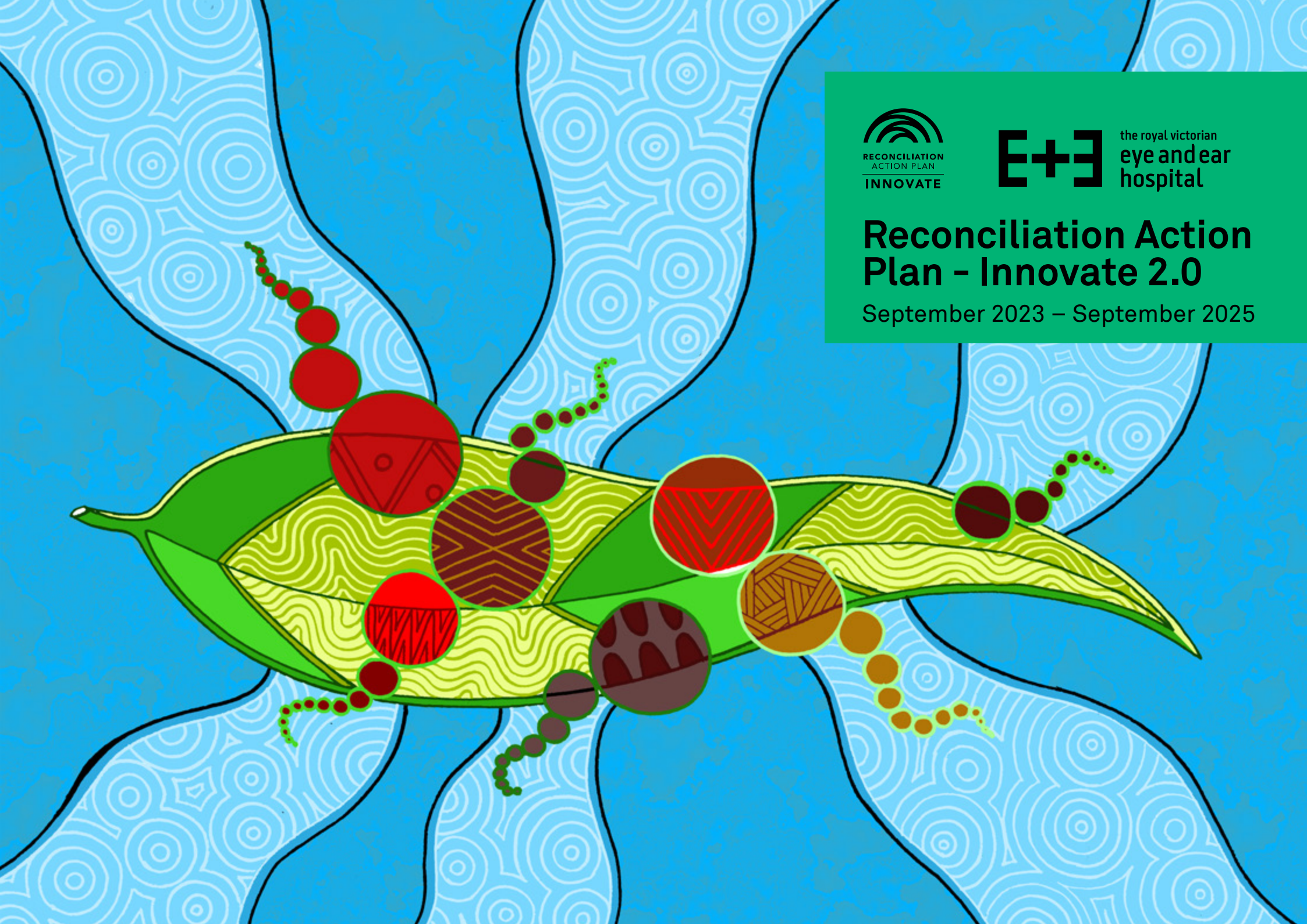




Reconciliation Action Plan - Innovate 2.0

September 2023 – September 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

02

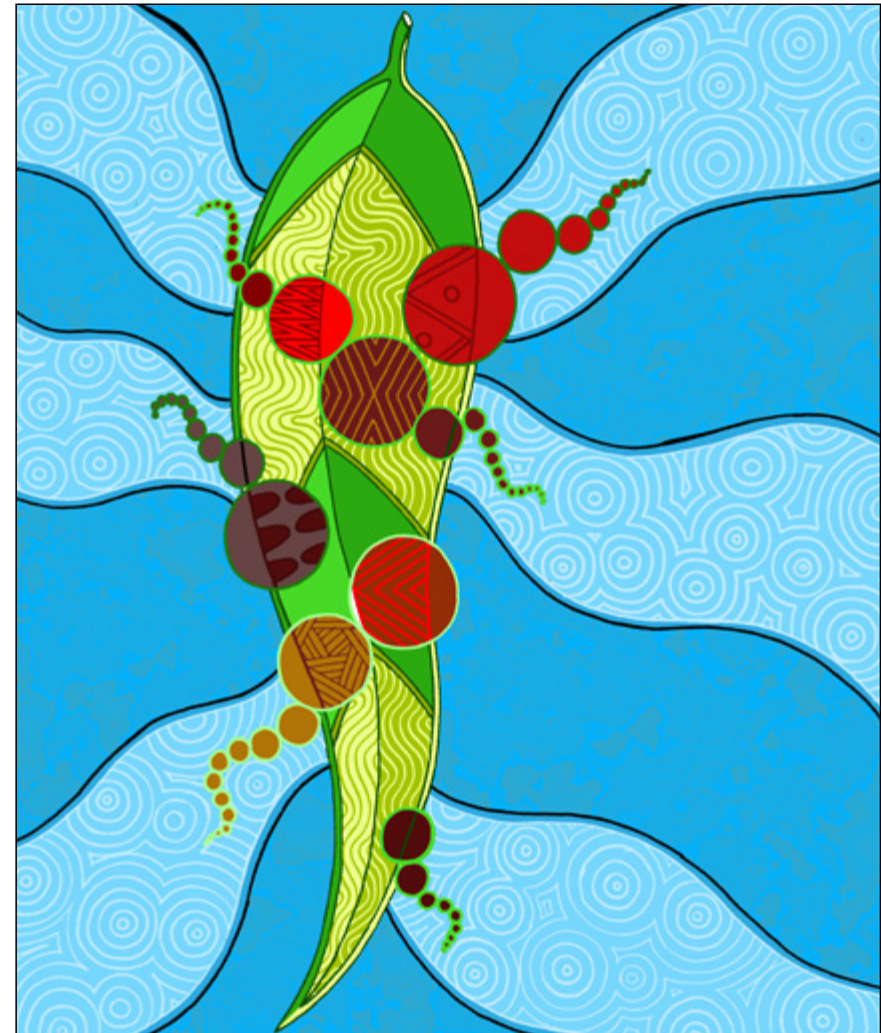
RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN - INNOVATE 2.0
SEPTEMBER 2023 - SEPTEMBER 2025

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise and respect the cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with Country which continues to be important to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

About the artist and artwork

Artist – Mandy Nicholson – Wurundjeri

Mannagum leaf – welcoming of visitors, used in smoking ceremony. Embedded in the leaf are circles depicting continuation of cultural practices and ceremony today and the sharing of our cultures with others. The waterways symbolise the waterways that run into the Birrarung (Yarra) and become one, so we begin our shared history of Melbourne.



Our vision for reconciliation

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Our vision for reconciliation is for a future where The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (Eye and Ear) actively promotes an ongoing culturally respectful environment that reflects equitable and inclusive access to services for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

We are committed to closing the healthcare gap for vision and hearing through shared understanding and creating stronger awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's histories, cultures and practices.



Message from Reconciliation Australia



Reconciliation Australia commends The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (Eye and Ear) on the formal endorsement of its second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. The Eye and Ear continues to be part of a strong network of more than 2,500 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously strengthen reconciliation commitments and constantly strive to apply learnings in new ways.

An Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build the strong foundations and relationships that ensure sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

An integral part of building these foundations is reflecting on and cataloguing the successes and challenges of previous RAPs. Learnings gained through effort and innovation are invaluable resources that the Eye and Ear will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to the Eye and Ear using the lens of reconciliation to better understand its core business, sphere of influence, and diverse community of staff and stakeholders. The RAP program's emphasis on *relationships, respect, and opportunities* gives organisations a framework from which to foster connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rooted in mutual collaboration and trust.

This Innovate RAP is an opportunity for the Eye and Ear to strengthen these relationships, gain crucial experience, and nurture connections that will become the lifeblood of its future RAP commitments. By enabling and empowering staff to contribute to this process, the Eye and Ear will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

Gaining experience and reflecting on pertinent learnings will ensure the sustainability of the Eye and Ear's future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, providing meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Eye and Ear on your second Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Message from our Board Chair

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RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN - INNOVATE 2.0
SEPTEMBER 2023 - SEPTEMBER 2025



It is with immense pride that I present The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2.0. As we progress on our reconciliation journey, this plan builds on the actions outlined in our initial Innovate RAP and reflects achievements as testament to our unwavering commitment and advancement of reconciliation. We do this as a community and have learned that collaboration between the hospital, our partner organisations, and most importantly, our patients is what delivers change.

I am most proud of our ongoing partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS). This union supports the vitally important clinics that provide access to ophthalmology and ear, nose and throat (ENT) care. Last year we celebrated a significant milestone, the 10-year anniversary since the opening of our collaborative Healthy Ears Outreach Clinic located at VAHS, Fitzroy.

Reconciliation is firmly entrenched in our organisational agenda and remains a top priority in all aspects of our operations. Our Innovate RAP 2.0 aligns seamlessly with our Strategic Plan, focusing us to provide inclusive and accessible care whilst addressing the diverse needs of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, consumers, staff and volunteers.

The learnings and challenges derived from our initial Innovate RAP propel us forward on our reconciliation journey. The Innovate RAP 2.0, which I present on behalf of the Board, carries the same momentum and fervour. It signifies our dedication to fostering positive change and ensuring meaningful reconciliation within our organisation and the wider community.

Dr Sherene Devanesen
Chair, Board of Directors

Message from our Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



At the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, we firmly believe that there is more that we can contribute to improving healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. That is why we are embarking on the next phase of our Innovate RAP journey with Innovate RAP 2.0. This plan will not only allow us to reflect on our past achievements, but also enable us to identify further opportunities to advance reconciliation.

The hospital successfully met the targets outlined in our Innovate RAP, including the launch of our Aboriginal Employment Plan 2021-2025 (AEP) and the establishment of our Welcome Space.

We strive to be an employer of choice for Aboriginal people by cultivating a culturally safe and inclusive working environment. To support us in achieving this goal, in alignment with our Aboriginal Employment Plan, we employed an Equity and Inclusion Coordinator

who collaborates closely with our dedicated Mirring Ba Wurring team (Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers). Together, they curate opportunities and experiences within our hospital that cater to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The creation of a safe space where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, carers, and staff can reflect, feel secure, and connect with their country became a reality in 2022 with the opening of our Welcome Space. This is a significant step forward in enhancing our hospital's cultural understanding and respect as we continue our reconciliation journey.

I would like to extend my gratitude to our Mirring Ba Wurring team, our RAP Working group, our partners at VAHS and our patients, whose unwavering commitment and guidance have been invaluable in shaping the Innovate RAP 2.0. Their collective efforts have paved the way for meaningful change within our organisation and I am confident that this plan will help guide us on the next steps of our journey.

Brendon Gardner
Chief Executive Officer

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (the Eye and Ear) is Australia's only specialist stand-alone eye, ear, nose, and throat (ENT) hospital. The hospital is the largest public provider of ophthalmology and ENT services in Victoria, delivering more than half of Victoria's public eye surgery and a vast majority of Victoria's public cochlear implants. As a state-wide organisation, it has geographic reach across Victoria and also provides specialised treatment and care for patients from interstate.

As a world leading eye, ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist service, our vision is to progress and provide exceptional care delivered by an empowered and sustainable workforce. This is underpinned by four guiding principles: Integrity, Inclusive and Accessible Care, Collaboration and Excellence and strengthened by our three Strategic Pillars:

- **Leading through Excellence**
- **Advancing Specialist Care**
- **Supporting and Growing our People**

The Eye and Ear is making significant progress towards closing the eye and ENT health gap for our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients. The Healthy Ears Clinic at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Services (VAHS) in Fitzroy has been operational for over 10 years and continues to be very successful. It runs every four weeks and provides ENT and Audiology assessment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Up to twenty people, predominantly children, are seen in each ENT clinic with up to twenty children assessed in each Audiology session. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for the service has escalated significantly. Hearing Blitz Clinics were introduced in partnership with the University of Melbourne and additional hearing assessment clinics were scheduled at the Eye and Ear to meet the significant increase in Audiology waitlist numbers. This has had a positive impact but demand for these services continues to be high.

Our business

The fortnightly Ophthalmology Outreach Clinic at VAHS continues to meet the needs of community, providing specialist eye health services to adults and children. Assessment and treatment services, including injecting and laser therapies, are administered onsite with streamlined surgery pathways at the Eye and Ear. Being the first Ophthalmology Clinic implemented within an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) in Victoria, the success of the clinic reflects the strong commitment, collaboration and dedication by the teams at VAHS and the Eye and Ear, with additional support from the Australian College of Optometry and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO).

Our organisation employs approximately 950 staff with eight staff identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, including two Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers (AHLOs) that form our Murring ba Wirring Team.



Community partnerships

The Eye and Ear has continued strong relationships with a number of external organisations and many of these are members of our Primary Care and Population Health Advisory Committee. The following organisations have contributed to our reconciliation journey and closing the eye and ear health care gap.

- **Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS)** – partnership providing a four weekly Healthy Ears Outreach Clinic and a fortnightly Ophthalmology Outreach Clinic
- **Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)** – the Eye and Ear is a member of the State Eye Health Committee, chaired by VACCHO. An AHLO attends the State-wide Hearing and Speech Committee which is led by VACCHO and convenes monthly. Both AHLOs attend the Improving Care for Aboriginal Patients (ICAP) forums twice a year
- **Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV)** – collaborative partnership providing funding and expansion of services at the VAHS Outreach Clinics
- **Australian College of Optometry (ACO)** – collaborative partnership providing eye care services at VAHS
- **Victorian Department of Health (DH)** – collaborative partnership supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people's access to eye and ear healthcare
- **University of Melbourne Indigenous Eye Health Unit (IEH)** – ongoing partnership supporting the promotion and co-design of initiatives specifically related to National Eye Health
- **Royal Australasian College of Surgeons** – College members are staff at the Eye and Ear and provide clinical care at the VAHS Healthy Ears Clinic
- **Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO)** – College members are Eye and Ear staff and some of these provide clinical care at the VAHS Ophthalmology Clinic
- **Vision Australia** – partnership identifying and sharing of knowledge to create opportunities that explore employment and education. The Eye and Ear Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers are members of the Vision Australia RAP Working Group

Community partnerships

The Eye and Ear works in partnership with these organisations to improve ear and eye health outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients. Our organisation is represented on external committees and steering groups with members from each of these organisations, including:

- State-wide Aboriginal Eye Health Strategy Committee which oversees the work being done in the twelve Victorian regions to improve Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander eye health.
- North West Metropolitan Aboriginal Eye Health Committee, one of the twelve regional committees, which oversees the work being done in our region to improve Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander eye health.
- State-wide Hearing and Speech Committee which oversees the coordination of ENT services across Victoria and the development of resources to better support care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.



RAP working group members

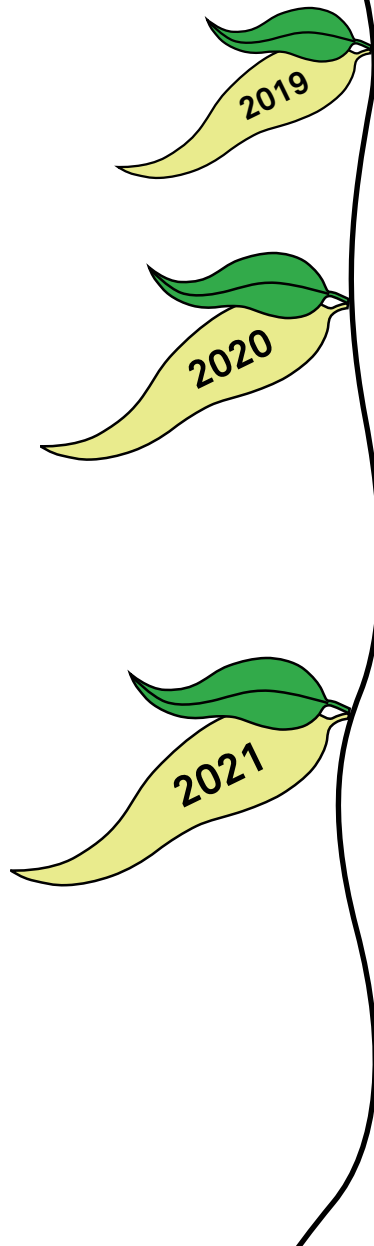
Name	Position
Leanne Turner	Executive Director, Operations and Chief Nursing Officer and RAP Champion
Renee Chmielewski	Director Partnerships, Clinical Education and Planning
Peter Waples - Crowe	Consumer Advisor, Thorn Harbour Health, (Ngaya Ngarigu)
Charlie Knight	Consumer Advisor, Bendigo District Aboriginal Cooperative (BDAC), (Ngarrindjeri Nation)
Carleen Miller	Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer, (Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation)
Natalie Tieri	Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer, (Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation)
Stefan Wigg	Director, Cochlear Implant, Balance Services and Relationships
Catherine Mancuso	Manager, Diagnostic Eye Services
Joanne Brodie	Director, Marketing and Communications
Kathryn Heagerty	Manager, Organisational Development and Learning
Toby Pontifex	Nurse Unit Manager, Specialist Clinics
Aimee Malotsis	Media and Communications Coordinator
Barbara West	Equity and Inclusion Coordinator
Glenda Prewitt	Manager, Supply and Procurement

Innovate RAP highlights 2020 - 2022

Key Achievements

- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) Healthy Ears Outreach Clinic
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) Ophthalmology Outreach Clinic
- The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital Mural and Welcome Space implementation - partnership with The Torch
- Official launch of Mural and Welcome Space – Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony performed by Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Ringo Terrick
- Aboriginal Employment Plan (AEP) 2021-2025 – review and implementation
- Cultural Protocol Fact Sheet – intranet resource available to all hospital staff
- Cultural Protocol Procedure – Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country
- Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) – Aboriginal community representative
- Customised Acknowledgement plaques at all entrances of the Eye and Ear
- Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Training Course
- Cultural Awareness Training for nursing students
- Cultural Awareness e-learning package for all staff – 94% completion rate
- ‘Ask the Question’ cultural training – available to all staff
- ‘Ask the Question’ cultural resources developed and available
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patient resources
- Dharri Baagon (supporting together) – mentor and support network for Aboriginal Health Workers in specialist health care services
- Mirring Ba Wirring (Eyes and Ears) – naming and cultural endorsement of the Aboriginal Health Unit
- Reconciliation Australia’s Workplace RAP Barometer survey – participated to measure implementation of the Reflect and Innovate RAP to determine actions and deliverables for Innovate RAP 2.0
- Commissioned an Aboriginal artist to paint the new artwork which will be displayed in the Eye and Ear foyer alongside the Mannagum Leaf painting

Eye and Ear hospital RAP timeline



- 2019 February** Launched the Reflect RAP
- 2019 February** Ophthalmology Clinic continues in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) and Australian College of Optometry (ACO). Healthy Ears Clinic continues to provide services for Aboriginal children
- 2019 March** Installation of additional Acknowledgement Plaques and reception flags
- 2020 April** Implemented mandatory cultural awareness e-learning package
- 2020 June** Launched Aboriginal Employment Plan
- 2020 July** Name the Aboriginal Health Unit, Mirring Ba Wurring after consulting Elders from Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage
- 2020 October** Facilitated 'Ask the Question' training and developed resources to support patients and staff
- 2020 October** Developed and implemented the Eye and Ear Cultural Protocol information sheet for staff
- 2021 February** Appointed an Aboriginal consumer advisor to the Community Advisory Committee
- 2021 March** Launched the Dharri Baagon (supporting together) mentor group
- 2021 July** Hearing Blitz clinics commenced at the Eye and Ear to support the waiting list for the Audiology Clinic at VAHS
- 2021 October** VAHS and the Eye and Ear extends services to adult patients at the Healthy Ears Clinic

Eye and Ear hospital RAP timeline



2022

2022 February

Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Training conducted

2022 July

The Mirring Ba Wurring Aboriginal Health Team delivered Cultural Awareness training to University of Melbourne Audiology and Optometry students

2022 July

Appointment of the Eye Health co-ordinator at VAHS to support eye services/clinics – funded by the Fred Hollows Foundation

2022 August

Participated in the Reconciliation Australia Workplace RAP Barometer survey. The results informed the deliverables in this Innovate RAP and informed opportunities for continuing education at the hospital with staff and consumer advisors

2022 September

Partnered with Vision Australia which strengthened the working relationships between the two organisations

2022 October

Cultural advice provided by the Mirring Ba Wurring Team for the Eye and Ear's new History wall recognising the hospitals contribution to Aboriginal Health services

2022 October

Launched the Welcome Space Garden and Mural installation

2023

2023 January

The Eye and Ear employed an additional 4 Aboriginal permanent part-time employees taking the total number of Aboriginal employees to 8

2023 May

The first Aboriginal Allied Health Student placement was conducted

2023 May

New artwork was commissioned in partnership with The Torch

2023 June

Named a Vision Australia guide dog, Mirring, meaning Eyes in Woi Wurrung language

Our reconciliation journey

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VAHS Healthy Ears Outreach Clinic

April 2022 marked 10 years of the partnership between VAHS and the Eye and Ear and the launch of the Healthy Ears Clinic. This clinic was launched as the first of its kind in an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation in Australia and continues to provide exceptional specialist care in a culturally safe environment. Due to increasing demand, the clinic has extended to a full day clinic and appointments are also now available for adult patients. An extra three ENT Consultants have been employed to work in the Healthy Ears team. Additionally, VAHS and the Eye and Ear have partnered with the University of Melbourne to establish Hearing Blitz Clinics at the Melbourne Campus to provide hearing assessments for children by graduates in an effort to reduce patient wait times in accessing the Audiology service. Hearing Blitz Clinics have also been scheduled at the Eye and Ear.

Over the past 10 years, the clinic has provided over 1,500 instances of care, and the Eye and Ear has facilitated over 220 ENT surgeries for young patients. The close collaboration between our organisation and VAHS provides a model of care that suits the patients' needs.

The clinic has been a partnership built on mutual commitment and trust and the desire to improve both the hearing and ear health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and now adults. The clinic runs for a full day every four weeks and offers audiology testing and ENT consultations.



Our reconciliation journey

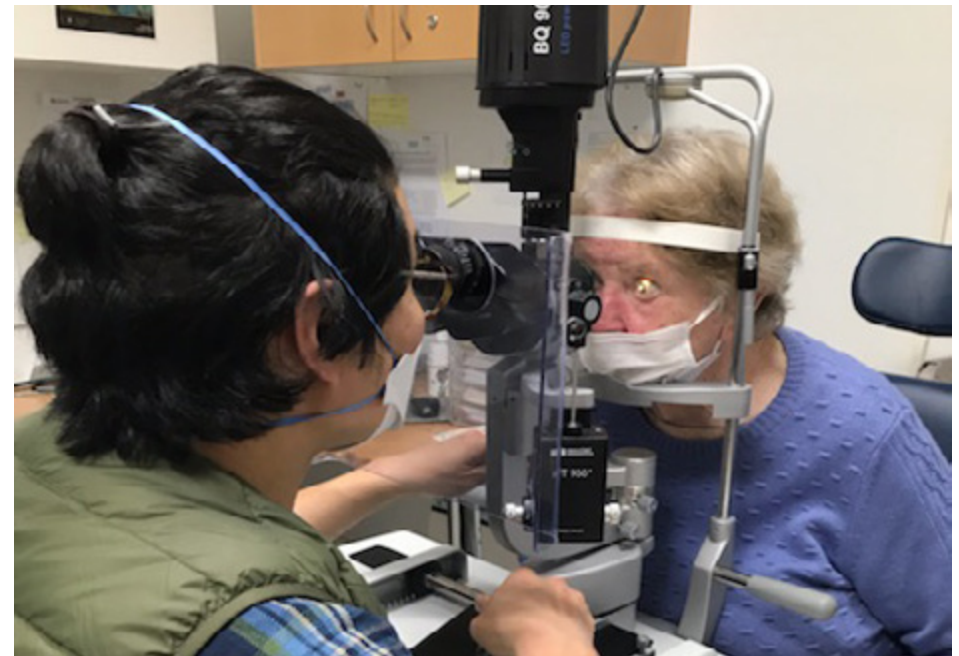
VAHS Ophthalmology Outreach Clinic

Since November 2018 the Eye and Ear and VAHS have worked in partnership to provide an Ophthalmology outreach clinic, the first to operate within a Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation in Victoria. An increase in funding has allowed the fortnightly outreach clinic to extend to a full day service, providing a model of eye healthcare that allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients to access specialist eye assessments and treatment within a culturally safe environment.

Staffed by Eye and Ear Ophthalmologists, Orthoptists, an Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer and a VAHS Eye Health Coordinator, the clinic has experienced high demand for services from community members, in particular Elders with chronic health conditions, who would have otherwise experienced barriers accessing specialised care.

VAHS and the Eye and Ear have collaborated closely to provide models of care that meet the patient needs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the flexibility of the clinical operations allowed both clinics to be adapted to prioritise patients requiring urgent or ongoing treatment. Reducing complexities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients when navigating treatment pathways has increased referrals and attendances, reduced waitlists for appointments and surgery whilst providing continuity of care between the VAHS clinics and the Eye and Ear.

'I've attended that clinic for a good 5 years with great results. It's been a journey that I've been looked after by a Dr Rosie and also Dr Nathan. They're regular visits every 2 months, because I have glaucoma. I was diagnosed through VAHS and I also have Macular Degenerative disease. I'm very fortunate as I'm able to have the injections in my eyes because it's such a very serious illness and you can go blind if you don't have the treatment.' Aunty Margaret, Taungurung Elder



Our reconciliation journey

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Mirring Ba Wurring (Eyes and Ears) – naming the Aboriginal Health Unit

The Eye and Ear consulted with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Land Council (WLC) in seeking cultural guidance and recommendations to name the Aboriginal Health Unit. Mirring Ba Wurring, meaning 'Eyes and Ears' in Woiwurrung, Taungwurrung and Boonwurrung languages was endorsed by Elder Aunty Gail Smith. Since adopting the Mirring Ba Wurring name, the name has been continually promoted internally within the organisation, and externally to the organisation's partners and stakeholders, to create awareness of cultural support services available to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients, community and staff.



Our reconciliation journey



Eye and Ear Mural and Welcome Space - partnership with The Torch

In October 2022, Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Ringo Terrick performed a Welcome to Country and traditional smoking ceremony to launch the opening of the Eye and Ear's mural art installation and Welcome Space.

The mural and Welcome Space is a culturally safe outdoor space where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, families and staff can feel welcome, connect to country and reflect on their wellbeing when accessing services at the hospital. Conveniently located within close proximity to the Emergency Department, it is hoped this space will decrease patient anxiety and the desire to leave prior to receiving treatment.

The original artwork the mural is based on, was commissioned and painted by Wurundjeri artist Mandy Nicholson in 2014. It depicts the Mannagum Leaf - Boon-marrit-tak gooreen Biik, Boon-marrit-tak gooreen gulinj (Healthy Country, Healthy People) that symbolises the welcome of visitors with circles depicting the continuation of cultural practices and ceremonies and the sharing of our cultures with others. The waterways symbolise the waterways that run into the Birrarung (Yarra) and become one, so we begin our shared history of Melbourne.

Our reconciliation journey

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To replicate and install the mural, the Eye and Ear commissioned The Torch, a not-for-profit organisation based in Melbourne who manage the sale of artworks on behalf of participants in the Indigenous Arts in Prisons and Community Program. All proceeds go directly to the artists. Support is tailored to each participant in the Post-Release (In Community) component of the program. Mandy's artwork was reproduced as a mural with precision, passion and the upmost respect.

The Welcome Space project aligned with actions in our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2020-2022 reflecting the Eye and Ear's commitment to strive toward making reconciliation 'come to life'. Being positioned on a prominent corner, the mural is a bold public statement showcasing the hospital's support for improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and its strong commitment to Closing the Gap.

The Mirring Ba Wurring team plan to utilise the Welcome Space as an educational outdoor classroom to conduct cultural training with students, graduates and hospital staff, and yarning circles with Elders and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

We hope this relaxed environment will encourage positive conversation between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait patients, visitors and staff, and create cross-cultural awareness to better understand the challenges and barriers experienced by some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait patients when accessing mainstream health services. This hope we hold close to our hearts and is the essence of Reconciliation.

Mandy Nicholson shared her story of the Healthy Country, Healthy People artwork with us.

“

It emphasises our connection to Country and how Country makes us strong. If Country is not healthy then we as people are not healthy. We have to look after it as our mother, we belong to it, not the other way around.

I want people to ask questions...what does that mean? What's it all about? So, I'm really glad that it's such in a prominent area.

”

Our reconciliation journey

Aboriginal Employment Plan (AEP) 2021-2025

We strive to be a diverse, inclusive and culturally safe employer-of-choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Aboriginal Employment Plan 2021-2025 aligns closely with the key focus areas for implementing health sector system reforms, as detailed in the Korin Korin Balit-Djak Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027 and aligns closely with the hospital's Reconciliation Action Plans.

The launch of the new Aboriginal Employment Plan 2021-2025 is a key milestone highlighting our organisation's continued efforts in creating a safe, respectful and welcoming environment for all current and prospective Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees. To support the implementation, the Eye and Ear employed a dedicated Equity and Inclusion Coordinator to assist with embedding professional experience opportunities to secondary students and university graduates.

'Having a workforce and having these people that are like you, can connect you and make you feel more comfortable. Hospitals and all workplaces should strive to have this diversity of staff members to help with that connection between patients and staff.'

Certificate 3 Aboriginal Allied Health Student, Mischa, Mamu (Queensland)

Cultural Protocol Information Sheet – Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country Procedure

The Eye and Ear respects and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land.

To demonstrate this respect, a Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country Procedure was developed to provide cultural guidelines and encourage Eye and Ear staff and Board Directors to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land by incorporating a Welcome to Country at formal occasions or Acknowledgement of Country where meetings are regularly convened.



Our reconciliation journey

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Custom Acknowledgement plaques at all entrances of the Eye and Ear

With the redevelopment of the hospital nearing completion, Kinya Lerrk were commissioned to develop customised Acknowledgment of Country plaques to be installed at all entrances of the hospital to further support our acknowledgment, respect and commitment to providing a culturally inclusive environment and services for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients.

Ask the Question training

Ask the Question training is facilitated by the Mirring Ba Wurring Aboriginal Health team to ensure staff have a comprehensive understanding and confidence to ask all patients accessing Eye and Ear services: "Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?". The collection of accurate data assists the hospital to provide culturally appropriate care, improve health and well-being outcomes of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients and contributes to Closing the Gap.

To encourage staff to ask all patients the Indigenous status question and advise presenting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients of the cultural support services available, Ask the Question posters are displayed throughout the hospital in both patient facing



and staff areas and Close the Gap Pharmaceutical Scheme posters are displayed in the Pharmacy waiting areas. Ask the Question mouse pads are gifted to staff who complete training, and lanyard stickers have been distributed to all staff which include the commissioned Mannagum leaf artwork by Mandy Nicholson with the Mirring Ba Wurring contact details.

Our reconciliation journey

Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Fact Sheet

To support the provision of a welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive environment for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients and to encourage the learnings of the mandatory Cultural Awareness e-learning package and Ask the Question training, an Aboriginal Cultural Awareness fact sheet was developed for staff which they can access through the intranet.

Dharri Baagon

The Eye and Ear has partnered with like-minded specialist service health care providers to create Dharri Baagon (supporting together in Taungwurrung language). The group consists of members from the Eye and Ear's Mirring Ba Wurring Aboriginal Health team, Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV), Australian College of Optometry (ACO),



Thorne Harbour Health, Vision Australia and the Aboriginal Eye Health Coordinator from VAHS. Together, the members collaborate and partner when recognising significant cultural dates and associated events whilst providing ongoing mentorship and support for each organisation's respective Reconciliation journeys.

New Aboriginal artwork commission

In February 2022, a tender process was completed with an independent panel selecting Graham Gilbert, an artist from The Torch to paint a new Aboriginal art piece to be displayed alongside the Mannagum Leaf painting in the Eye and Ear's new 1863 café dining area. The artwork brief was to depict a platypus, a semi aquatic, egg laying mammal endemic to Australia. According to Aboriginal legend, the story of the platypus has specific cultural significance to the tribal clans of the Kulin Nation as the mammal originated when a young female duck mated with a lonely and persuasive water-rat, hence it's unique appearance of webbed feet, bill, four legs and dark brown fur. Platypus have eyes above their bill restricting their view to see things directly below them. When in water, their eyes and ears are covered by skin flaps so they cannot see or hear underwater. Aboriginal clans have differing names for the platypus but in Woi Wurrung language of the Wurundjeri clan, the land on where the hospital is situated, it's called Dulaiwurrung.

By adopting and promoting the spiritual story of the platypus, we hope to advance cultural awareness through respectful story-telling and create a mutual connection and understanding between Aboriginal culture and Eye and Ear staff.

Our reconciliation journey

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Challenges and Learnings from our Innovate RAP journey.

Since the completion of our first Innovate RAP in July 2022, we have reflected on the Eye and Ear's progress toward reconciliation and the key indicators that require focus as we move to implement our second Innovate RAP. Although the past 2 years have been extremely challenging for the hospital as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the deliverables in the Innovate RAP were completed and there was a demonstrated progressive increase in the cultural activities and opportunities to acknowledge Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The organisation's participation in Reconciliation Australia's and Polity's Workplace RAP Barometer has highlighted some of the key challenges and learnings that have become apparent since the implementation of our Innovate RAP. These include:

- embedding the actions from the Aboriginal Employment Plan (AEP) 2021-2025 to create employment opportunities
- promoting educational training program opportunities for secondary students and tertiary graduates
- Executive and Senior leaders prioritising participation in reconciliation activities

- creating Innovate RAP awareness and responsibilities for all staff across the organisation
- promoting greater staff participation in cultural activities
- embedding current actions and deliverables into business as usual



Our reconciliation journey

As an organisation, it is important to recognise that all staff and volunteers have a responsibility for advancing reconciliation. By broadening our RAP Champions to reflect our workforce and to collectively lead the implementation of our deliverables, we hope to advance staff knowledge, respect and cultural understanding of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. This will lead to an active increase in cultural awareness and competency, organisational commitment and responsibility towards reconciliation and become second nature to all who work at the Eye and Ear.

With many projects continuing and new initiatives underway, the Eye and Ear's second Innovate RAP promises to be just as progressive. We will be creating more awareness and promotion within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of our outreach health care services, enhancing the cultural safety of our hospital and exploring new external partnerships within our sphere of influence to advance opportunities within employment, education and procurement. Recognising that we can only attain better outcomes by collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, meaningful engagement with communities in metropolitan and regional Victoria is crucial to the success of reconciliation and equality for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Trusting relationships are essential for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and health services. By maintaining our culturally

respectful and trusting relationships and linking services between VAHS and the Eye and Ear, we have increased community confidence which has been evidenced through the increased attendance rates at the two VAHS clinics with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients actively seeking ongoing treatment and care. We have a better understanding of our patient's preferred healthcare pathways, assisting with the relevant support networks to break down the barriers, making a difference to Close the Gap and ultimately improve the health outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.





Relationships

Building and maintaining existing relationships and actively engaging new partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and key stakeholders will enable the Eye and Ear to continue our reconciliation journey to close the eye and ear, nose and throat (ENT) healthcare gap. To achieve positive health outcomes, it is crucial we continue to listen to the voice of community when providing services for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients that are culturally appropriate and within a culturally safe environment.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Meet with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations important to the delivery of our RAP, to continue to strengthen future engagement.	February 2025	Director, Partnerships, Clinical Education and Planning (DPCEP)
	Continue implementation and review of our engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, organisations, and community.	February 2025	DPCEP
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week resources and reconciliation materials to staff via our social media platforms to create awareness and encourage participation.	May 2025	Director, Marketing and Communications (DM&C)
	Ensure all RAP Working Group members participate in an external National Reconciliation Week event.	27 May- 3 June 2024, 2025	Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer (AHLO)
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate National Reconciliation Week.	27 May- 3 June 2024, 2025	AHLO
	Register our National Reconciliation Week events on Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week website.	May 2024, 2025	DM&C



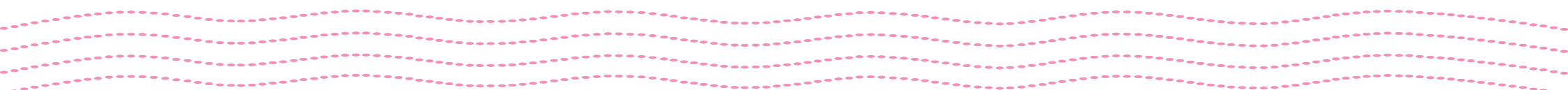
Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Organise at least one National Reconciliation Week event each year.	27 May- 3 June 2024, 2025	AHLO
	Collaborate with external RAP partners to organise one National Reconciliation Week event each year for all organisations to participate in.	May 2024 and May 2025	AHLO
	Continue implementation strategies to raise awareness and engage staff to advance reconciliation outcomes across our workforce.	October 2023	AHLO
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	September 2025	DM&C
	Continue to explore opportunities to positively influence and collaborate with our external stakeholders to drive positive reconciliation outcomes.	September 2025	AHLO
	Advance collaboration with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to progress reconciliation collectively.	September 2025	AHLO
	Maintain the communication strategy and resources to further raise awareness of the RAP with staff, volunteers and the Eye and Ear community.	September 2025	DM&C
	Regularly provide updates on the progress of the RAP actions and deliverables to staff, external stakeholders and community	September 2025	DM&C



Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Actively encourage our external stakeholders to develop a RAP to support wider economic and employment engagement with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	September 2025	AHLO
	Consult with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities to identify respectfully appropriate opportunities to support the Uluru Statement of the Heart.	December 2023	AHLO
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Review People and Culture policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions and future needs.	September 2025	Equity and Inclusion Coordinator (E&I Coordinator)
	Continue to communicate the anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	September 2025	E&I Coordinator
	Engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander consumer advisors to consult on our Equal Opportunity Procedure which includes our anti-discrimination policy.	September 2025	E&I Coordinator
	Provide ongoing education opportunities for the senior leadership team, managers and team leaders on the effects of racism.	September 2025	E&I Coordinator





Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Collaborate with our internal and external stakeholders to improve services provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	Maintain quarterly meetings with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) staff to monitor and discuss improvements for the operations and activity of the Healthy Ears Outreach Clinic in collaboration with VAHS, and work collaboratively to implement those improvements.	August 2025	DPCEP
	Maintain quarterly meetings with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) staff to monitor and discuss activity and improvement opportunities to maintain and strengthen the Ophthalmology Outreach Clinic run at VAHS.	August 2025	DPCEP
	Continue partnerships with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS), the Australian College of Optometry (ACO), the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and other external stakeholders to promote access for patients from regional Victoria to the Ophthalmology Outreach Clinic at VAHS.	September 2025	DPCEP
	Continue to share our knowledge and learnings from the Outreach clinics at VAHS to support regional and rural Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO'S) to implement this model of care as required.	September 2025	AHLO
	Work closely with VACCHO and other external stakeholders to improve ear and speech health in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples through developing patient information resources on common ear, nose and throat (ENT) conditions.	September 2025	AHLO



Respect

The Eye and Ear is committed to ensuring all staff are culturally aware, respectful and knowledgeable of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. To advance reconciliation, it is vital we continue to respectfully engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to guide and inform directives for the delivery of culturally appropriate health care.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
6. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Review and update cultural learning needs within our organisation.	September 2025	AHLO
	Consult local Traditional Custodians and/or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy.	October 2023	AHLO
	Continue to implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff via various delivery methods including face-to-face workshops, online cultural training and cultural immersion opportunities.	September 2025	AHLO
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, People and Culture managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	September 2025	AHLO



Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance of cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.	September 2025	AHLO
	Implement and communicate cultural protocol documents, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	September 2025	AHLO
	Invite a local Traditional Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony, if possible, at significant events when they are scheduled.	September 2025	AHLO
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of meetings.	September 2025	AHLO
8. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2024 and July 2025	AHLO
	Review People and Culture policies and procedures, including our Cultural Leave policy, to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	November 2023	E&I Coordinator
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	July 2024 and July 2025	AHLO



Opportunities

Creating employment, professional development and procurement opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and businesses is important to the Eye and Ear as it maintains an equitable and inclusive workplace culture that positively empowers Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees, supports communities to build capability and self-determination, and provides mutually beneficial procurement partnerships.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	February 2024	E&I Coordinator
	Engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	February 2025	E&I Coordinator
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	November 2023	E&I Coordinator
	Advertise job vacancies via appropriate social media platforms to effectively attract Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	September 2025	E&I Coordinator
	Review People and Culture recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	February 2024	E&I Coordinator



Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Investigate professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students through implementation of cadetships, internships and scholarship programs with external partners.	September 2025	E&I Coordinator
	Develop engaging relationships with employment and education organisations to increase placement opportunities and employment pathways for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.	September 2025	E&I Coordinator
10. Increase Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Continue implementation of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy and encourage use by staff members.	September 2025	Supply and Procurement Manager (S&P Manager)
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	October 2023	S&P Manager
	Increase awareness and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	September 2025	S&P Manager
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	September 2025	S&P Manager
	Develop and support commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	September 2025	S&P Manager



Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	September 2024	DPCEP
	Review the Terms of Reference for the RWG bi-annually.	November 2023	DPCEP
	Meet at least three times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	September 2025	DPCEP
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	September 2023	DPCEP
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	September 2023	DPCEP
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	September 2023	DPCEP
	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	September 2023	DPCEP
13. 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.	June annually	DPCEP
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	DPCEP



Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	DPCEP
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	December 2023, March 2024, June, 2024, September 2024, December 2024, March 2025, June 2025, September 2025	AHLO
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	September 2024, September 2025	DM&C
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	May 2024	DPCEP
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	September 2025	DPCEP
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	February 2025	DPCEP

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