

# **St Patrick's Community Support Centre**

## **Reconciliation Action Planning**



### **Staff and visitors information booklet**

## What is reconciliation?

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Reconciliation means  
understanding and respecting  
each other. It's a good thing to  
look to in the future

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In its broadest sense 'reconciliation' means 'coming together'.

In Australia, '**reconciliation**' refers to **bringing together** Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians.

Reconciliation is not something that one decides to 'do' – it is a process, at the end of which there may be reconciliation, but this can never be guaranteed.

Reconciliation can mean many things and might have a different meaning to different people. However, reconciliation has **elements of truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, reparation, and love.**

Supporting reconciliation means **working to overcome the division** (often called "the gap") and inequality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Differences are biggest in health, income, living standards and life expectancy, but also prejudice and racism.



## What is a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)?

On 25 July 2006 Reconciliation Australia launched their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program. Its main aim is to help organisations close the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal Australians with measurable and accountable actions.

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) **provide a framework to directly improve relationships and respect** between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

RAPs must be **developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders** and be measurable, action-oriented and publicly accountable. They may include small initial steps or decisions for major changes.

## When did the reconciliation process start in Australia?

The process of Reconciliation formally began as a result of the Report of the [Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody](#) in 1991.

The government formed the **Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation**, setting a 10 year timeframe to advance a **national process of reconciliation**.

Among the Council's tasks was to address Aboriginal disadvantage and aspirations in employment, health infrastructure and economic development.

It identified **eight key issues in the reconciliation process:**

- Understanding country
- Improving relationships
- Valuing cultures
- Sharing history
- Addressing disadvantage
- Custody
- Destiny (Aboriginal people controlling their own destiny)
- Formal documentation of the process

The Council's formation was an **acknowledgment of the past and ongoing failure of government policy** to recognize and address the cultural, social and economic needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Australians. It was also recognition that progress also required a sea change in the understanding and involvement of non-Aboriginal Australians.

While the reconciliation process has successfully motivated and moved thousands of ordinary people, court decisions, laws and political developments made the reconciliation process much harder.

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We can't change what  
happened in the past, but we  
can make a better future by  
understanding the past

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## Why should we reconcile?

Reconciliation can only be viewed on a case by-case basis. There is no definitive process that is foolproof and universal.

It is a **bottom-up process** that occurs one person at a time, but that also requires support from official institutions and strong leaders.

History teaches us that the need for reconciliation is self-evident. We must care for one another and try to understand one another, or we are doomed to fail.

You can find evidence in the two world wars. After World War II the **Marshall Plan** assured that the defeated countries' people were looked after—contrary to World War I where they were humiliated and destroyed.

Reconciling with former enemies helps avoid feelings of revenge, anger and hatred. It is **the only way to assure lasting peace** and stability.

## Why is St. Patrick's doing a RAP?

St Patrick's Board approved the development of a RAP for the organisation in September 2016 and since that time a working group has been meeting to work on the RAP.

Aboriginal people make up a significant proportion of St Patrick's clients. As an organisation that encourages and respects diversity it's important that St. Pat's demonstrates a genuine commitment to improving relationships between clients from all cultural backgrounds. The RAP is another step in showing our respect through recognising the valuable contribution Aboriginal people make to the community as well as furthering positive relations and improving our services.

We see the RAP as an opportunity to learn more from the local elders about local Aboriginal history and connection to the Fremantle area as well as creating the opportunity to form stronger partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal people and organisations in achieving good outcomes that will help all Aboriginal people to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

The working group is working through a "Reflect" RAP. This recognises the work we are currently doing that supports reconciliation and sets the foundation for further actions. The following are some of the actions we are including in the St. Pat's RAP:

**Commitment to all staff participating in cultural awareness training.** Encourage all staff to take a keen interest in learning about and celebrating ATSI traditional and modern culture. This might also include inviting ATSI elders to speak, distributing fact sheets among staff, or spreading good news about our Aboriginal clients internally and externally.

- **Recruitment and retention of ATSI staff.** This might include a greater focus on recruitment and retention of ATSI people and not just in roles dealing with Aboriginal issues.
- **Acknowledge traditional owners/custodians.** Acknowledge ATSI people as the traditional custodians of the land at major meetings and events. Inclusion of the



ATSI flags alongside the Australian flag whenever displayed as well as inclusion in our publications, websites, etc.

- **Form partnerships.** Create positive and productive working partnerships with Aboriginal organisations. Strong relationships bring different skills and perspectives to the table and encourage innovation, success and excellence. This might include having identifying ATSI services for our preferred supplier lists, partnering with services we provide.
- **Aboriginal Advisory group:** Consult with local ATSI elders to find out what the community needs, then work with them to help provide these goods or services.

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St. Patrick's RAP will focus on reflecting  
on what we are currently implementing  
and setting some simple, achievable goals

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### Here are some smaller things we can all do:

- always write "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people", don't write "Aboriginals" "Indigenous" or "indigenous"
- invite family, friends or work colleagues to a screening of an [Aboriginal movie](#)
- invite our clients to share their stories about their own histories and highlight their achievements
- acknowledge the traditional owners when possible
- involve family, friends, staff to contribute ideas (strengthens awareness of ATSI history/culture)

- create a calendar showing ATSI events featuring photos and information about these events
- hang ATSI artworks in offices
- support local ATSI programs and take time to develop relationships



## **A national movement towards reconciliation**

Between 2006 and 2011 more than 300 organisations have implemented RAPs, including some of Australia's largest companies and not-for-profits, government departments, schools and universities.

More than 20,000 people from RAP organisations have completed formal cultural awareness training. Organisations have committed to employing more than 21,000 Aboriginal people, and by May 2012 over 13,000 positions were filled. 1,000 Aboriginal youth were in apprenticeships and traineeships. \$26 million were spent purchasing goods and services from certified Aboriginal businesses.

## **Where can I learn more?**

Check out the following sites for more information on reconciliation:

### **Reconciliation Australia**

[Reconciliation Australia](#) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation established in 2000 by the former Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation. They are the peak national organisation building and promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for the wellbeing of the nation.

### **Reconcile.org.au**

The [Reconcile website](#) was developed pro bono for Reconciliation Australia. Its purpose is to create an online resource for people nationwide to learn and discuss the importance of reconciliation and how we can all go about achieving it.

## **Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR)**

ANTaR is an independent, national network of mainly non-Indigenous organisations and individuals working in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

## **Australian Government**

The Australian government has put together a page on the [history of the reconciliation movement](#) along with links to further information and resources.

## **Reconciliation in Canada**

Reconciliation is not unique to Australia. Canada is working towards implementing all of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 1994 recommendations for its Aboriginal people. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission created a report about abuses within government residential schools of Aboriginal children. An estimated 150,000 ATSI children were also forcibly removed from their families to break their link to their culture and identity and assimilate them into mainstream society. Canada apologised in 2008 to survivors of the residential schools.

## **Have a say**

We would love to hear your thoughts and ideas on how St Patrick's can be a welcoming place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel that they can belong and feel included and valued members of our community, as clients, staff and visitors.



So far we have...

...drafted a set of actions and strategies St Pat's can pursue (the RAP) that will be circulated for feedback

....sent out an invitation to local Aboriginal people to be part of an Advisory Group for the RAP as well of consulting with us about issues relevant to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients

... introduced protocols around Welcome and acknowledgement of country

....set up some yarning groups

...hosted an interagency forum on reconciliation and action plans

....committed to annual NADIOC week events

....committed to cultural awareness training as a core requirement for all staff

## Here are some ways you can get involved

- Drop us a line, through our feedback and suggestion box or through our website <http://www.stpats.com.au/feedback-form/>
- Clients can participate in a yarning session (Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people welcome) that are being held in the dining room at St. Pat's
- Send an email to or talk to one of the people on the St Patrick's RAP working group.



This is the St Patrick's team working on our RAP. Feel free to have a chat with one of them if you want to learn more.

Victor                      Director Homelessness and Housing

Traci                        Manager Day Centre

Amanda                    Senior Outreach worker

Joanna                     Aboriginal Health Outreach Worker

Lance                      Assertive outreach worker

Varnya                     Communications Coordinator

Lyn                         Manager Corporate Services