



Reconciliation Action Plan

June 2019 - June 2020



Acknowledgement of Country

It is a privilege to be living and working on the lands of **Wadawurrung** and **Gunditjmara** people. It is upon their ancestral lands that Bethany services are situated. We respectfully acknowledge the past and present Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and acknowledge the wisdom and diversity of past and present Elders.

We share commitment to nurturing the future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the communities in which we work. We must take time to reflect and take up the challenge to open our eyes to understand the story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This land has held a deep spiritual significance, we acknowledge the attachment and spiritual connection the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with this country. Through generations, their stories and spirit have been written into this land. We acknowledge the people's relationship with Bunjil, the creator, with the land and all creation.

We also extend our acknowledgement to all other cultural groups that have contributed to the country we live in today.

For any public enquiries please contact Tracie McPherson- Chair of the RAP Working Group.

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Cover Artwork

Strong Brother Strong Sister and The Koorie Youth Group created this art piece to tell an extremely important story.

The artwork symbolises the journey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people that are in out of home care and the importance of connection to culture, community and identity.

The young artists have painted this piece to make a statement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families in out of home care, to recognise their strength, resilience, passion and determination.





Message from CEO

On behalf of Bethany I am proud to introduce the inaugural Bethany Group Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) June 2019- June 2020.

The intent of this document is to guide and inform the organisation's governance, processes and outputs. It will also provide us with a clear, strategic and measurable framework for translating our commitments into actions.

In alignment with Bethany's values, we are committed to celebrating diversity and innovation. We are determined to create a connected, diverse and inclusive environment ensuring Bethany's services are accessible and can be embraced by all members of the community.

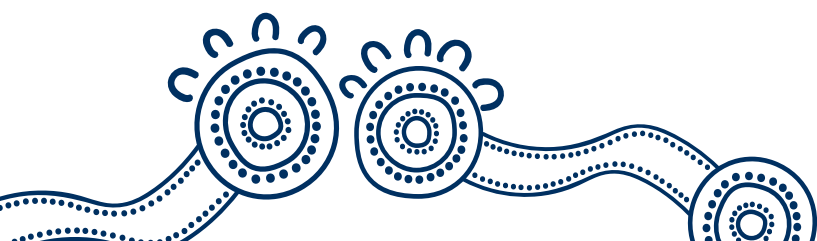
Bethany recognises that we have a role to play in promoting and protecting the respect and trust of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as we strive to achieve equity across the board.

I am confident that this document outlines a set of achievable actions which will allow Bethany to develop a deeper cultural understanding and will enhance our existing relationships with community members, Elders and Leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs).

I acknowledge and thank all those involved in developing the RAP and we look forward to continuing to be guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, volunteers, partners and stakeholders as we participate in the journey of reconciliation.

Grant Boyd

CEO Bethany Group



Bethany Community Support Inc.

Bethany Community Support provides high quality community services to individuals located in Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsula, Warrnambool and South West Victoria. Bethany is a not for profit and non-denominational organisation established in 1868. Over time the organisation has responded to the changing needs of the community and has adapted the services provided. Bethany's mission is to value people, strengthen lives and effect change.

The organisation provides a broad range of prevention, early intervention and integrated service responses to communities including Child and Family, Housing and Relationship Services, Problem Gambling and Financial Counselling and Parenting Programs. Family Violence Services expands into case management support for women and children impacted by family violence and perpetrator interventions.



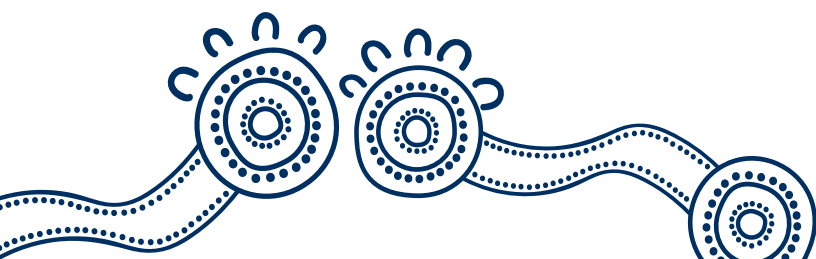
Photo credit: Highton Kindergarten - Harper Douglas (left) and Marli Coulson (right)

Bethany Kindergarten Services Ltd.

In July 2017, after a period of consultation with staff, kindergartens, local government and the Department of Education and Training, Geelong Kindergarten Association and Bethany Community Support announced their intention to merge. The Boards of both organisations agreed to bring the two entities together, in recognition that the merge would enable the delivery of quality early childhood education programs for children, enhanced by access to a range of support services for kindergarten families.

The Bethany Kindergarten Services approach to early learning focuses on each and every child experiencing a quality, contemporary educational experience. This is achieved by providing our educators with the opportunity to keep up to date with current practice through a strong commitment to professional learning, leadership and development. Bethany Kindergarten Services is invested in ensuring children are able to participate in a variety of rich, meaningful, enquiry based experiences that promote inclusion, respect and diversity. We remain committed to realising our vision of 'developing every child's potential'.

Bethany Kindergarten Services embraces the opportunities outlined in the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2020, to improve Koori education outcomes and close the gap in educational achievement. We strive to provide early childhood learning environments where the rich and thriving cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is understood and celebrated by all children and their families.



The Bethany group

(Bethany Community Support and Bethany Kindergarten Services)

Bethany's revenue is provided by state and federal government, community, philanthropic and fee for service.

The Bethany group operates over four key sites, 22 kindergartens and employs over 350 staff on a casual, part time and full time basis. Of the 350 plus staff, Bethany currently has 5 employees who have identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Our administration staff are located at:

- Hamlyn Heights (Head Office)
- Geelong West
- South Geelong
- Warrnambool

In addition to this Bethany Community Support also has a number of staff working in co-located spaces across the region, including in schools and community hubs, and undertaking home outreach.

Bethany Kindergarten Services operates the following kindergarten services:

- Allanvale Preschool Centre
- Beacon Point Preschool
- Bellevue Preschool Centre
- Bell Park Kindergarten
- Bell Post Hill Kindergarten
- Breakwater Preschool
- Drysdale Preschool
- Fyans Park Kindergarten
- Grovedale Kindergarten
- Herne Hill K-6 Early Learning Centre
- Highton Preschool
- Kirralee Kindergarten
- Normanby Street Preschool
- Lara Kindergarten
- Leopold Kindergarten
- Ocean Grove Preschool
- Portarlington Preschool
- Queenscliff Kindergarten
- Rix Street Kindergarten
- William Hovell Preschool
- William Parker Memorial Kindergarten
- Woodlands Preschool

Photo credit: Leopold Kindergarten



Our RAP

Bethany believes that the development and implementation of a RAP is critical to demonstrate our commitment to supporting and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations. We believe that a RAP will allow for Bethany to establish new meaningful relationships and also strengthen existing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The RAP will develop opportunities within our organisation to improve services provided to and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

A community consultation conducted for the purpose of this RAP with Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative highlighted that through Bethany's early work, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may not have positive experiences or memories of our historical services due to cultural inappropriateness and a lack of cultural awareness. Bethany will be guided by the organisation's vision to reshape practices and perceptions and through this RAP intends to build on the mutual respect and existing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure positive, lasting change.

These actions are further reflected in Bethany's strategic aims and priorities, as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2017-20, which include:

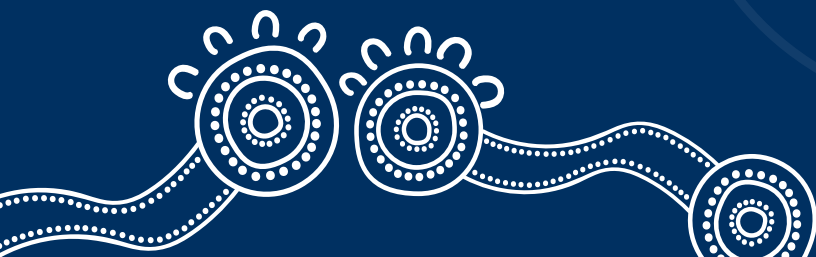
- Ensure children get a good start in life, have a strong sense of identity and contribute to their world
- Increase the opportunities for individuals and families to build resilience and experience safe and supportive relationships
- Challenge gender inequality and reduce the level of risk and harm experienced by women and children
- Reduce barriers that create disadvantage and support people participating in the community in ways they chose

This RAP not only provides a high-level vision for reconciliation, but reflects Bethany's commitment to applying this work in a practical way across all levels and areas of the organisation.

We will utilise this plan as a living document, providing processes which guide the organisation and facilitate our learning, growth and continuous improvement as we work towards closing the gap in:

- Reducing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and address the underlying causes of child protection interventions
- Facilitating safe and strong communities including program family violence across communities and working closely with ACCHOs to support the provision of family services
- Early years participation through provision of supported playgroups, parenting program and kindergarten services

Together, we aim to strengthen our collective ability to deliver quality early childhood education programs for children and provide support to families in new and innovative ways as part of a broader network of community services.





Bethany's Reconciliation Action Plan

Bethany's first RAP will utilise the framework provided by Reconciliation Australia when establishing culturally appropriate practices within and outside our organisation. We are committed to examining the current models of care and support offered by Bethany, which are based on a Western construct.

Bethany's reconciliation journey began in 2012 with the establishment of an Aboriginal Cultural Working Group, which consisted of representatives from different program areas. The working group developed a clear Terms of Reference (TOR) document and developed an Aboriginal Cultural Action Plan (2012-2015).

Following the expiry of the original Aboriginal Cultural Action Plan and a change of staff representatives, the TOR and Action Plan were reviewed and updated with the new working group proposing the development of a Bethany RAP. An active RAP Working Group made up of managers and coordinators representing service delivery areas across the organisation promoted and provided support to the development of the organisation's RAP. Some staff members who identify as Aboriginal are active participants of the working group.

In working toward reconciliation, Bethany's three primary partner organisations include: Wathaurong, Gunditjmara and Winda – Mara.

To ensure that the RAP is a robust document it is crucial that baseline data and benchmarks are obtained to inform current and future practice. Actions will be reported on to the Bethany Board and Reconciliation Australia. This is fundamental to ensuring continuous improvement and consistently delivering safe, effective, connected and person led practices.

The RAP will focus on strengthening authentic partnerships and leading an internal and external community that supports social change and economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The document will also provide a set of actions to assist Bethany's stakeholders to understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and histories.

This RAP will outline actions, deliverables, timelines and accountable stakeholders across four key areas:

1. Relationships
2. Respect
3. Opportunities
4. Tracking Progress and Reporting.

Current Initiatives

1. Employment

- Employment of Elders to present Cultural Understanding, Safety Training and provide cultural advice
- 12 month full time Traineeship offered to an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person
- Opportunities for mentoring programs between Bethany and ACCHOs. Currently Bethany's Cultural Working Group Chair provides mentoring to the CEO of Strong Brother Strong Sister. This mentorship is for 12 months and commenced in March 2019
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees have the ability to identify on resource forms

2. Events

- All available Bethany staff attendance at Cultural Days including Apology Day Breakfast, NAIDOC week activities and Family Violence Regional Action Group meetings
- Bethany annually hosts a Reconciliation Walk led by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from the Bethany West Geelong office to the Hamlyn Heights office which includes a Smoking Ceremony upon walk conclusion
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander films are selected and aired at the Bethany Warrnambool Film Festival, an art-house screening of 5 films over 5 months which focuses on celebrating diversity and raising funds for the Bethany Community Support South West region
- Bethany facilitates the Giving Tree which provides Christmas gifts to in need Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

3. Onsite Integration

- Aboriginal, Australian and Torres Strait Islander flags at all reception sites, outside head office and at all Kindergartens are displayed
- Acknowledgment of Country plaques on display in entrances
- Wathaurong glass featured in office displays and used for plaques, awards, trophies and other corporate gifts

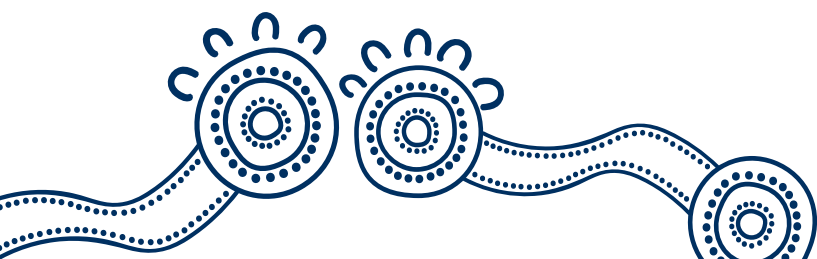
Program Collaboration and Integration

Bethany staff work alongside ACCHOs staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users to allow for culturally safe practices to be in place when providing support through program areas. This includes ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and practices are central to support and an overall connection to country is maintained. The Bethany program areas include:

- Children and Parenting Services
- Family Violence Services
- Gamblers Help
- Kinship Care
- Family Lead Decision Making
- Implementation of the Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026 and Koorie Kids Shine - Kindergarten Campaign

4. Training

- Bethany staff undertake compulsory face to face and online training regarding the history/trauma and generational grief within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Elder led visitation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sites such as Wurdi Youang through on country visits are offered to Bethany staff



Relationships

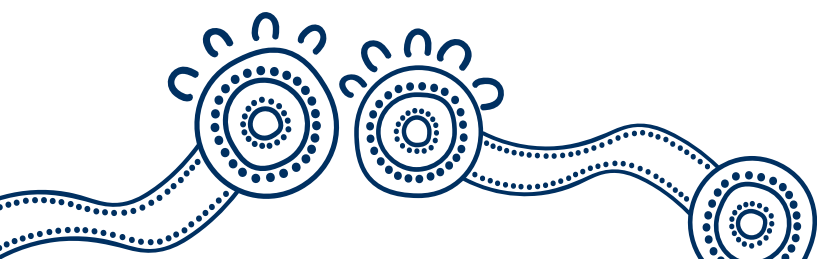
The basis of reconciliation is developing strong relationships, built on mutual trust and respect. As an organisation we recognise that the first step is to deepen our understanding of the cultural heritage and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. Through community consultation, we recognise the need for staff to build meaningful relationships with ACCHOs.

Our challenge is to ensure that a cultural lens is reflected through our work. On this basis we aim to alter the delivery of our services to:



Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish a RAP Working Group	RAP Working Group oversees the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP	July 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented on the RAP Working Group	July 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Meet at least twice per year to monitor, guide and report on RAP implementation, updating the RAP based on learnings	July 2019 September 2019 November 2019 January 2020 March 2020 May 2020 July 2020	Assistant Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Establish Terms of Reference for the RAP Working Group	July 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
Strengthen internal and external relationships with a focus on our involvement with our partner organisations – Wathaurong, Winda - Mara and Gunditjmara	Provide more information to ACCHOs about the Bethany services to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are aware of the areas Bethany can support individuals	July 2019	Assistant Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey	August 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Develop a list of RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey	August 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Investigate opportunities to share professional expertise with our partner organisations	August 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Connect with alike RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to share learnings and challenges, discuss our reconciliation journey and adapt practices to ensure best approach	September 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Support worker co locations at Bethany and ACCHOs sites	September 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Build trust through creating a communication strategy which will enable stronger information sharing with ACCHOs	September 2019	Marketing and Communications Coordinator



Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week resources and reconciliation materials to our staff	July 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Encourage all Bethany staff including the RAP Working Group to participate and be present at National Reconciliation Week and broader community events that are open to services providers	May 2020	Chair of the RAP Working Group
Raise internal awareness of our RAP	Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness amongst all staff across the organisation about our RAP commitments	October 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group

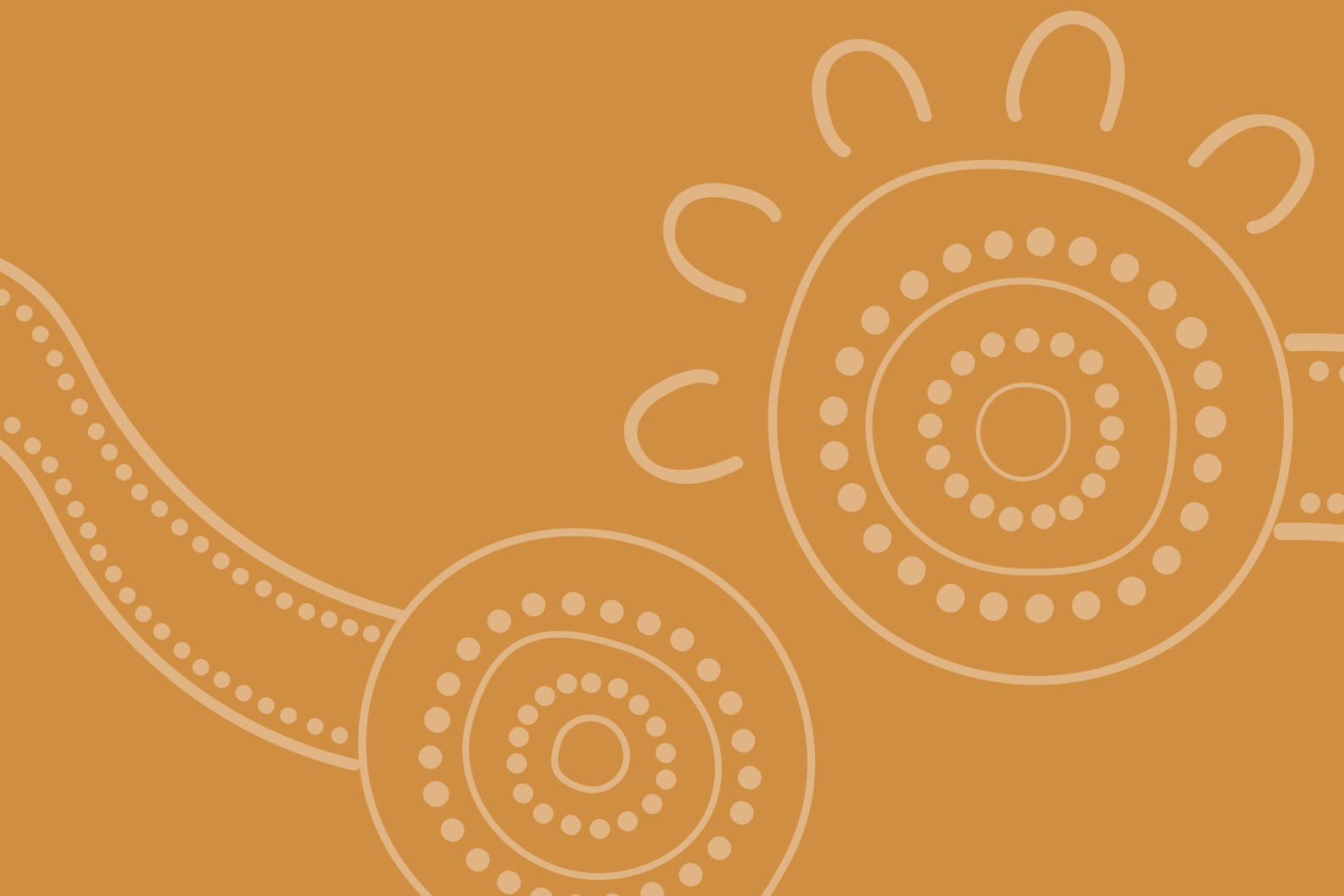
Photo credit: Highton Kindergarten - Ethan Hill (left), Ollie Nieuwenhuis (middle) and Will Duncan (right)



Respect

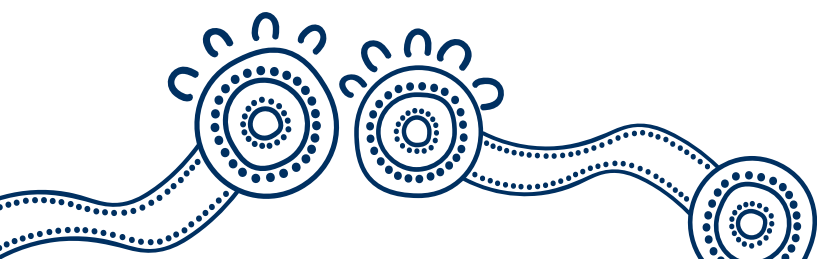
Bethany is committed to ensuring all services are culturally respectful to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the communities we serve. Bethany's current Quality Improvement Plan identifies 'Cultural competency education and training' as a high organisational priority.

We acknowledge that building cultural understanding and respect is an ongoing process and that Bethany staff must acknowledge the trauma suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the impact this past trauma has on individuals and communities today.



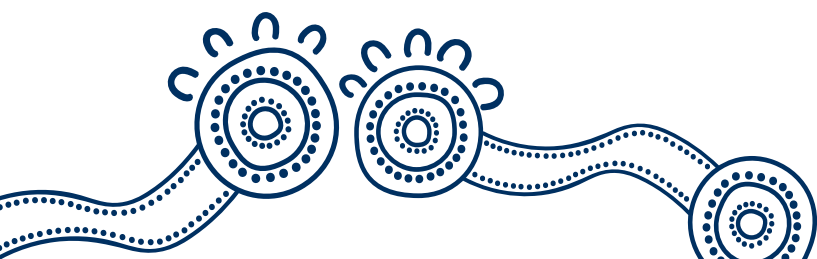
Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Investigate and create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning and development	Commit to ongoing localised Cross Cultural training for self-nominated staff, which will include walks on Country – face to face delivery run by Traditional Owner groups and ACCHOs	June 2020	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Develop a business case for increasing awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements within our organisation	July 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Capture data and measure our staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements	July 2019	People and Culture Manager
	Conduct a review of cultural awareness training needs within our organisation	September 2019	Assistant Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Create professional learning opportunities through the development of the Bethany annual training calendar which includes learning about achievements, resilience and cultures within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities	December 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
Participate in and celebrate NAIDOC Week	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week which includes information about the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities	July 2019	Marketing and Communications Co-ordinator
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting community events in our local area	July 2019	Events Assistant
	Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external NAIDOC Week event	July 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group



Respect

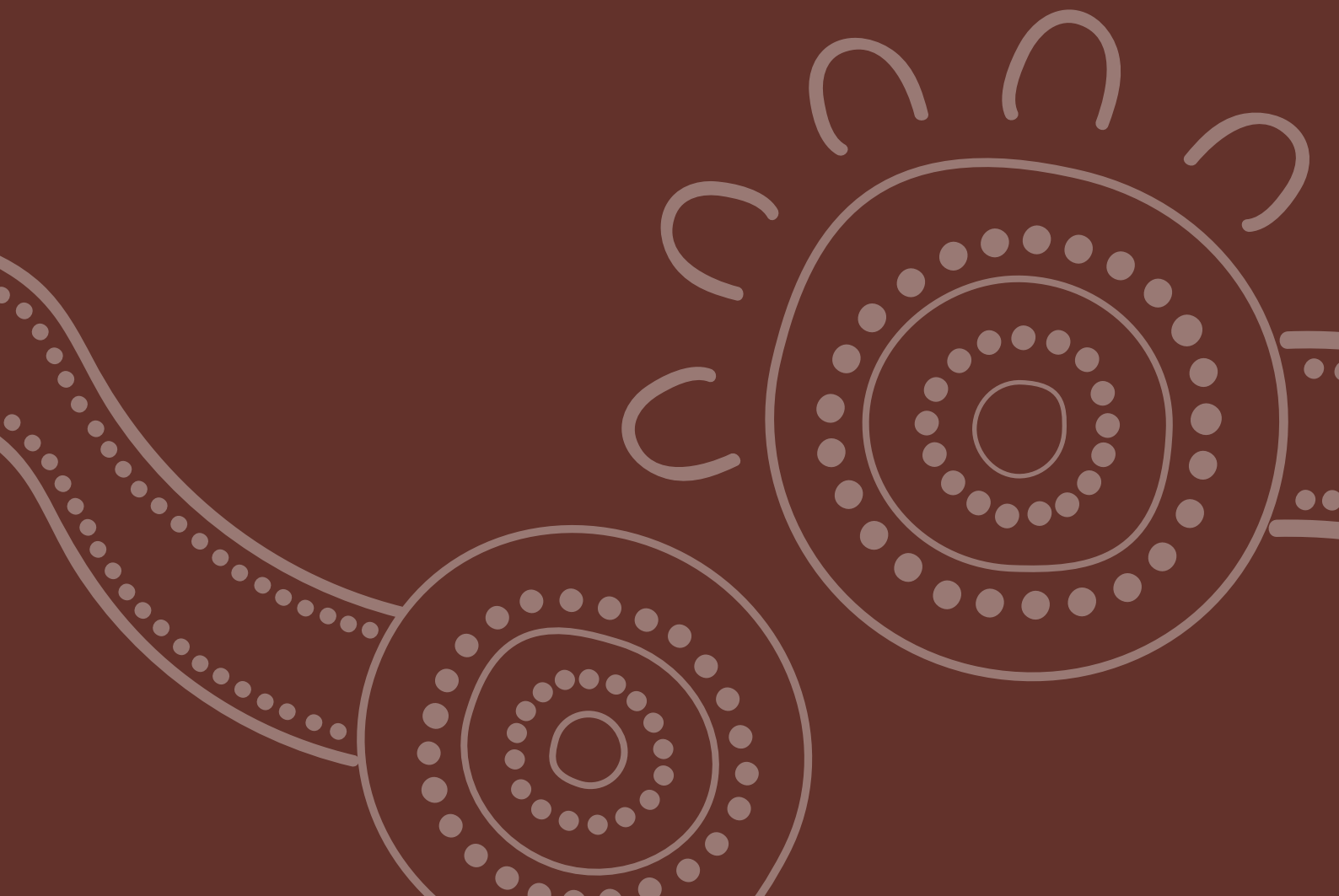
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols	Explore who the Traditional Owners are of the lands and waters in our local area	June 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Ensure all staff begin meetings of significance by acknowledging Traditional Custodianship of the land	July 2019	CEO
	Scope and develop a list of local Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisations sphere of influence	October 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness and understanding of the meaning and significance behind Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols (including any local cultural protocols)	October 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
Create a culturally inclusive environment for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients	Where possible, ensure promotional materials feature local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	August 2019	Marketing and Communication Coordinator
	Undertake a cultural audit review for all Bethany offices	October 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Examine the physical nature of the space at all Bethany sites and explore ways to improve their levels of cultural safety for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users and employees	October 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Consult ACCHOs to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples perspectives are considered when developing and implementing service user programs	December 2019	Assistant Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Purchase artwork from the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to continue to foster a culturally inclusive space	January 2020	Marketing and Communications Coordinator
	Encourage staff to utilise ACCHO spaces when providing outreach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients	February 2020	Assistant Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Work with ACCHOs to begin developing a strategy of engaging Aboriginal people in individual decision making processes	June 2020	Chair of the RAP Working Group



Opportunities

Listening to, and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ensures we can provide appropriate service delivery.

Bethany's vision is to ensure that all services are accessible, we believe we can do this through employment and consultation.



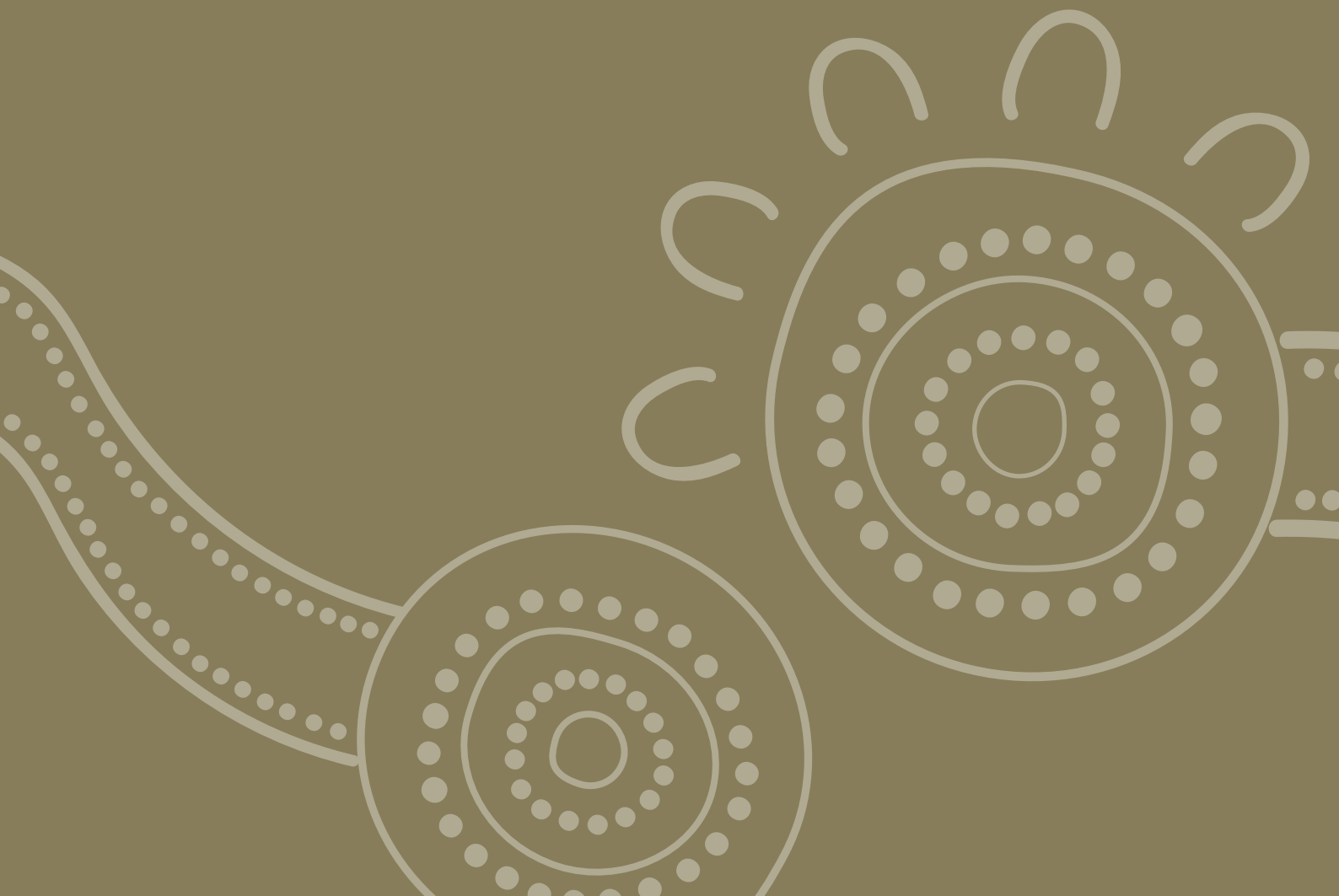
Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment	Work current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment and development opportunities	July 2019	People and Culture Manager
	Provide further opportunities at Bethany for work placements	August 2019	People and Culture Manager
	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation	October 2019	People and Culture Manager
Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity	Develop an understanding of the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses	August 2019	Corporate Service Manager
	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses	August 2019	Corporate Service Manager

Photo credit: Highton Kindergarten - Peter Berry (left) and Olive Paulin (right)



Tracking Progress & Reporting



Tracking Progress and Reporting

Build support for the RAP	Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation	July 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Define systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP activities	July 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia	September 2019, 2020'	Chair of the RAP Working Group
Review and Refresh RAP	Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements	February 2020	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Submit draft RAP/s to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement	June 2020	Chair of the RAP Working Group
Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally	Report achievements, challenges and learnings to Bethany Executive and board	Bi-monthly meetings from July 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group
	Provide updates on RAP actions for the Bethany Annual Report	October 2019	Chair of the RAP Working Group

Photographer: Anita Dalton from Gunditjmara Model: Shylee Corigan wearing a possum skinned cloak used as a naming cloak





bethany
group

community support
kindergarten services

