility and willingness to understand the cultural insights necessary for mutuality and trust, even though these learnings may be unsettling from the perspective of a culture that has been dominant for so long.

Respect

Of Mission Australia's five values, *respect* is pivotal. We are committed to respecting all individuals regardless of their colour, race, religion or socio-economic background. Those who are homeless, unemployed, have a disability, are alienated from family or school or otherwise disadvantaged, are the very people for whom our organisation exists. Unfortunately, these marginalised groups are over-represented in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Our staff will exercise full respect towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – and especially to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and program participants. We will endeavour to respectfully learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to participate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their festivals and celebrations.

Opportunities

Mission Australia's vision is *to see a fairer Australia by enabling people in need to find pathways to a better life*. The appalling gap between living conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal Australians is a major barrier to a fair Australia. We will seek to do all we can to reduce that gap. At some of our MA sites this will simply mean taking initial steps to engage the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. At other sites we will be asking how we can work more collaboratively with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and how service delivery can become more culturally sensitive and effective. We will consider how we might employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and improve our employment and human resources strategies. We will regularly review our position in order to have an up-to-date picture of our involvement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This will enable us to re-set clear targets for the future. As our managers establish objectives for their work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff they will necessarily take into account the situation prevailing in their own regions. We may, for example, need to build in more flexible conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who have pressing family responsibilities, who are expected to attend ceremony and sorry business or who need to be present when members of their extended family are sick or dying.

Summary of our key commitments

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE
<p>We will build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals by national, state and local representatives of Mission Australia: Our goal is to identify and get to know the Traditional Owners, Elders and leaders in the communities wherever MA has a presence. This will include our urban as well as rural centres. We will particularly seek out Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations whose involvements coincide with our interests in community services, employment, training, early learning and housing. The relationships we develop will be the foundation for future partnerships, the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and local cultural appreciation training for MA staff.</p>	<p>National, state and territory and regional leaders of Mission Australia, from members of the ELT to Operations Managers across the country, will identify and establish regular contact with the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies around Australia. These will include health, justice, community development and educational bodies.</p>	<p>Executive Leadership Team (ELT) members; State Directors; Operations Managers.</p>	<p>From July 2009 and ongoing.</p>
	<p>Local site managers will visit selected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or individuals at least twice a year. They will include records of these visits in their regular reports. The number of visits will vary due to local context and will be determined in consultation with Operations Managers.</p>	<p>Operations Managers; Site Managers; Program Managers.</p>	<p>From July 2009 and ongoing.</p>
<p>We will build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures: Our goal is for <i>Welcome to Country</i> and <i>Acknowledgement of Land</i> to become habitually practised throughout the organisation. The desire to have Traditional Owners present at significant meetings should be tempered by the time and pressure constraints experienced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders themselves. The form of words is important and the crafting of these in consultation with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities provides a good opportunity for conversation and for demonstrating respect towards local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders.</p>	<p>At all major public MA meetings organisers will invite local Traditional Owners to perform <i>Welcome to Country</i>. All managers will understand the difference between <i>Welcome to Country</i> and <i>Acknowledgement of Land</i>. They will know the names of their local custodians, will be familiar with the MA wording for <i>Acknowledgement of Land</i> and will offer acknowledgements at the commencement of all significant meetings for which they are responsible – these include launches, graduations, important celebrations, retreats, managers' meetings, staff inductions and training events.</p>	<p>CEO and all members of ELT; State Directors; Operations Managers; All Site Managers; All Program Managers; Chaplains.</p>	<p>From July 2009 and ongoing.</p>
<p>We will deliver Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural appreciation training appropriately to all staff across the organisation: A certain amount of training is necessary for all staff, even those whose engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is minimal. For staff members regularly involved with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, more extensive locally based training will be necessary in order to be sensitive to culture and work effectively. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are not homogeneous, static or 'textbook' but are characterised by a range of local attitudes, values, beliefs, customs, norms and understandings. Therefore, training will be conducted in consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.</p>	<p>General Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural appreciation training will be delivered to all MA staff and will be included in staff induction programs. During induction days all new staff will be introduced to MA's Reconciliation Action Plan summary. Leaders of face-to-face induction days will be encouraged to invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainers to contribute an element of cultural appreciation training.</p>	<p>Operations Managers; All Site Managers; All Program Managers; Chaplains; National Aboriginal Advisor; HR staff.</p>	<p>Commencing July 2009. 50% completed by July 2010. 100% completed by December 2010.</p>
	<p>In cases where our programs and services regularly involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the staff members delivering these services will receive specific and locally relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural appreciation training.</p>	<p>Operations Managers; All Site Managers; All Program Managers.</p>	<p>From July 2009 and ongoing.</p>
<p>We will participate in the educational and celebratory events offered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as we believe that they are an important element of cultural appreciation: These include NAIDOC week, Sorry Day, National Apology Day and National Reconciliation Week. These occasions provide excellent opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags to be displayed and for special prominence to be given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art-work.</p>	<p>At the beginning of each year, a calendar of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and celebrations in each State will be circulated. All sites will participate in at least two events of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, celebration or training per year.</p> <p>Jade Rose's painting, <i>The spiritual journey of the joining of two spirits</i>, is already displayed in all Mission Australia's offices and entrances. MA <i>Acknowledgement of Land</i> posters are to be displayed at all sites.</p>	<p>State Directors; All Site Managers; All Program Managers; Chaplains; National Aboriginal Advisor.</p>	<p>From January 2010 and ongoing.</p>

Summary of our key commitments

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE
<p>We will develop key opportunities for MA to contribute to closing the gap: We can increase the effectiveness of our existing programs and service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In order to do this, we will need baseline information regarding our current work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. Any effective review process will involve consultation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, staff members and stakeholders.</p>	<p>A Review Report will be submitted by MA Managers and will include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Evidence of their ongoing consultation with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. 2 Initiatives planned to improve accessibility of existing MA programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 3 Initiatives such as mentoring and training programs which will open doors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for employment within MA. 4 Targets for increased numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. 5 Targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeships. 6 Targets for the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. 7 Identification of the particular elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural appreciation training important for their staff. 	<p>MA Managers.</p>	<p>June 2010.</p>
	<p>HR will develop a database of MA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and participants from which we will be able to measure numerical changes. This will provide some measure of the success of our deployment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff as well as the extent and effectiveness of our programs with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.</p>	<p>Executive Leader Human Resources; National Aboriginal Advisor.</p>	<p>June 2010.</p>
<p>We will increase the levels of our employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within MA.</p>	<p>We will increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed by MA. Our target will be to exceed the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to non-Aboriginal employees compared with the corresponding proportion in the general population in each region where we are working. These proportions vary widely from well over 50 percent in many parts of the NT to below 1 percent in most of Victoria.</p>	<p>Executive Leader Human Resources; Operations Managers; All Site Managers; All Program Managers.</p>	<p>December 2010.</p>

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