



Reconciliation

Action Plan

December 2020 - December 2021



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT



The Women's Centre
safe space for women

Tears Tell *Stories*

Artwork courtesy of Karen Doolan,
2017

"When we cry we are healing, every tear has a story and it can tell us when we are sad, happy, angry, and all the other emotions that come with tears, we need to cry as this is part of life and human nature also to relieve our self so we don't get sick, it's ok to cry let it all go don't be shame to cry people need to know how you feel, you always feel better after you had a cry this is how we were made.

The symbols shaped like a u shape represent women sitting around the fire and the u shape on its own is a women who is sitting alone, the tracks leading to the other women mean its time to sit with the elders who are always there for us when we need them, they are waiting for us to go to them when we need them and we think we know everything but we don't, we will always need our elders for wisdom.



The women figures in the far corner are angels who are always watching and will always be there for us in spirit.

This is the story of the artwork so I hope you are happy with it, I felt that people do not cry enough as they don't want people to know how they are feeling it seems that society tells us that this is not appropriate and it upsets others, so people tend to cry alone and this is not appropriate and it upsets others, so people tend to cry alone and this is where we need to be with someone, we don't need to say anything just hold them when they cry.

In Aboriginal culture when there is sorry business or sadness women whale (sic) and are not ashamed to cry."



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the First Nations on whose lands and seas we live and work; and we honour their Elders, past, present and emerging.

We particularly recognise the unique journey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and the contributions their voices make within our organisation and the wider community.



The Women's Centre

Message from North Queensland Combined Women's Services President of the Management Committee; Theresa Petray

The feminist framework we operate from includes an awareness of the way that gender intersects with other structural inequalities, including colonisation. We see the effects of those intersections on a daily basis in the work we do with women. A Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) will support us as we continue to acknowledge the social injustice and deep intergenerational trauma that colonisation has meant for First Nations peoples, and the ongoing impacts that subsequently exist. In addition to working effectively with the women who use the service for support and advocacy, a Reconciliation Action Plan is a concrete means for The Women's Centre to contribute to structural change, through actions that contribute to the creation of a culture of social justice and change in the centre and broader community. Though we are a small organisation, our RAP will help to support the broader cultural shift towards reconciliation.

Reconciliation is about our actions, our behaviours, and our intent to do things differently. A RAP gives us a central point of purpose and guidance for how we can and will create change with and for First Nations Peoples, and an ongoing lens through which we can assess and adjust whether this is achieving the described goals and aims. It operationalises good intentions and allows them to become action by formalising our reconciliation goals.

In particular, our Reconciliation Action Plan will help us provide best practice services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who use the service. Further, The Women's Centre RAP will assist us with relationship building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations in the region. A positive two-way relationship built on trust and respect needs to exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and the wider community throughout society. These relationships will assist the organisation to consciously explore opportunities and avenues that will promote better service provision to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander women.

The NQCWS Management Committee is honoured to support this step on a pathway to meaningful relationships, social justice and reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Theresa Petray

North Queensland Combined Women's Service - President



Our *business*

The Women's Centre exists to support and empower women in Townsville and surrounding regions. We are here to bring positive change to women's lives. The Women's Centre offers the following services:

- Women's Health Counselling and Support
- Specialist Women's Homelessness Support
- Sexual Assault Support Service
 - Including 24 Hour Sexual Assault Response in cooperation with Townsville Hospital, QLD Police, and the Clinical Forensic Medicine Unit, since 2016
- Since 2019, Disaster Recovery Support (funded through short-term grants)

The Women's Centre supports women through a variety of methods, including walk-in crisis support and casework, ongoing counselling, community education and group activities. Our service is located in Townsville, and in 2020 we relocated to a new, purpose-built premises. In addition to services offered on-site, we provide regular outreach services to Townsville Women's Prison, the Burdekin region, Charters Towers, and Ingham.

The Women's Centre supports over 1000 women each year, many of whom access the service more than once, and some of whom may access more than one service. In 2019 we saw 1548 women utilise The Women's Centre services at least once. Of these, more than one quarter identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women, compared to Townsville's overall population which includes 7.9% of people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. However the rate of service usage by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women varies between services (Figure 1).

As a small, non-government organisation, our staff numbers fluctuate depending on external funding. In August 2020, we employ 20 women. Of those, we currently employ one full-time team member who identifies as an Adnyamathanha woman. Further, The Women's Centre operations are led by a Management Committee currently consisting of seven women, including one who identifies as an Aboriginal Woman.

The Women's Centre was formally founded in August 1984 through volunteer efforts, and was underpinned by a feminist framework. Since then, The Women's Centre has secured more stable government funding but still relies on grants and short-term service delivery agreements to increase our ability to support women in Townsville. Our work is still unapologetically feminist and social justice oriented: we seek to support all women, challenge injustices, and aim to develop a socially just, inclusive and respectful society.

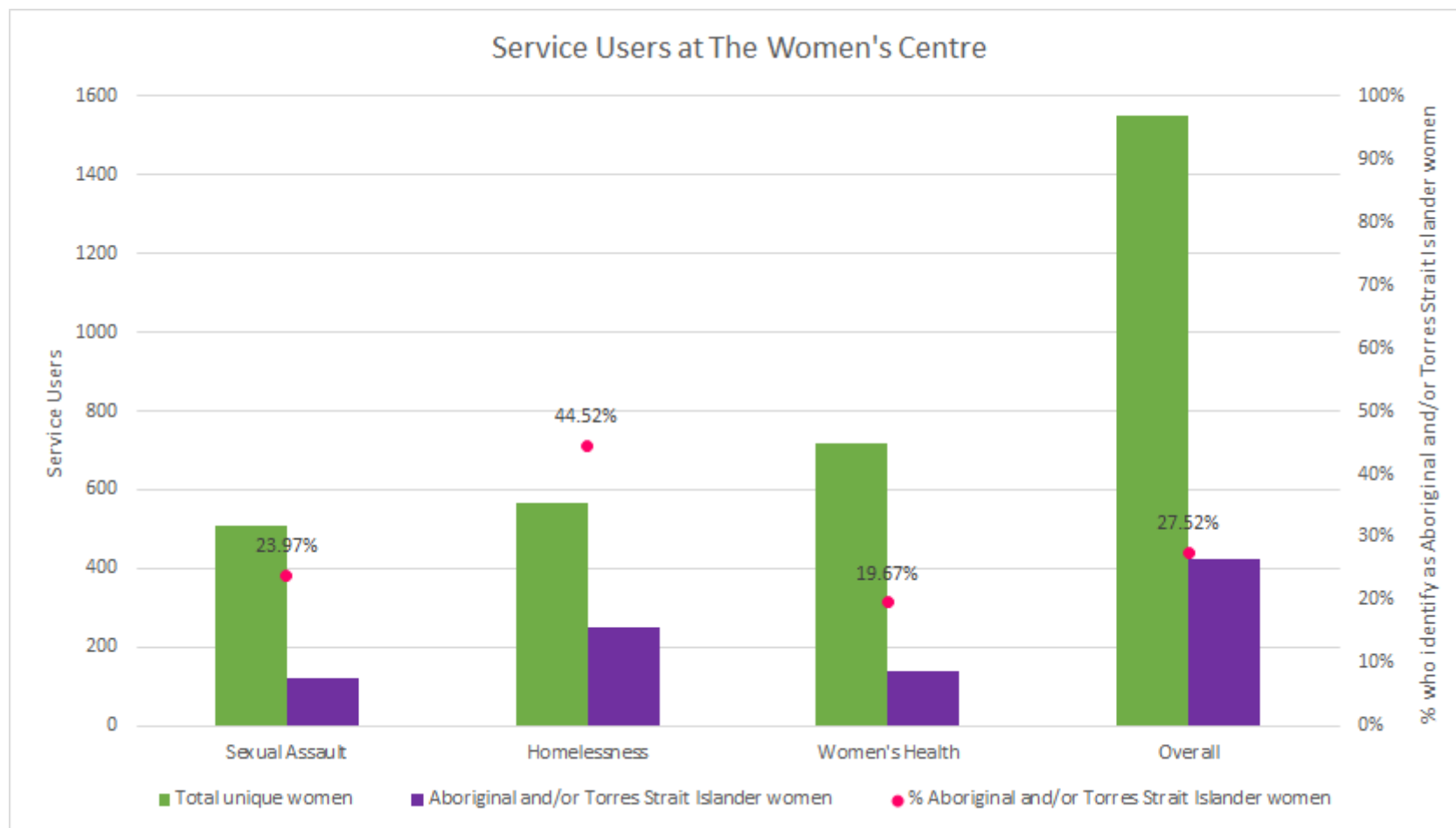


Figure 1. Total service users at The Women's Centre, 2019. Bars show the total number of women, and the total number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women, who accessed each service at least once. Dots show the percentage of service users who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women. If a woman accessed more than one service, she has been counted just once in the Overall bars.





Our RAP

The Women's Centre acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations as the sovereign peoples of this land. The Women's Centre is committed to reconciliation and will work towards this goal in all areas of our operations. The Women's Centre's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) will be implemented across the whole organisation via inclusion on regular staff and Management Committee meetings. However, a RAP Working Group (RWG) will drive and monitor the implementation of the Reflect RAP, assisting our organisation to lay solid foundations that will support our future reconciliation initiatives. The RAP Working Group will meet at least quarterly.

Role

The RWG will provide guidance and support for staff and Management Committee as they develop strategies, policies, and actions related to reconciliation. Its key roles include

- Monitoring data relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users, and staffing;
- Track progress on the RAP timeline once per quarter;
- Report to the organisation on progress once per quarter;
- Initiate and facilitate broader discussions about reconciliation within the organisation.

Membership

The RWG will be inclusive of staff and the Management Committee. Nominations will be sought from individuals and final membership decisions will be made in consultation with The Women's Centre Coordinator. The composition of the RWG is to include:

- At least one member of the Leadership Team (the RAP Champion);
- At least one member of the Management Committee;
- At least one member of staff who is not on the Leadership Team; and
- At least one member who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander woman in addition to the members above.

Since The Women's Centre is a small organisation, *a//* First Nations women from staff and Management Committee will be invited to join the RWG. Members of the RWG are expected to serve for 12 months (however if any members leave the organisation a replacement member will be sought).

It is important that The Women's Centre RAP remains a living document and becomes part of our everyday practice. The goal is not the RAP; rather, the RAP will help us work towards our goal of meaningful structural change. The Women's Centre is committed to continuous improvement and excellence in the work that we do. Given our feminist framework, and our commitment to the large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who use the service, this means continuously finding the space to listen, learn and educate ourselves on how to work more effectively towards reconciliation.

A key part of this Reconciliation journey is listening, and creating a culturally safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to tell us some uncomfortable truths and an understanding that in order to maintain positive relationships service delivery needs to be mindful and considerate of the structural inequalities which continue to drive disadvantage and racism. We also commit to creating a platform, wherever we can, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women within the Centre, within the sector, and within the region. Reconciliation is an ongoing process. It needs to happen at all levels of society, from individuals to organisations to governments.





Our *partnerships* & current *activities*

The Women's Centre is made up of individuals from a big range of cultural backgrounds, starting places, and understandings of First Nations contexts - but with our own personal commitments to reconciliation.

As individuals, our commitments to reconciliation include listening, learning, being respectful, challenging racism, and creating positive change wherever we can.

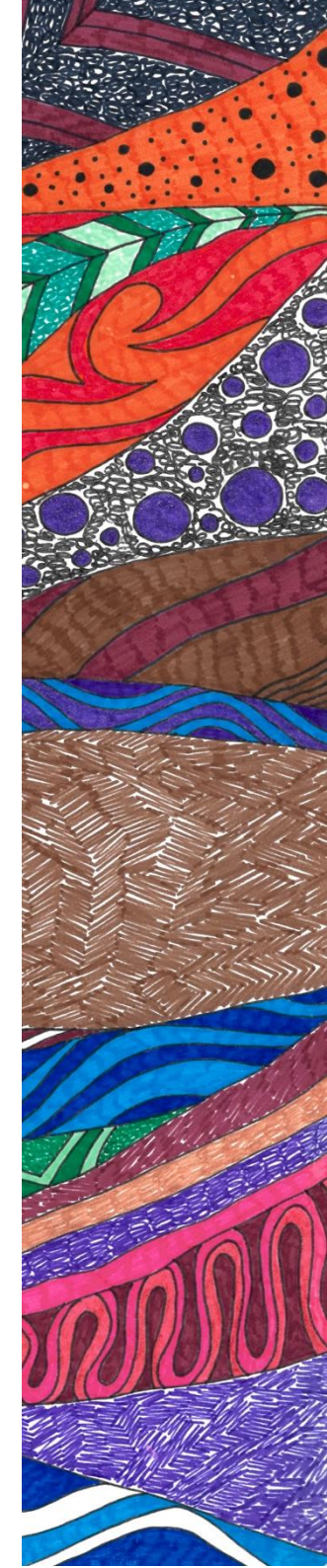
As an organisation, we have worked towards social justice and cultural safety for a number of years, and look forward to this Reconciliation Action Plan as a means to consolidate and reinvigorate our efforts.

- In our new premises, we are seeking inclusive design to symbolise our commitment to reconciliation.
- Our new premises and an agreement with Queensland Health will see the introduction of midwifery services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on site one day per week.
- Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service Family Wellbeing Service will coordinate a playgroup for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers in our new premises.
- We have ad hoc working relationships, which can become more formalised, with Townsville Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service, Iris Clay Hostel, Tonky Logan Hostel, Youth Shelter, The Lighthouse, Family and Wellbeing Program, Sir Reverend Charles Diversionary Centre and Camp Street Accommodation Service, Yumba Meta Housing, Flora House, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Service North Queensland, Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service, and others.
- In previous years we have provided our premises as meeting space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's yarning circles and dance groups. These individual and ad hoc commitments provide an important foundation for reconciliation, but we are just starting our formal reconciliation journey.

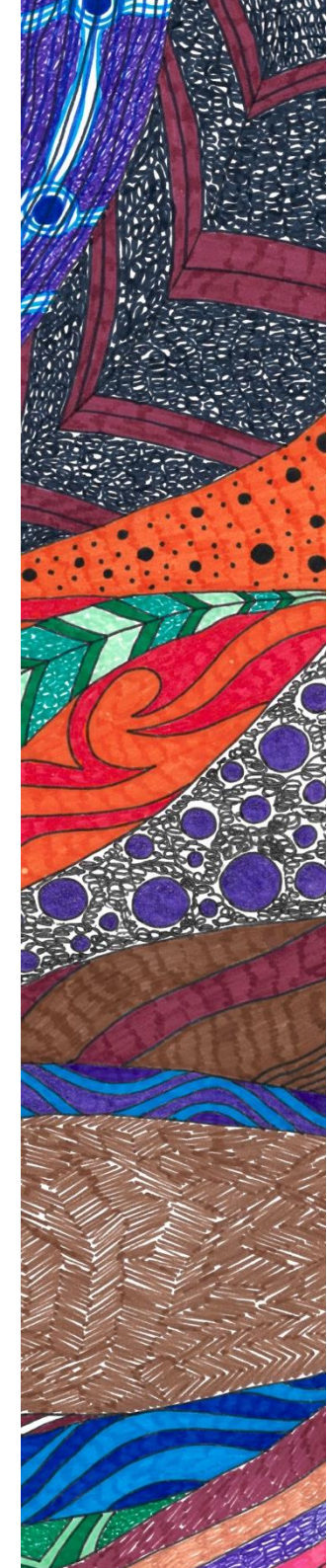


Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan to incorporate regular reciprocal knowledge and skills sharing amongst stakeholders and organisations to improve service delivery. Actively network with current groups and women's health services by participating in their events. Develop a communication strategy to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to use The Women's Centre as a meeting place. 	May 2021	RAP Champion
		March 2021	RAP Champion
		March 2021	RAP Champion
		April 2021	Social Media Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations, and develop best practice in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users. 	September 2021	RWG Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community partners to develop collaborative practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service users. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify contact people and communicate with Wulgurukaba Elders and representatives about The Women's Centre's business, our values, and our RAP. Build relationships with other Traditional Owner groups in the regions where The Women's Centre operates: Bindal (Townsville to Ayr), Manbarra & Bwgcolman (Palm Island), Warringnu (Charters Towers), Juru (Burdekin), and Nywaigi (Ingham). 	March 2021	RAP Champion
		December 2020	RAP Champion
		March 2021	RAP Champion



2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff and Management Committee members. 	April 2021	RWG Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. 	May 2021	RWG Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage and support staff and Management Committee to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. 	27 May- 3 June 2021	RAP Champion
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate induction to RAP at the start of the RAP and for new staff members upon joining the organisation ○ Add Reconciliation Action Plan as a recurring agenda item for staff meetings as part of continuous improvement. ○ Produce a Reconciliation Statement for The Women's Centre. 	December 2020 December 2020 December 2020 December 2020	RAP Champion RAP Champion RAP Champion President
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Reference Group to ensure ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders and women who use the services. 	March 2021 March 2021	RWG Chair RWG Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Host a RAP Summit with other local women's services to discuss the progress towards reconciliation in the sector. 	June 2021 June 2021	RWG Chair RWG Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. 	February 2021	Quality and Human Resource Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	March 2021	Quality and Human Resource Manager



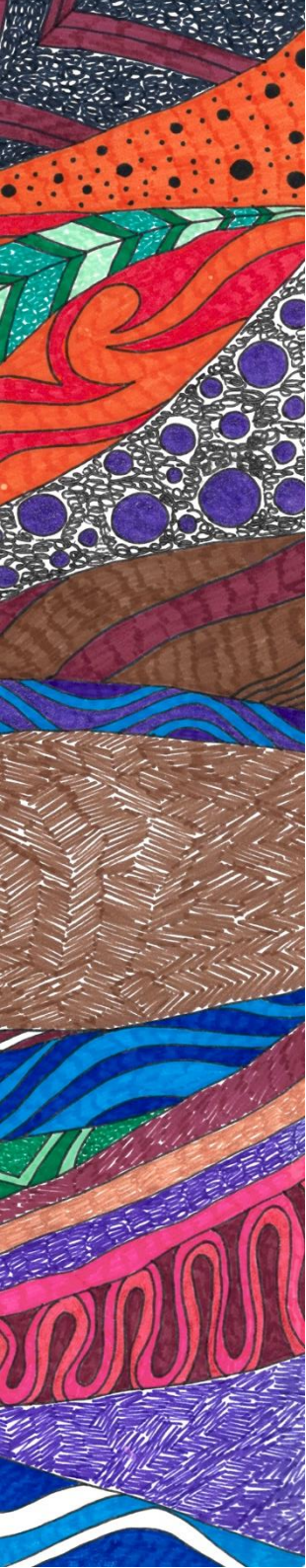


Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. 	December 2020	Treasurer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make an ongoing plan for cultural education for orientation of new staff, and ongoing staff and Management Committee members 	December 2020 December 2020	RAP Champion RAP Champion
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build relationships with Wulgurukaba Aboriginal Corporation to ensure appropriate cultural protocols are followed for events on Wulgurukaba Country, where The Women's Centre is located. 	December 2020 December 2020	RAP Champion RAP Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staff understandings of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to promote the Acknowledgment of Country policy & procedure to all staff as part of RAP Induction. 	June 2021 April 2021	RAP Champion RAP Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop protocols for Welcome to Country to be conducted at large events in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and to be included in Acknowledgement of Country Policy and Procedures. 	June 2021	RAP Champion



7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ First staff meeting in November and July to include discussion of NAIDOC and its history and ongoing significance.	July 2021	RWG Chair
		July 2021	RWG Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ In addition to sharing with staff via email list, share to The Women's Centre social media.○ The Women's Centre to hold a stall or information table at Townsville NAIDOC Family Day Out	July 2021	Social Media Manager
		July 2021	Social Media Manager
		July 2021	Social Media Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ All staff and Management Committee to be invited to attend.	July 2021	RAP Champion & RWG Chair
		July 2021	RAP Champion & RWG Chair
8. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories into the physical space of The Women's Centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Design signage demonstrating RAP values for use at events and in the Centre premises.	January 2021	Business Administrator
9. Ensure the new premises are a culturally safe and inclusive space for Aboriginal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and artwork in the new premises.	December 2020	RAP Champion



and Torres Strait Islander women who use the service.

- Seek advice from Wulgurukaba Representatives about appropriate ways to open the space, e.g. Smoking Ceremony

December 2020

RAP Champion

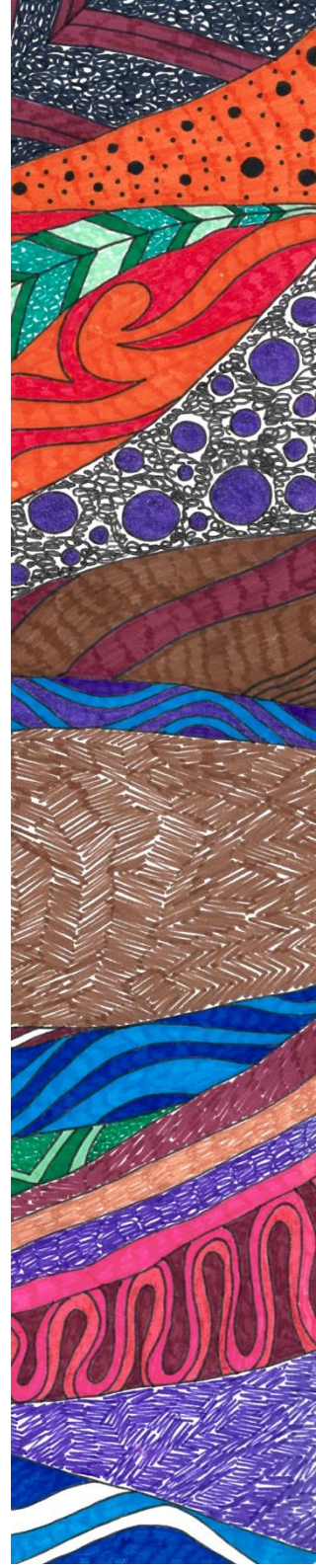


Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and organisations to use The Women's Centre's physical location for meetings and events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider reduced hire fees for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and organisations when Venue Hire Policy and Procedures are developed 	December 2020	Business Administrator; Quality and Human Resource Manager
11. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current employment conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, including dedicated cultural leave provisions. Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. Consider scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students while on placement at The Women's Centre. 	June 2021	RAP Champion
		April 2021	Quality and Human Resource Manager
		May 2021	Business Administrator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify current barriers to increasing representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and develop a targeted change plan. 	June 2021	Business Administrator
		June 2021	RAP Champion
		June 2021	RAP Champion
		June 2021	RAP Champion



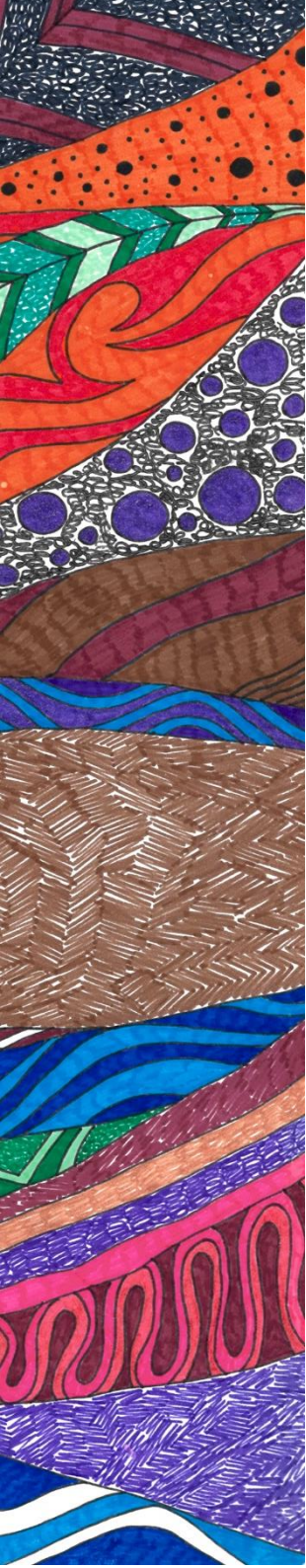
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate funding opportunities for identified positions amongst case workers and/or counsellors. 		
12. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise procurement policy to ensure quotes are sought from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander providers where relevant. 	February 2021 April 2021	Business Administrator Quality and Human Resource Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Supply Nation membership. Management Committee to consider the business case for membership. 	February 2021	Treasurer, Management Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission staff shirts to be designed by a local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander artist for staff to purchase and wear for events. 	April 2021	RWG Chair





Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Form, review and maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.<ul style="list-style-type: none">RWG to include representation from staff and management committee members.	December 2020 December 2020	RAP Champion RAP Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	December 2020	RWG Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	December 2020	RWG Chair
14. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Define resource needs for RAP implementation.<ul style="list-style-type: none">Budget to be shared with Management Committee for oversight, and approval as needed (according to the Financial Delegations Policy & Procedure).	December 2020 December 2020	RWG Chair Business Administrator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.<ul style="list-style-type: none">RAP to be a standing agenda item for Leadership Team meetings.RAP to be a standing agenda item for monthly Management Committee meetings.	December 2020 December 2020 December 2020	RWG Champion RWG Champion RWG Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	December 2020	RWG Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop template for monthly RAP reports to Management Committee meetings.	December 2020	RWG Champion



15. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, 2021	RAP Chair
16. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	August 2021	RAP Chair



The Women's Centre

safe space for women

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