





ARTIST: WAYDE CLARKE

Hi, I'm Wayde Wiradjuri/Birpai man, also known as Aléjandro, I am a queer, Aboriginal artist. My work explores identity and perception through my own experiences as a person of colour who identifies as gay living in Australia. I create installations to take on the world and bring attention to issues that are important to me.

I have always been passionate about art, but never thought it would become my career. I was late starting art and only considered it a hobby. I never thought my art would be bought or sold but I was wrong. I sold my first work in early 2018 and my art journey has not stopped since then.

I have been lucky enough to be able to run educational workshops teaching Aboriginal art to adults and children. I also run other workshops outside of this as I want people to feel free from the stress of everyday life. Art helps people heal and let go. I am not a qualified therapist but I fully believe this. If you are interested in booking a session please contact me.

I have always been enthralled by the notion of being unapologetically myself and would love others to do the same. My own identity has always been a source of confusion that has led me to find my way through art and self-discovery. Over the years I have gradually started to develop an awareness of who I am and where I fit into this world. This is an ongoing journey, and my work has developed as my understanding of myself has grown.

DESCRIPTION OF ARTWORK

My artwork for the RAP celebrates the ongoing journey of reconciliation and the values of justice, equity, and equality at its heart. The artwork features the Rainbow Serpent, a powerful symbol in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, representing a bold, colourful, and beautiful thriving community.

Through the Rainbow Serpent, I emphasise the need for all Australians to work together towards building a community full of love and harmony. The serpent is shown in a dynamic, vibrant, and bright community, reminding us that reconciliation is not just about acknowledging the past but also building an inclusive and equitable future. The snake is moving as we move forward, learn to listen, respect and acknowledge Australia's history in a positive message.

I included the LGBTQIA community in my artwork to highlight the need for diversity and inclusivity. The community brings diversity and flare to the world through their contributions to fashion, TV, movies, stage production, music, writing, and more. I acknowledge that while not everyone identifies as LGBTQIA, those outside the community can still be allies.

Overall, my artwork celebrates the journey of reconciliation and emphasises the importance of working together towards a more inclusive and equitable society where everyone has the same opportunities and choices in life, regardless of their cultural background.



A STATEMENT FROM KAREN MUNDINE,
RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA’S CEO

Reconciliation Australia commends ACON 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. ACON continues to be part of a strong network of more than 2,200 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 ACON will continuously draw upon to create RAP commitments rooted in experience and maturity.

These learnings extend to ACON 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 ACON 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, ACON will ensure shared and cooperative success in the long-term.

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

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



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

MESSAGE FROM
THE CEO AND PRESIDENT

ACON’s Reconciliation Action Plan is our ongoing commitment to ensuring First Nations people of diverse genders and sexualities can live their healthiest lives.

The second iteration of our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan will bring us closer to First Nations people of diverse genders and sexualities, including those who are lesbian, gay, and bisexual, Brotherboys, Sistergirls and trans mob (LGBTQ+SB).

Truth-telling and deep listening will guide ACON to achieve the actions we have outlined in our Reconciliation Action Plan and we will incorporate these learnings into our services for First Nations LGBTQ+SB communities.

ACON supports the pursuit of rights, justice and equity for First Nations people and celebrates First Nations culture, Blak joy, resilience, and strength. ACON is committed to removing barriers that contribute to disparities in First Nations health, inclusion, wellbeing, and employment.

We are concerned about the unacceptable gap that continues to exist across many areas of health for Australia’s First Nations population, compared with the Australian-born non-Indigenous population. To end these disparities, we must take every opportunity to build relationships and partner with First Nations health services and organisations.

First Nations people have the right to live their lives free of discrimination, which is why we will continue to embed anti-racism and anti-discrimination strategies into ACON’s ways of working, including within our own policies, processes, and procedures.

The past few years have been a difficult time for many due to the profound impact of COVID-19 and the Lismore floods

and despite this, we have seen spectacular achievements from First Nations colleagues and communities.

It was the ACON First Nations Health Programs team that led the community creation of the now iconic Rainbow Serpent First Nations Float for Sydney World Pride 2023. ACON will continue to work together with First Nations communities with a sense of shared celebration and pride.

We’re so privileged to have had Wiradjuri man Jason Glanville join our ACON Board. Jason has brought us extensive governance expertise and experience across community, corporate, government and philanthropy.

We have also increased the number of First Nations community members on our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and the group recently appointed Mingyungbal, Dunghutti and South Sea Islander person Jane Yettica as Indigenous Co-Chair. Jane is an Indigenous engagement consultant, storyteller, podcast host and former ACON staff member.

The creation of this plan was made possible due to the exceptional work of ACON staff and community members, including members of Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group.

We are delighted to share this plan with you and look forward to working together to drive change for First Nations people.



Nicolas Parkhill AM
CEO



Dr Justin Koonin
President

OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

OUR BUSINESS

Our vision for reconciliation is for an inclusive community where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community work together in the spirit of truth and in the pursuit of health equity.

It is a community that respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities’ human rights, identities, and cultures, listens to their voices, and ensures they are at the centre of health responses that affect them.

The future that we envisage is free from HIV transmission and one where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities, alongside the rest of our communities, live their healthiest lives. No one should be left behind.

“We will strive to be the best possible allies to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities by actively listening, by interrogating the way we work, by fighting racism, and by amplifying their voices whenever we can.”

Our vision for this Innovate RAP is for a community committed to a listening and truth-telling process, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are truly heard, and a healing process can be enabled. It is for an ACON community that makes meaningful change to address what is heard in that truth-telling process, by building relationships, respect and opportunities in the pursuit of health equity for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities.

The actions of this RAP take us on that truth-telling journey and will provide us with outcomes to implement to bring us closer to our vision of everyone in our communities, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, having the opportunity to live their healthiest lives.

ACON is Australia’s largest health organisation specialising in community health, inclusion, and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders. Established in 1985, ACON works to create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives.

Our head office is in Sydney, we have offices in Newcastle and Lismore, and we deliver outreach services across NSW. We also provide a range of programs nationally.

ACON currently employs over one hundred and sixty staff, including one full-time First Nations Health Programs Coordinator (identified position), and one full-time and three part time Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff. We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment retention in our workforce needs to improve and this will be one of our key focuses within this Innovate RAP.

ACON is a leader in community health responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders. We work closely with the NSW Ministry of Health, Local Health Districts, and key community and research partners in the blood-borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections sectors to achieve the goals of the NSW HIV Strategy 2021–2025.

We also work closely with other NSW Government departments including the Department of Communities and Justice, and community and research partners across a range of health issues that impact our communities, including cancer, alcohol and other drugs, mental health and suicide prevention, sexual, domestic and family violence, safety and inclusion, trans health, safety and inclusion, ageing, and disability.

Our Pride Inclusion Programs offers Australian employers, sporting organisations and health and wellbeing providers a membership-based program that provides dedicated relationship management, expert advice, training, resources and on call support for all aspects of LGBTQ inclusion. These programs have over 500 active member organisations across Australia.

OUR PURPOSE

We create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives.

OUR VISION

We strive to be a global leader in community health, inclusion and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders.

OUR COMMUNITIES

Our communities are broad, diverse, and intersectional, with a range of under-addressed or unmet health needs.

We recognise that members of our communities share their sexual and gender identity with other identities and experiences. This may include LGBTQ+ and/or people living with HIV who are also:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people
- people from culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse, migrant, and refugee backgrounds, and people of colour
- people who use drugs
- mature aged people
- young adults
- people with disability

We acknowledge that the health needs of all the people ACON serves are not the same, but we share a common goal to end the stigma and discrimination that affects our health and wellbeing.

We know that how our communities define and describe themselves change, and we strive to ensure that all people we work for feel welcomed by the services we offer and the language we use.

OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

Our 2019-2024 Strategic Plan highlights five focus areas:

1. Ending HIV transmission for all in our communities
2. Delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health programming
3. Giving voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion
4. Developing financial diversity, strength and growth
5. Building a workplace that attracts and develops the best people

OUR VALUES

OUR VALUES INFORM WHO WE ARE:

- Community
- Collaboration
- Informed

OUR VALUES INFORM HOW WE WORK WITH PEOPLE:

- Equity
- Inclusion
- Compassion

OUR VALUES INFORM HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS:

- Excellence
- Courage
- Innovation



OUR RAP

WHY RECONCILIATION MATTERS TO ACON

STRONG, RESILIENT AND PROUDLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES OF GENDER AND SEXUALLY DIVERSE PEOPLE

ACON works for people living with HIV and people of diverse sexualities and genders, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or queer. We are extremely diverse, and we know that the identities, paths and experiences of people in our communities are shaped by a multitude of factors, including their cultural identities, where people live and their socio-economic background. These factors contribute to determining health outcomes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities have unique perspectives, cultures and lived experiences. They have the right, without discrimination, to maintain and develop their cultural and/or spiritual expression. We are committed to celebrating the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities, including those who are gay, lesbian and bisexual, Brotherboys, Sistergirls and trans mob, and to working in partnership.

IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities experience compounding minority stressors, and face unique challenges in accessing health services and in having their voices heard. We are particularly concerned about high rates of sexually transmissible infections, harmful substance use, domestic, sexual and family violence, incarceration, suicidality, barriers to affirming healthcare and homelessness impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in NSW, and the increasing gap in rates of HIV transmissions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations compared with Australian-born non-Indigenous populations.

We are committed to addressing the barriers, both at ACON and in other parts of the health system, that contribute to poorer health outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

REFLECTING ON OUR FIRST RAP

In September 2018, we launched our first Reflect RAP with a view to creating a more strategic, collaborative and whole-of-organisation approach to our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our first RAP built on a long history of working with Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander community members since the start of the HIV epidemic and the work of our dedicated Aboriginal Project, which has been providing culturally-appropriate and Aboriginal led HIV and sexual health services since 1997.

With our ambitious first Reflect RAP, we laid some solid foundations for future actions:

- We held four RAP launches across NSW in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, leaders and community members
- We gained a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures – close to one hundred ACON staff attended a full day cultural awareness workshop, which ensures that everyone has a solid cultural awareness base to build on
- We built on existing partnerships and identified key people and organisations to partner with
- We made significant improvements in diversifying our suppliers, with over \$114,000 worth of services procured from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses over the two years

We have also learned from the challenges we have encountered along the way. During our first RAP's life, we were not able to retain the three staff in the Aboriginal Project team. This staff turnover prompted a review of our hiring and retention practices so we can do better in the future to build a culturally inclusive and supportive workplace where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff can thrive.

Updating our systems, the way we record data and keep track of our key performance indicators took more time and problem-solving efforts than we had anticipated. Overcoming these difficulties has, however, taught us valuable lessons on how to be more effective, including through clear allocations of roles, responsibilities and budgets.

REFLECTING ON OUR SECOND RAP AND FIRST INNOVATE RAP

In June 2020, we launched our Innovate RAP online as COVID had begun its effects on our in-person connections. We made a lot of progress in our RAP, however COVID and staff shortages created delays and challenges throughout.

- We created a First Nations Voice Project, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led collaborative process for the development of strategic direction, programs, and services
- BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation delivered cultural capability training to ACON staff
- We increased our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment from 1.5%–4.1%
- We hired a new First Nations Health Programs Coordinator

- We created ACON's first ever paid Aboriginal identified Regional Health Promotion Internship
- We appointed an Aboriginal board member
- We embedded our RAP actions into business planning
- We held a fully funded in-person retreat and workshops in Newcastle for our RAP Working Group to come together and connect around what we have achieved and to set the intention of this new Innovate RAP
- We developed and delivered Yarn it Up, a program of yarnning circles with Sistergirls, Brotherboys and trans mob
- We developed specific promotional material for our suicide prevention services, co-designed with our First Nations peer support workers
- We co-designed health promotion resources with First Nations LGBTQ+ people and First Nations service providers related to suicide prevention, trans health equity, sexual, family and domestic violence, ageing and service delivery
- We bought a table at Redfern AMS 50th Gala Dinner Sponsorship of NAIDOC Ball Gala Dinner

RAP WORKING GROUP RETREAT AUGUST 2022

With COVID-19 preventing in-person work and a move to the online space we really felt a disconnect from each other and the work we were doing. Community members requested more opportunities to meet again in person and from there, we decided that holding an in-person, fully funded RAP Working Group Retreat would be ideal for building those connections back up and focussing on what has worked well and where we can improve in our next Innovate RAP.

The retreat was held on Awabakal and Worimi Country in Muloobinba (Newcastle). We gathered at Yamuloong Conference Centre for two days of workshops to evaluate our first Innovate RAP and to inform this second Innovate RAP. There was also a Zoom option for the members that could not make the trip and our Aboriginal Board Member Jason Glanville Zoomed in for some introductions and a yarn on the second day. RAP Working Group members had all meals, accommodation and travel paid for, and were paid for their time.

By meeting in-person we were able to connect over meals, share hugs and connect in a more meaningful way. The location, hospitality of the venues and accommodation was great and very welcoming. The beautiful surrounds of Yamuloong were helpful in creating a positive working environment and we were able to get through quite a lot in a short period of time.

Our retreat made us re-evaluate our opportunities and we now offer hybrid RAP meetings with Zoom for those who need it and in-person for our Gadigal members.

OUR SECOND INNOVATE RAP

With more to do our three focus areas continue to be: partnerships, listening & truth telling, and jobs.

Through candid discussions with the RAP Working Group and ACON staff there is a sense of uncertainty around implementing RAP actions. Support from senior leaders is not always translated into practice or included on staff work plans.

With staff changes and no clear learning strategy this will be imperative moving forward. A key and important focus for this Innovate RAP is deep listening and truth telling. Our First Nations Voice project will be key in shaping the way we work into the future through Aboriginal led consultation and Aboriginal ways of working. As an organisation we will work to be anti-racist, fight discrimination and create a supportive workplace for First Nations employees.

Data limitations have been identified and we have an incomplete picture of ACON's programs reach and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. We will focus on meaningful data collection and improvements to our processes.

GOVERNANCE AND SUPPORT FOR OUR RAP

The implementation of our first two RAPs highlights the commitment to reconciliation across the organisation. Our Senior Leadership Team champions the RAP development process while allowing the plan to be developed from the grassroots up. In this Innovate RAP our Senior Leadership Team will each be responsible for championing a key focus of the RAP to drive momentum and enthusiasm across the organisation. Resources and a framework were put in place to recruit and support a Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group who began work in April 2017.

RAP WORKING GROUP

The ACON RAP Working Group is composed of ACON staff and external community members. Over the past few years, we found that non-Indigenous members were continually outnumbering community members in meetings which led us to re-evaluate the Terms of Reference (TOR) and change membership. The new TOR states: Membership of the RAPWG will be limited to 6 non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ACON staff and 10 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders (non-ACON staff); and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ACON staff may engage and/or be an active member of the RAPWG without a nomination process. By including this change, we saw a shift and had more community members in attendance. Another change to the TOR was to create a paid position for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Co-Chair who is not an ACON staff member, and this position has been filled May 2023.

Current ACON RAP Working Group membership includes eight First Nations people (three ACON staff) and six non-Indigenous ACON staff.

FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY MEMBERS

• Jane Yettica – Co-Chair

Jane Yettica (she/they) is a proud Mingungbal Yugambeh, Dunghutti and South Sea Islander person, with strong ties to their cultures and communities. Jane is an Indigenous Engagement Consultant, Storyteller and Podcast Host. They have extensive experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community engagement, communications and project management. As a consultant, Jane uses genuine connections, practical solutions and a holistic approach to designing strategies and programs that will have positive and sustainable impacts for all stakeholders. Her work focuses on embedding Indigenous cultural practices and protocols to ensure the appropriate recognition and protection of Indigenous knowledges in spaces that are often dominated by western processes. Jane is passionate about inclusion and advocacy for LGBTQ+SB communities. Jane’s podcast Blak Joy is a Spotify Original and celebrates the infinite ways Blak Joy exists, resists and rebels life in the colony. Jane is currently studying Master Business Administration at University of New South Wales, specialising in change management and social impact.

• Estelle Clarke

Estelle (she/her) is a proud Yorta Yorta, Wamba Wamba woman with appreciated and celebrated trans experience. She was born in Boorloo on Noongar Whadjuk Boodja but has resided on Gadigal Country since 2015. Estelle is a previous Western Australian Young Person of the Year as well as a National Young People’s Human Rights Medal finalist. She now works at BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation as the Programs and Training Coordinator based at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern.

• Tim Moffit

Tim (he/him) is a proud Gammillaroi man. As a Positive Speaker, Tim is committed to reducing stigma and discrimination and helping others better understand the realities of living with HIV. Tim has spoken at numerous mental health conferences. He has been involved in a range of ACON programs for many years and has been a member of the RAP Working Group since its inception.

• Quinton Reeks

Quinton (he/they) is a unique 2spirited individual who is a proud descendant of the Undumbi People from Gubbi-Gubbi Country, and they now call Sydney home. Although still relatively new and in the process of establishing themself within the community, they are actively working on building those crucial relationships that will ultimately help assist in being that driving force in changing the narrative for both the Indigenous and LGBTQ+ people for the better.

Currently working in the public sector, they have been afforded an opportunity to explore their passion within the community engagement space as part of the

Indigenous and Remote Servicing Division. From a humble upbringing in Ipswich and speaking from lived experience, they understand the struggles that often confront our communities and they are wholeheartedly committed to being the voice for those who need to be heard.

FIRST NATIONS ACON STAFF

• Jinny-Jane Smith

Jinny-Jane (she/her) is a proud Wiradjuri/ Walbunja woman of the Yuin nation. Jinny identifies as a lesbian woman, mother and aunty to many. Jinny is dedicated to giving her time to enhance communities address social justice and self-determination for the betterment of her community. Jinny has been an active advocate for the plight of not only Aboriginal rights but the rights of her queer blak community for over 10 years. Jinny is a board member Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Womens Corporation. Also works as the Program Manager for First Nations projects at ACON. Jinny is passionate about making change regarding the stigmas and stereotypes of the LGBTQ+ communities.

• Chloe Wilson

Chloe (she/her) is a proud queer woman of the Boorooberongal clan of the Dharug Nation. She was raised on the boundaries of three Nations: the Awabakal to the east, the Wonnarua to the northwest and the Darkinjung to south. Chloe is the Mental Health Peer Worker for Suicide Prevention at ACON Hunter, based in Newcastle. In this role she is committed to breaking down the barriers in society that create the shame that silences people in their suffering to create safer, supportive communities. Chloe has a Bachelor of Community Services and is completing her Master of Counselling with the hopes of joining the deadly clinicians that are pioneering the movement to decolonise the mental health system in Australia. Chloe has presented at mental health and suicide prevention conferences.

• Samwise Carson-Homewood

Samwise (he/they) is a proud Durug man. He started out volunteering with the Hunter team and can pack condoms like a champion. They then took on the ACON Hunter Aboriginal Health Promotion Internship position in 2021 which culminated in a successful Queer Mob Newcastle event. Since then Samwise completed another year with the Hunter crew as an LGBTQ+ Youth Project Officer, responsible for working with a group of young people to put on eight LGBTQ+ youth events in Newcastle. When Samwise is not building his career in LGBTQ+ health he enjoys making music, art and hanging out with all their pets.

• We would like to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander RAP Working Group Members who prefer not to be named

NON-INDIGENOUS ACON STAFF

• Kage Gold – Co-Chair

Kage (they/them) is the Acting Regional Manager, ACON Hunter offering outreach services across the Hunter, New England, Central Coast and Western regions of NSW. They have a range of professional skills and experience that includes carpentry, science, human nutrition and health promotion within the HIV and sexual health sector. Kage has been part of the RAP Working Group for five years and they are a passionate advocate for centering First Nations people and voices and promoting reconciliation. They are driven by health equity, community empowerment and meaningful inclusion of First Nations people.

• Matthew Vaughan

Matthew (he/him) is an experienced leader in the community services sector, with over 15 years of experience working in various roles across government, non-government and community-based organisations at state, national and international levels. As the Director for HIV Sexual Health at ACON, he has played a vital role in developing the multi-award-winning campaign, Ending HIV, and a suite of programs and services working towards the elimination of HIV transmissions in NSW.

• Josef Garrington

Josef (he/him) is a Community Health Promotion Officer in the Regional Outreach team at ACON, providing outreach to sexuality and gender diverse people and people living with HIV down the South Coast of NSW. He has been based on Gadigal Country in Sydney since moving from his hometown of Lismore on Bundjalung Country in Northern NSW. Josef enjoys working with regional LGBTQ+ people, community groups and service providers to increase safety, inclusion, and accessibility in country towns. Connecting in with regional Aboriginal organisations and attending Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander days of significance has been essential to Josef’s work to increase awareness for LGBTQ+SB mob. Throughout his time on the ACON RAP Working Group Josef has learned and continues to learn from mob by listening to truth telling and is looking forward to contributing further to ACON’s RAP.

• Maria Hristodoulou

Maria (she/her) is an events and fundraising officer at ACON. She consistently works together with others in order to promote equality within the community. Maria supports all members of the community, offering empathy and supports all individuals in order for them to feel accepted, secure and acknowledged. Her vast years of experience allows her to work to the best of her ability, becoming a valuable member within all her projects. She consistently strives to learn, engaging in many support groups such as the RAP group to broaden her knowledge. Maria has been part of the RAP for 2 years and has learned an incredible amount of information regarding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

• Ben Brown

Ben (he/him) is a Relationship Manager within the Pride Inclusion Programs division of ACON where he supports organisations across Australia to deliver on their LGBTQ inclusion strategies, and supporting those employees who are a part of the LGBTQ community to feel safe and supported at work. Ben has experience both working in a corporate environment within Talent Acquisition and Organisational Development where he has assisted on the development and delivery of RAP’s, and in human services where he was a Social Worker for the Department of Child Protection in South Australia.

• Lucy Watson

Lucy (she/they) is the Manager of Policy, Strategy and Research at ACON. Lucy is a new member of the RAP Working Group, and is committed to health equity, justice, and rights for all in our communities. Lucy strives to work with an intersectional lens and an anti-racist approach to build solidarity in LGBTQ+ communities. Lucy has a background in media and research, and holds a PhD in the esteemed field of celebrity studies.

• Past Members

We also want to acknowledge the contributions of former RAP Working Group members who have contributed since our RAP journey began in April 2017: Internal and external Aboriginal members, Ronald May, Casey Conway, Syl Ayers-Phillips, Michael Cochrane, Jordan Wimbis, John Leha, Annaliese Constable, Mish Sparks, William Trewlynn, Russell Cook, Emma Bastable and non-Indigenous ACON staff members, Samantha Vescio, Shai Feniger, Zahra Stardust, Ash Watson, Edda Lampis, Félix Delhomme, Elaine Czulkowski and Tim Wark.



RELATIONSHIPS

Building trust and strong relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community is key to improving inclusion within our communities and achieving health equity.

By actively and meaningfully including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our work and within our organisation (Strategic Plan, 2.3), and by building mutually beneficial partnerships (SP, 3.4), we will improve the effectiveness and reach of our programs and services.

As a mostly non-Indigenous organisation we will strive to be the best possible allies to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities by actively listening, by interrogating the way we work, by fighting racism, and by amplifying their voices whenever we can (SP, 3.2). We are committed and invested in Aboriginal-led programs.

Focus Area

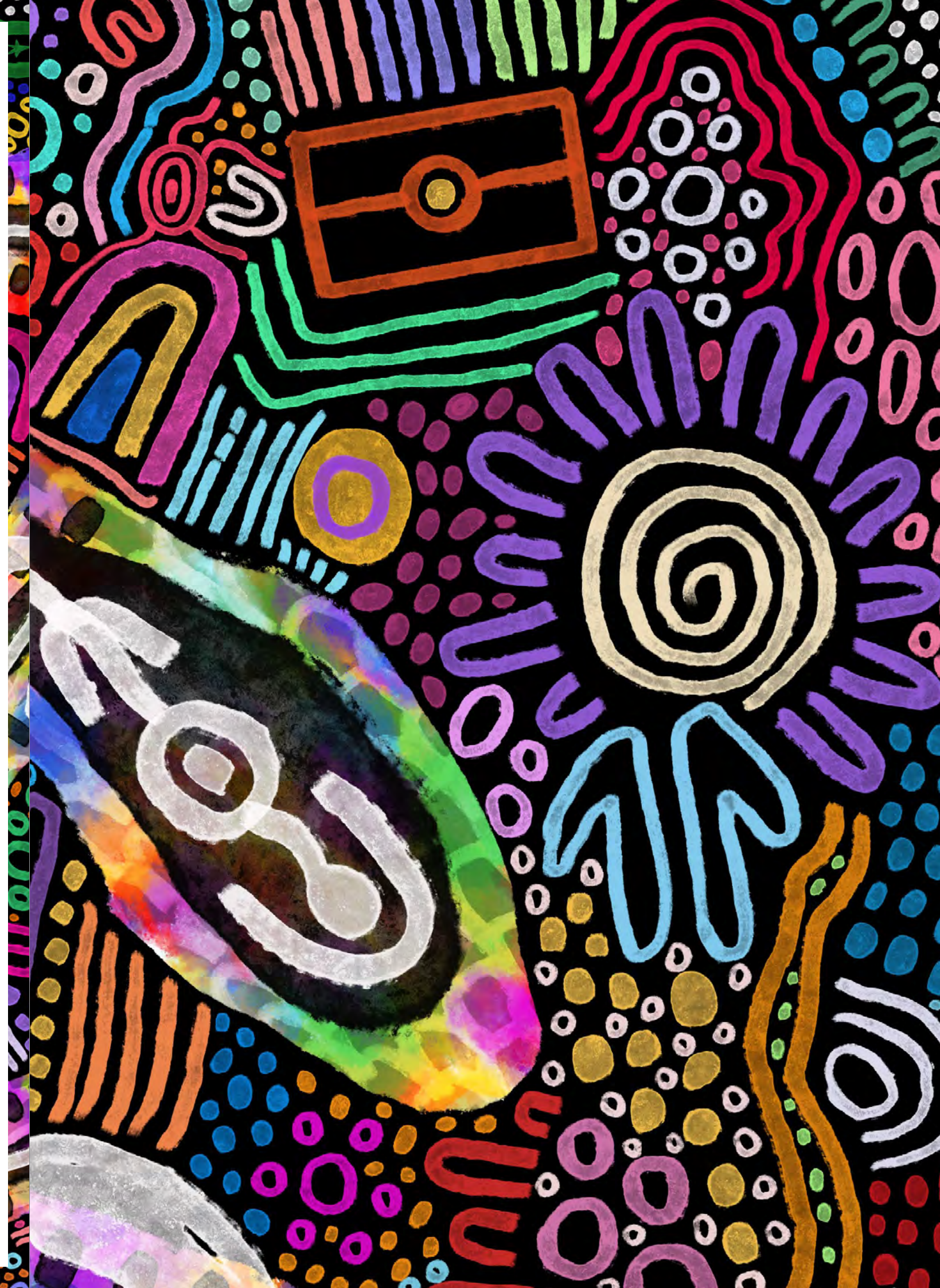
Relationships underpin everything we do at ACON and align most particularly to the following focus areas of our Strategic Plan for 2019-2024:

- Focus Area 1: Ending HIV transmission for all in our communities
- Focus Area 2: Delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health programming
- Focus Area 3: Giving voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations and form partnerships.	1.1 Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement and explore opportunities for collaboration.	February 2024 (progress report) & February 2025	CEO
	1.2 Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	August 2024	CEO
	1.3 Commit to a community listening process to better understand what matters to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities as ACON moves towards truth-telling and accountability as an organisation.	February 2024	CEO
	1.4 Following from actions in 1.3 undertake a collaborative process that identifies strategic directions for programs and services that ACON will advocate for and implement as appropriate.	February 2024 (progress report) & February 2025	CEO and Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	1.5 Establish and formalise partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations such as through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), service level partnership agreements or collaborations, across all divisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• HIV and Sexual Health• Policy, Strategy & Research• Regional Services• Community Health• Corporate Services• Pride Inclusion Programs• Media Marketing Fundraising Using accessible and inclusive process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.	February 2025	CEO
	1.6 Advocate for, support and promote existing resources and initiatives by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services and organisations, prioritising those focussing on LGBTQ+ or PLHIV.	May 2024 (progress report) & May 2025	CEO

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	2.1 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	April 2024, 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	2.2 RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June, 2024 & 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	2.3 Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June, 2024 & 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	2.4 Senior leadership and management to lead and support each division to organise or engage with at least one NRW event per year. Events may include invited speakers, volunteering opportunities, or cross division collaboration. At least one event should be open to community. Events to put a spotlight on reconciliation and inclusion within LGBTQ+ communities.	27 May- 3 June, 2024 & 2025	CEO and Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	2.5 Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website .	May 2024, 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	3.1 Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce including through innovative communication methods.	October 2023 (progress report) & October 2024	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	3.2 Develop and promote a public statement to communicate ACON's commitment to truth telling and reconciliation. Outlining ACON's actions and policies to address racism and the impacts of colonisation both internally and externally.	February 2024	CEO and Director, Marketing, Communications and Fundraising
	3.3 Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes and promote inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse sexualities and genders and/or living with HIV.	May 2025	Director, Policy, Strategy and Research
	3.4 Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	August 2024 (progress report) & May 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	4.1 Conduct a review of organisational policies and procedures to promote anti-discrimination and anti-racism. RAP Working Group to identify priority policies for revision.	February 2024, Then ongoing	Manager People and Culture and Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	4.2 Ensure the external community complaints procedure is culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that it is actively promoted.	February 2024, Then ongoing	Director, Corporate Services and Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	4.3 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	August 2024	Manager People and Culture
	4.4 Educate senior leaders and staff on the effects of racism within our own LGBTQ+ communities and society more broadly.	May 2024 (progress report) & May 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group and Manager Community Partnerships and Population Programs
	4.5 Promote anti-racism initiatives developed by Human Rights and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations, groups, networks and individuals.	May 2024, 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group and Manager Community Partnerships and Population Programs
	4.6 Provide opportunities and support staff to undertake learning and development that addresses equity, inclusion and anti-racism, and report twice yearly on uptake across the organisation.	May 2024, 2025	Manager People and Culture and Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	4.7 Develop, implement and communicate a strategy to address racism and discrimination for our staff, including the provision of anti-racism training for all new staff. Where appropriate partner with LGBTQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and/or community advisors.	August 2024, February 2025	Manager People and Culture and Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	4.8 Ensure RAP Working Group members, People and Culture managers and other key staff participate in on-going and customised anti-racism learning.	May 2024, 2025	Manager People and Culture and Co-Chair, RAP Working Group





Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and lived experiences is fundamental to strengthening inclusion within gender and sexually diverse communities and in society more broadly.

ACON is committed to celebrating the unique cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities and to supporting the advancement of their human rights. These are fundamental pillars to improving health outcomes.

We are committed to providing a culturally safe place within ACON and creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to proudly express their identities.

Focus Area

Respect aligns to the following focus areas of ACON Strategic Plan 2019–2024:

- Focus Area 3: Giving voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion
- Focus Area 5: Building a workplace that attracts and develops the best people

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	5.1 Work in partnership with LGBTQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop and deliver an intersectional training module on inclusion (of people who are LGBTQ+ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander). Make accessible to all ACON Staff.	August 2024	Manager, Pride Training and Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	5.2 Support the cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff by sponsoring them to attend cultural events, learning and leadership activities.	May 2024, 2025	Manager People and Culture, and Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	6.1 Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols, and Sorry Business.	February 2024, 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	6.2 Implement, review and update ACON's cultural protocol policy, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	February 2024, 2025	Manager People and Culture
	6.3 Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year as per ACON's cultural protocol policy.	July 2024, 2025	CEO
	6.4 Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings as per ACON's cultural protocol policy.	May 2024, 2025	CEO
	6.5 Include Acknowledgement of Country pop up window on ACON websites including all new ACON websites.	February 2024	Manager, Digital Information

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	7.1 RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2023 First week in July, 2024	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	7.2 Identify barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week and review People and Culture policies and procedures as required.	October 2023	Manager People and Culture
	7.3 Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff through innovative communication methods.	First week in July, 2024 First week in July, 2025	CEO
8. Celebrate the stories and cultures of LGBTQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	8.1 Celebrate the stories and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait-Islander members of our communities on LGBTQ+ diversity days.	August 2023,2024 (International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples) December 2023,2024 (World AIDS Day) March 2024,2025 (Mardi Gras) March 2024,2025 (Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination) May 2024,2025 (IDAHOBIT)	CEO
		8.2 Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, groups, networks and community leaders to participate in Mardi Gras and other Pride festivals organised or sponsored by ACON across NSW.	February 2024, 2025 Director, HIV & Sexual Health and Director Regional Services
		8.3 Create opportunities for regional LGBTQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to attend and participate in regional pride festivals and LGBTQ+ events across NSW. For all ACON sponsored Regional LGBTQ+ events, organisers will provide subsidies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to attend.	February 2024, 2025 Director, HIV & Sexual Health and Director Regional Services
		8.4 In partnership, support the organisation of activities during Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIV Awareness Week (ATSIHAW) and encourage staff participation.	December 2023, 2024 Director, HIV & Sexual Health and Director Regional Services

OPPORTUNITIES

We are determined to make ACON an environment where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff, volunteers and clients feel welcomed, included and supported.

We are committed to making sure Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in our communities have access to opportunities to live their healthiest lives. We are committed to improving data collection and reporting practices to assist us in providing the best care.

This includes reducing sexually-transmissible infections and ending HIV transmissions for all in our communities (SP, Focus Area 1), and delivering the best support services and health promotion programs (SP, 2) that appropriately address their needs (SP, 2.2), leaving no one behind (SP, 2.4).

Focus Area

Opportunities align to all five focus areas of ACON Strategic Plan 2019–2024:

- Focus Area 1: Ending HIV transmission for all in our communities
- Focus Area 2: Delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health programming
- Focus Area 3: Giving voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion
- Focus Area 4: Developing financial diversity, strength and growth
- Focus Area 5: Building a workplace that attracts and develops the best people

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	9.1 Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	February 2024, 2025	Manager, People and Culture
	9.2 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, the RAPWG and First Nations Voices Project to consult on a recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	February 2024	Manager, People and Culture
	9.3 Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	October 2024	Manager, People and Culture
	9.4 Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, including by improving the way ads and position descriptions are written and by using targeted channels (Facebook, Koori radio, Koori Mail, interagency meetings etc).	May 2023	Manager, People and Culture
	9.5 Review People and Culture recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	April 2024	Manager, People and Culture
	9.6 Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce.	May 2024, 2025	CEO and Manager, People and Culture
	9.7 Develop partnerships with higher education institutions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support units and other University-based associations to identify talent.	May 2024, 2025	CEO

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	10.1 Using ACON's Procurement Policy & Procedures maintain minimum target of 3% procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	May 2024, 2025	Director, Corporate Services
	10.2 Continue to communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	February 2024, 2025	Director, Corporate Services
	10.3 Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. Communicate the policy and preference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned business if quote within 10%.	February 2024, 2025	Director, Corporate Services
	10.4 Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	February 2024, 2025	Director, Corporate Services
11. Improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data collection and reporting practices	11.1 Provide a quarterly data update to the RAP Working Group regarding First Nations client data.	October, January, April, July 2023, 2024, 2025	Director, Community Health and Director, Regional Services
	11.2 Investigate and identify barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client data collection and address barriers to collecting these demographics via training initiatives.	February 2023	Director, Community Health and Director, Regional Services
	11.3 Improve consistency and quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data collection across the organisation, with an aim to adhere to Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles.	May 2024, 2025	Associate Director, Client Services

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12. Ensure the meaningful involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ+ people and PLHIV in the development and implementation of ACON programs.	12.1 Explore opportunities for funding for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ+ retreat and support the delivery of this retreat in partnership with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled community organisations.	July 2024, 2025	Director, Community Health, and Director, HIV and Sexual Health
	12.2. Develop a guiding resource for ACON staff around meaningful inclusions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	August 2024	CEO
	12.3 Support and promote health resources, referral pathways and initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services or other relevant organisations that may support First Nations wellbeing.	June 2024, 2025	Director, Community Health and Director, Regional Services
13. Build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in ACON policy, research and grants development.	13.1 Ensure at least one member of the ACON Research Ethics Committee identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.	February 2024, 2025	Director, Policy Strategy and Research
	13.2 Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community statistics are included in all ACON policy papers (where available), and advocate for the collection of specific data for this population.	May 2024, 2025	Director, Policy Strategy and Research
	13.3 In line with deliverable 1.6, support advocacy initiatives led by LGBTQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and PLHIV.	May 2024, 2025	Director, Policy Strategy and Research
	13.4 Search for, identify, share and promote funding opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-targeted programs across NSW, prioritising regional programs. Provide support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to apply in consortium with ACON.	May 2024, 2025	Director, Policy Strategy and Research



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
14. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	14.1 Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	February 2024, 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	14.2 Implement, review and update Terms of Reference for the RWG annually or six-monthly if needed.	December 2023, 2024	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	14.3 Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	October, February, May, August 2023, 2024, 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
15. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	15.1 Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	February 2023, 2024	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group and Manager People and Culture
	15.2 Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	February 2023, 2024	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group and CEO
	15.3 Define, maintain, and review appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	November 2023, 2024	Grant Reporting and Planning Officer
	15.4 Appoint and maintain a RAP Champion from our Senior Leadership Team to drive and champion internal engagement and awareness of the RAP.	October 2023, 2024	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	15.5 Assign members of our Senior Leadership Team an aspect of the RAP to Champion. E.g. NAIDOC Week, NRW	October 2023, 2024	CEO
	15.6 Ensure RAP Progress is a standing agenda at Senior Leadership Team meetings.	September 2023, 2024	CEO

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
16. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	16.1 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 2023, 2024	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	16.2 Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	1 August annually	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	16.3 Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	16.4 Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders at ACON General Staff Meeting.	Monthly, Review practice [August, 2024]	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	16.5 Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually through innovative, culturally appropriate and engaging communication methods, including digital platforms.	May 2023, 2024	Director, Marketing, Communications and fundraising
	16.6 Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	May 2024	Manager, People and Culture
	16.7 Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	August 2025	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group
	16.8 Report RAP progress annually to the ACON board.	November 2023, 2024	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group and CEO
17. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	17.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	February 2024	Co-Chair, RAP Working Group

Contact for public enquiries about our RAP

Kage Gold Acting Regional Manager - Hunter & RAP Co-Chair

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