

# Reconciliation Action Plan

## March 2020 - March 2021



**Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN wishes to acknowledge Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Custodians of this land.**

**We pay our respect and recognise their unique cultures and customs and honour their Elders past, present and emerging.**



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# Message from Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN Board Chair and CEO



**MERRILYN STROHFELDT**  
**DARLING DOWNS AND WEST MORETON PHN**  
**CEO**



**JOHN MINZ**  
**DARLING DOWNS AND WEST MORETON PHN**  
**BOARD CHAIR**

Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN is committed to working with primary health care providers, health professionals and the wider community to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our region.

Our vision **‘Making a difference by building healthier communities through a connected, responsive and sustainable primary health care system’** is our driver to ensure we consider our core goals and connect with, respect and value the experiences and input from all people living in our communities.

The development and implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) formalises our commitment to reconciliation, ensuring the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard and considered in all of our decisions and actions.

To begin this journey, we are proud to officially present our first step towards reconciliation, our Reflect RAP. Our RAP reinforces our dedication to the reconciliation process and outlines key objectives that we will be working towards over the next 12 months, ensuring we have mutually respectful and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

By improving cultural understanding throughout our PHN, we can influence sustainable change that will incorporate the knowledge, traditions, customs and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures.

With improved understanding, we will be able to provide efficient and effective support to our key health service delivery partners to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that reside in our communities.

The Board and Senior Leadership Team wholeheartedly support the RAP and the outlined objectives within, and recognise that beginning this process enables our PHN to move forward, together as one, as we take the important steps to be a culturally inclusive organisation.

Our reconciliation journey will strengthen our ability to deliver on our goals of healthy partnerships, healthy systems and healthy people and we look forward to taking the next steps in this journey for our organisation.

**JOHN MINZ**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Minz".

**MERRILYN STROHFELDT**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meryl Strohfeldt".

# Message from Reconciliation Australia CEO, Karen Mundine



**KAREN MUNDINE**  
**RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA**  
**CEO**

Reconciliation Australia is delighted to welcome the **Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN** to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program and to formally endorse its inaugural Reflect RAP.

As a member of the RAP community, the **Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN** joins over 1,000 dedicated corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have formally committed to reconciliation through the RAP program since its inception in 2006. RAP organisations across Australia are turning good intentions into positive actions, helping to build higher trust, lower prejudice, and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Reconciliation is no one single issue or agenda. Based on international research and benchmarking, Reconciliation Australia defines and measures reconciliation through five critical dimensions: race relations; equality and equity, institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance. All sections of the community—governments, civil society, the private sector, and Aboriginal and Strait Islander communities—have a role to play to progress these dimensions.

The RAP program provides a framework for organisations to advance reconciliation within their spheres of influence. This Reflect RAP provides the **Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN** a roadmap to begin its reconciliation journey. Through implementing a Reflect RAP, the **Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN** will lay the foundations for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

We wish **Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN** well as it takes these first critical steps in its reconciliation journey. We encourage the organisation to embrace this journey with open hearts and minds, to grow from the challenges, and to build on the successes. As the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation reminded the nation in its final report:

**“Reconciliation is hard work—it’s a long, winding and corrugated road, not a broad, paved highway. Determination and effort at all levels of government and in all sections of the community will be essential to make reconciliation a reality.”**

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend **Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN** on its first RAP, and look forward to following its ongoing reconciliation journey.

**KAREN MUNDINE**

# Our business

Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN is an independent not-for-profit organisation who partners with communities, health care providers, regional hospital and health services, and state and federal governments to improve primary health services in our region.

Funded by the Australian Government, we work closely with the Darling Downs and West Moreton communities to better understand, support and improve the health of people living in our region.

To do this, we bring together general practitioners (GPs), allied and mental health clinicians, practice nurses, practice managers, hospitals and health services, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), community service providers, and Elders and community members to identify gaps in the health services that are needed by our communities. We then fund programs and services based on these needs.

We also support primary health care providers, like GPs, practice managers, practice nurses and allied health professionals, to improve the quality of care they provide to their patients.

## OUR PRIORITY AREAS

Understanding our health challenges is the first step to addressing these gaps and enables our investment and action to be targeted to the right people at the right time, and where possible, in their own communities.

In 2017, our PHN started an important conversation with our stakeholders as to how we can better work together to achieve this and improve health outcomes for people living in our region. Through extensive consultation and data gathering, the resulting 2017/18 Health Needs Assessment (HNA) outlined nine priority areas for achieving better health across our region.

In 2019, we refreshed the HNA to best reflect the current service gaps and needs of our region, which saw our priorities increase from nine to 10:

- |           |  |           |  |
|-----------|--|-----------|--|
| <b>01</b> | Maternal and infant health and child development         | <b>06</b> | Primary mental health care                 |
| <b>02</b> | Prevention and management of chronic conditions          | <b>07</b> | Drug and alcohol misuse                    |
| <b>03</b> | Health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples | <b>08</b> | Access and integrated service delivery     |
| <b>04</b> | Workforce capacity and wellbeing                         | <b>09</b> | Health for priority populations            |
| <b>05</b> | Health for older Australians                             | <b>10</b> | Health promotion and prevention strategies |



# Our region

Our region spans a geographical area of 95,500km<sup>2</sup> and is home to over 560,000 residents of which 25,000 identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We cover 10 local government areas (LGAs) which include the major inland cities of Toowoomba and Ipswich, and communities located in the Lockyer Valley, Scenic Rim, Somerset, South Burnett, Cherbourg, Southern Downs, Goondiwindi and Western Downs LGAs.

We have two main office locations, Toowoomba and Springfield, with two satellite offices based in Kingaroy and Dalby. Our PHN employs 40 staff, two of which identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



**560,000+ people live in the urban, rural and remote areas within the Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN region**



**25,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live in the Darling Downs and West Moreton region**



Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN Reflect RAP

# Our RAP

Our PHN seeks to deeply understand and build further awareness internally and externally of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledges, histories and experiences.

We acknowledge the history and experiences of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples differ significantly from non-Indigenous Australians. Culture and knowledge are a central component to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health, social and emotional wellbeing.

The Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) will enable us to explore and inform our internal and external activities of the continuing and diverse cultures, and the spiritual connection the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have to the lands, winds and waters.

Through this process, we can embrace the diversity that our organisation has and build on our strengths to improve the health of our communities. Implementing the Reflect RAP will embed cultural understanding and awareness throughout our organisation, touching each of our programs and activities and building inclusivity into all that we do. We want to ensure that we integrate and consider the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and cultures when making decisions and provide a safe, open and honest working environment.

## OUR RAP WORKING GROUP

Our RAP is championed internally by the Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN Board, Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Team, the RAP Working Group and all staff at the PHN. The RAP was developed by the RAP Working group, with members including:

- » **Denise Pambid (RAP Chair)** - Senior Manager - Program Development, Evaluation & Engagement
- » **Kevin Rose** - PHN Board Member
- » **Renata Danisevska** - Digital Health Lead
- » **Francene Bain** - Program Officer
- » **Anna Jones** - Manager - Media and Communications
- » **Aaron Vinnell** - Communications and Content Officer
- » **Jared Cruikshank** - Program Officer
- » **Marlena Bishop** - Program Officer
- » **Belinda May** - Senior Program Officer
- » **Melody Shepherd** - Manager - Workforce Development

**Our RWG  
is made up of  
25%**

**of our PHN's  
employees**





## Our steps so far

In 2018, the Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN Board of Directors encouraged the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to improve the way we acknowledge and understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and enable greater opportunities for a reflective dialogue about the importance of reconciliation.

An internal RAP Working Group (RWG) was formed during the first half of 2019 with over 25% of employees volunteering to be involved, including representation from the PHN Board and Senior Leadership Team. Since their inception, the RWG have spent time exploring the stages of the RAP process and working to gain a better understanding of the poor health and social and emotional wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our region.

In addition to the development of the RWG, all employees completed cultural competency training which forged an opening for discussion on the history and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The RWG recommended the organisation begin with the Reflect RAP to enable a deeper understanding of the strengths and challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to work together to set goals to achieve improved outcomes. The RWG reviewed RAPs from other PHNs, government departments and organisations to gain an understanding of the activities to be considered and the critical elements that would work towards reconciliation for our PHN.

In August 2019, the Reflect RAP was drafted through a workshop with the RWG. To build an inclusive approach into the process, the RAP was disseminated to all employees for feedback and awareness building.

In order to achieve a genuine, sustainable whole of organisation approach to reconciliation, the RWG understands that all employees of our PHN must be engaged, and the reconciliation principles must be embedded with our activities. Over the next 12 months, the RWG will continue to meet to finalise planning and implementation of actions to further our journey toward reconciliation.

### INTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Our internal activities to date have included:

- encouraging and supporting staff to be involved in culturally significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events such as NAIDOC Week;
- embedding an Acknowledgement of Country/Welcome to Country at all of our meetings and events, including an Acknowledgement on all of our significant marketing materials such as our website, annual report, banners and other promotional items;
- introducing an online learning module for internal and external stakeholders to build cultural competence;
- developing resources to support GPs working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- supporting primary health care providers to deliver culturally appropriate care through our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Care Liaison representatives and Project Officers;
- profiling and promoting ACCHOs to the primary health care community and wider audiences;
- commencing the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy; and
- embedding cultural consideration and competence into contracts for third party service and program providers.

## Community partnerships and current activities

### COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Our PHN maintains strong formal and informal relationships with key community and health organisations in our region. In particular, we continue to work with ACCHOs and the Indigenous Health Liaison Officers at each of our hospital and health services to develop culturally appropriate programs which work towards improving the health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our region.

We participate in monthly integration meetings with both the Darling Downs and West Moreton hospital and health services to share current projects, identify future opportunities and discuss openly ways to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

# Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	March 2020	Senior Manager-Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	March 2020	Senior Manager - Commissioning
	Scope and develop a list of local Elders groups within the PHN region.	April 2020	Senior Manager-Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2020	Manager - Media and Communications
	RAP Working Group (RWG) members to participate in an external NRW event.	May - June 2020	Manager - Media and Communications
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to continue to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May - June 2020	PHN Board Chair
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	October 2020	PHN Board Chair
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	October 2020	Senior Manager-Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	April 2020	Senior Manager-Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	March 2020	General Manager - Finance and Corporate Services
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	April 2020	General Manager - Finance and Corporate Services
5. Promote and support Aboriginal Medical Services (AMSs) that the PHN works with.	Encourage PHN staff to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services/ organisations in our region, including PHN-funded/ supported programs.	March 2020	Manager - Media and Communications
	Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Services to access PHN facilitated education.	April 2020	Manager - Primary Care Liaison Workforce

# Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
6. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledges and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a brief for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledges and rights within our organisation.	March 2020	Senior Manager-Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	March 2020	Senior Manager-Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
	Ensure cultural awareness is included in the Board Induction process.	March 2020	PHN Board Chair
7. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	October 2020	Senior Manager-Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	October 2020	PHN Board Chair
8. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating significant days/dates.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	July 2020	PHN Board Chair
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2020	PHN Board Chair
	RAP Working Group (RWG) to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. Explore providing support to stakeholders involved in these events.	July 2020	Manager - Media and Communications
	Investigate significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander days/dates and create a calendar to be distributed to staff.	March 2020	Digital Health Lead
	Host morning teas/lunches in recognition of significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander days/dates.	October 2020	Digital Health Lead
9. Demonstrate respect through PHN communications tools.	Explore opportunities for the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork to be integrated in the PHN brand and style guide.	April 2020	Manager - Media and Communications

# Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a brief for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	May 2020	Health Pathways Program Officer
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	May 2020	Health Pathways Program Officer
11. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a brief for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	June 2020	Health Pathways Program Officer
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	June 2020	Health Pathways Program Officer
12. Embed knowledge and skills in our organisational processes that support improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes.	Consider strategies to ensure issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are part of the PHN Board and the Board's strategic advisory groups' (Clinical Council and Community Advisory Committees) skill mix.	March 2020	PHN Board Chair
	Consider how our PHN commissioning process could be more culturally appropriate.	October 2020	Senior Manager - Commissioning
	Explore opportunities to support the development of HealthPathways relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.	October 2020	Health Pathways Program Officer

# Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form RWG to govern RAP implementation.	March 2020	Senior Manager- Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	March 2020	Senior Manager- Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	March 2020	Senior Manager- Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
14. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	March 2020	Senior Manager- Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
	Engage Senior Managers in the delivery of RAP commitments.	October 2020	PHN Board Chair
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	October 2020	Senior Manager- Program Development Evaluation and Engagement
15. 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.	September 2020	PHN Board Chair
	Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN Board to monitor the implementation of the RAP through six monthly reporting while in the very early stages of our reconciliation journey.	September 2020	PHN Board Chair
16. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2020	Senior Manager - Program Development Evaluation and Engagement

## Enquiries

### Denise Pambid

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