

# Victorian Healthcare Association

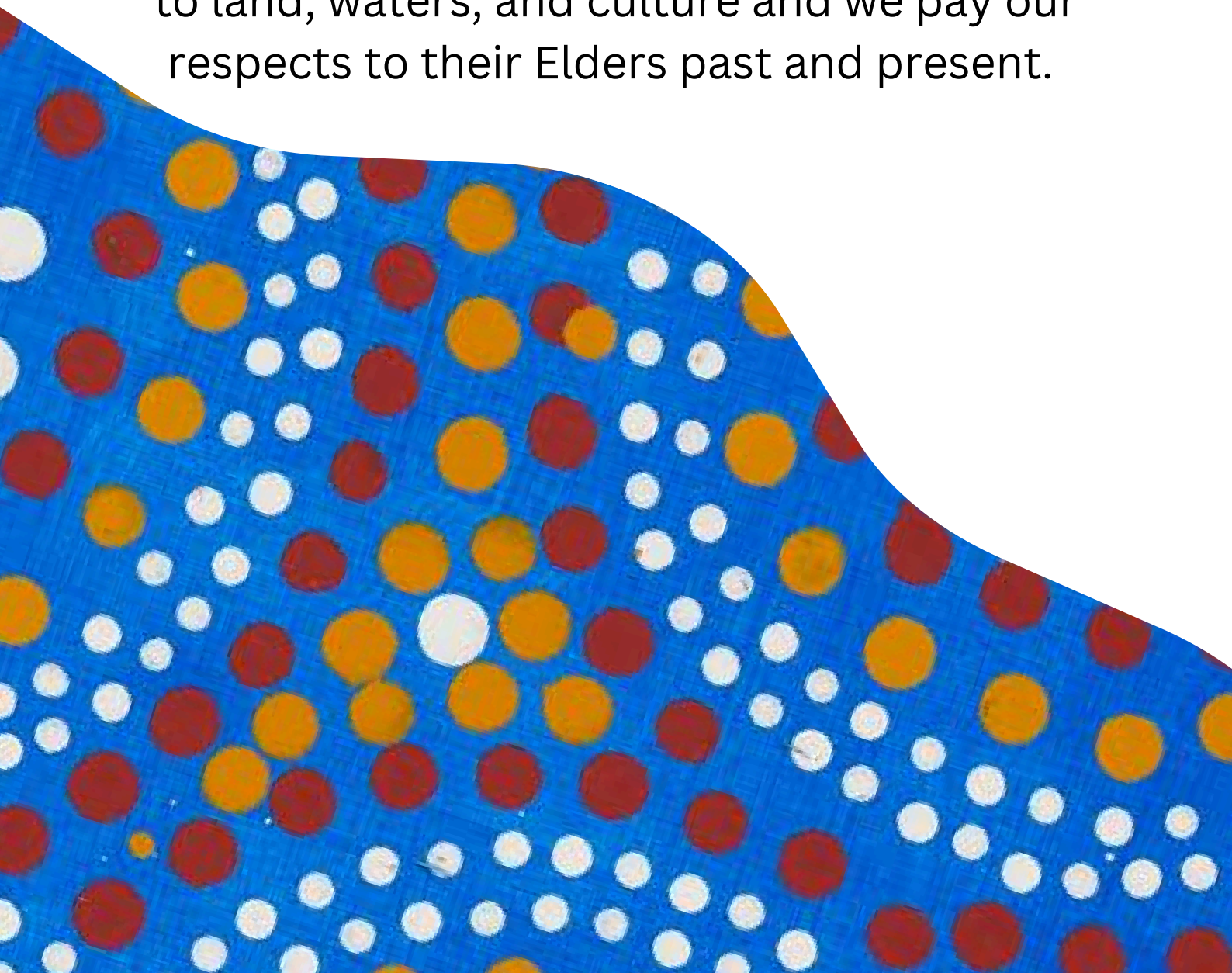
Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan  
October 2024 - March 2026



# Acknowledgement of Country

The VHA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of unceded lands throughout Australia. The VHA office is located on the traditional lands and waterways of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin nation.

We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



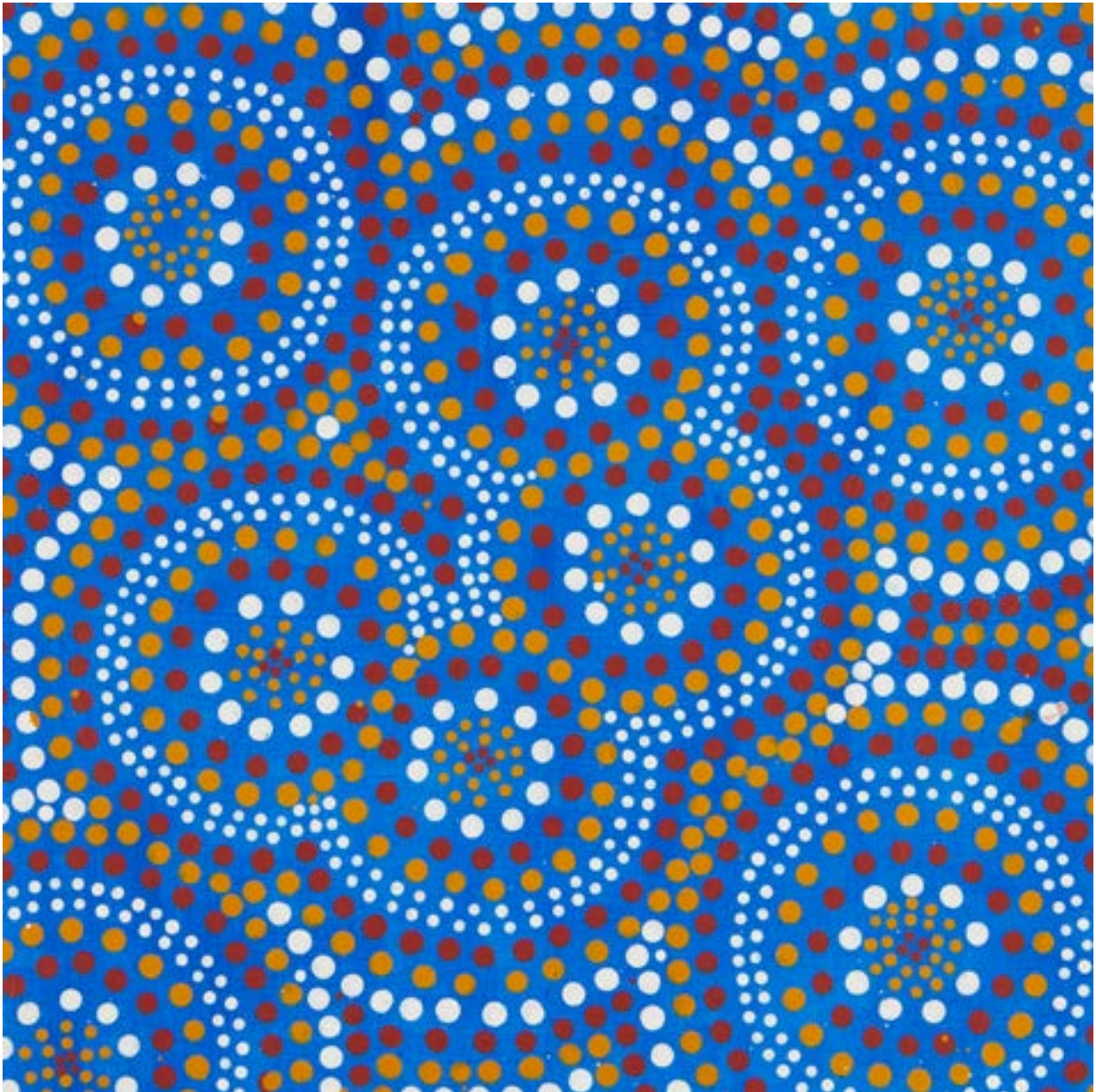
## Table of contents

<b>About the Artwork</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>About the artist</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Message from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Message from the CEO and Board Chair</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>About the VHA</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Our Rap</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>RAP Working Group</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Our partnerships and current activities</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Actions and deliverables</b>	
Relationships	<b>13</b>
Respect	<b>15</b>
Opportunities	<b>17</b>
Governance	<b>18</b>

# About the artwork

**'Strong Foundation' 2023, acrylic on canvas, B.J.C, Wadawurrung people**

“Building a really strong foundation for the start of anything, from relationships to houses, this is a solid foundation to build off.”



This artwork was created through The Torch, a not-for-profit organisation that provides art, cultural and arts industry support to First Nations people currently in, or recently released, from Victorian prisons.

## About the artist

B.J.C is a Wadawurrung artist who began developing his art practice in prison in 2021. In this time painting allowed him to connect to his culture, “It was really good in prison and being comfortable yarning with the guys about our culture and learning from one another, and keeping the stories alive and getting them on canvas – making stories into art.” His paintings use colour and dot work to express stories and messages meaningful to him, with themes of health, harmony, mindfulness and strength frequently engrained in his artworks.

B.J.C thinks art has changed him as a person as he explains “made a calmer me and not worrying about the negative or past focusing on my path for the future and keeping strong.” I think instead of me doing crime, I just stick to myself and family – instead of stealing I just paint, and it helps with my feelings a lot. And I do that for my family.

Since beginning with The Torch he has completed 13 paintings, licensed 2 of his artwork images and exhibited in The Torch’s annual Confined 13 and Confined 14 exhibition at Glen Eira City Council Gallery.

The VHA resonates strongly with B.J.C.’s vision of building from a strong foundation in pursuit of new connections, partnerships and a shared purpose. We are inspired by the work’s expansive feeling – the repeating and interconnecting pattern that radiates out from the centre. We have a long history of convening and collaborating with our members across the state in service of the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

As we pursue our strategic directions in the current challenging healthcare landscape, we build on these existing relationships, strengths and learnings as we explore needed change towards a stronger and more equitable health system. In launching our first reflective RAP, VHA seeks a meaningful and respectful connection to align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their rich and expansive knowledge, wisdom and history of caring for country and community.

# Message from the CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Victorian Healthcare Association to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Victorian Healthcare Association joins a network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Victorian Healthcare Association to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Victorian Healthcare Association, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

**Karen Mundine**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Reconciliation Australia**

# Message from the CEO and Board Chair

We are proud to present the Victorian Healthcare Association's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), marking the official acknowledgement of the VHA's ongoing commitment and relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The VHA's commitment to reconciliation is critical, given that the services we represent – Victoria's public health, community health, ambulance and aged care services – touch the lives of communities across the state.

Our Reflect RAP is underpinned by our genuine commitment to promote reconciliation by building relationships, respect and trust between the VHA and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their families and communities. We have been proud to see our staff take up the opportunity to reflect on how we can contribute to reconciliation and take actions to support our role as a culturally inclusive leader in the public healthcare sector.

We take this commitment to meaningful reconciliation seriously, as we seek to create a culturally safe environment for our staff, board and members – and the communities they serve.

In implementing this plan, we commit to working together with our members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to create a healthcare system that meets the needs of all Victorians.

Our plan is structured around Reconciliation Australia's framework of relationships, respect, opportunities, and governance.

To advance action on these three core pillars we will:

- Build and maintain strong collaborative and mutually respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, in particular key organisations operating within the Victorian public health and community care sectors
- Increase the cultural competence of staff by undertaking cultural safety training and by reviewing our organisational Acknowledgement of Country statements and protocols, ensuring they are informed by consultation with local Elders
- Providing ongoing learning opportunities for staff to build awareness and capability about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, challenges, and achievements
- Implement governance processes to inform and guide the development and evaluation of our Reflect RAP, as well as lay the foundations for future RAPs and a wider embedded approach to incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander considerations into the VHA operations and activities for the shared benefit of all Victorians.

It is our hope that we strengthen respect, trust, and positive relationships between the VHA and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and contribute to a just, equitable and reconciled Australia.

**Dr Sue Matthews**  
Board Chair

**Leigh Clarke**  
Chief Executive Officer





## About the VHA

Established in 1938, the Victorian Healthcare Association (VHA) is the peak membership body supporting Victoria's public health services to deliver high-quality care. Our office is located on the Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. The VHA currently employs 17 staff and does not presently have any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employees.

115 health services across Victoria's diverse public healthcare sector, including public hospitals, community health, and multipurpose health services, hold organisational membership with the VHA. We support our member services by contributing to policy design, advocating for change, providing high-quality events, and networking opportunities, and leading projects aimed at building the capacity of the Victorian healthcare system to implement major reform. The VHA's value lies in our capacity to be the focal point of our membership and to deliver stronger outcomes and results than members would achieve alone.

The VHA advocates on behalf of its members on sector-critical issues by engaging and influencing key decision-makers involved in policy development and system reform. We are focused on inspiring a new vision for the future of our healthcare system, to be the voice of our members in advocating for the changes they seek, to deliver value by being member-driven and results focused, and to boldly pursue transformation of the healthcare system. Everyone in Victoria deserves access to high-quality public healthcare.

### **Our values:**

- Celebrate success
- Create one voice
- Dare to lead
- Better together
- Push beyond boundaries

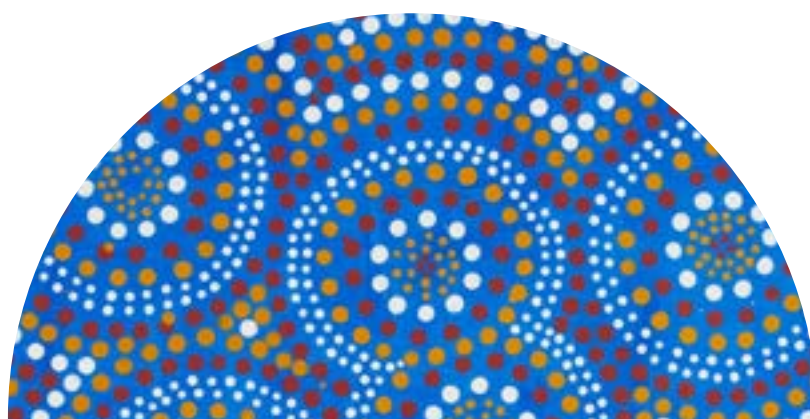
## Our RAP

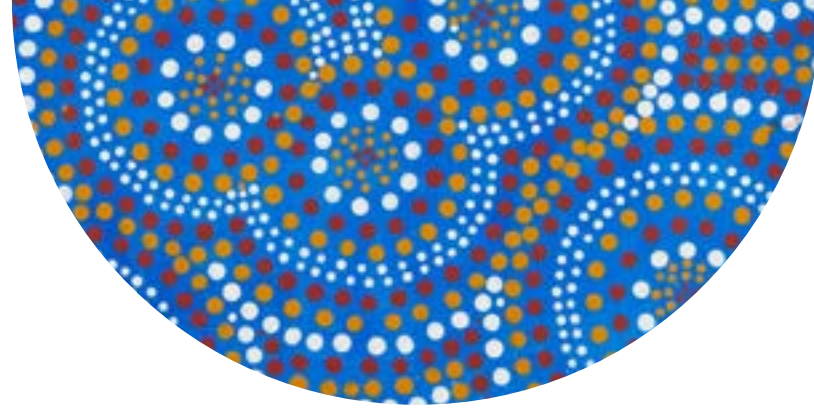
Embarking on a journey to help empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, the VHA is feeding into aspirations and goals which reach far beyond our organisation, our member services, or even the broader healthcare system: reconciliation is an ongoing process in which we can all collectively strive to acknowledge the destructive history and impacts of colonisation, and strengthen relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians for the benefit of everyone.

As a peak state-wide body representing health and community health services, the VHA is well placed to take a strategic lead in advocating for and supporting system reform to ensure health services meet the needs of all Victorians. As such, it is important that we lead by example, both internally and externally, to better reflect and represent community aspirations, experiences, and needs through consideration of the impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in everything we do.

Since commencing development of this RAP, the VHA has deeply reflected on our relationships and interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, identified internal knowledge gaps and training opportunities, and considered how to listen to and elevate First Nations voices and achievements most effectively within our daily work. Resulting activities have included solidifying partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholder organisations within the public health sector; arranging formal cultural safety training for all VHA staff, and undertaking a review of our HR policies and procedures to help promote positive race relations via anti-discrimination strategies. Additionally, we have commenced ongoing consultation between our RAP working group and Wurundjeri Elders which has supported the development of organisational Acknowledgement of Country statements and protocols.

Our Reflect RAP focuses on deepening our understanding of our sphere of influence, building internal knowledge understanding and capability. It is vital that the VHA builds, establishes, and maintains strong collaborative and mutually respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, in particular key organisations operating within the Victorian public health and community care sectors.





Australian colonial history is characterised by land dispossession, violence, and racism. The VHA is committed to contributing to a healthier and more equitable Australia where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel valued and respected, have their rights recognised and upheld, and have equal access to resources and life opportunities. We are proud to present our first RAP which outlines the building blocks of how the VHA will implement a deliberate and structured approach to reconciliation within our organisation. The actions and deliverables outlined in this living Reflect document together form a crucial first step in the VHA's ongoing journey to take genuine, informed, and sustainable action to advance reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria.

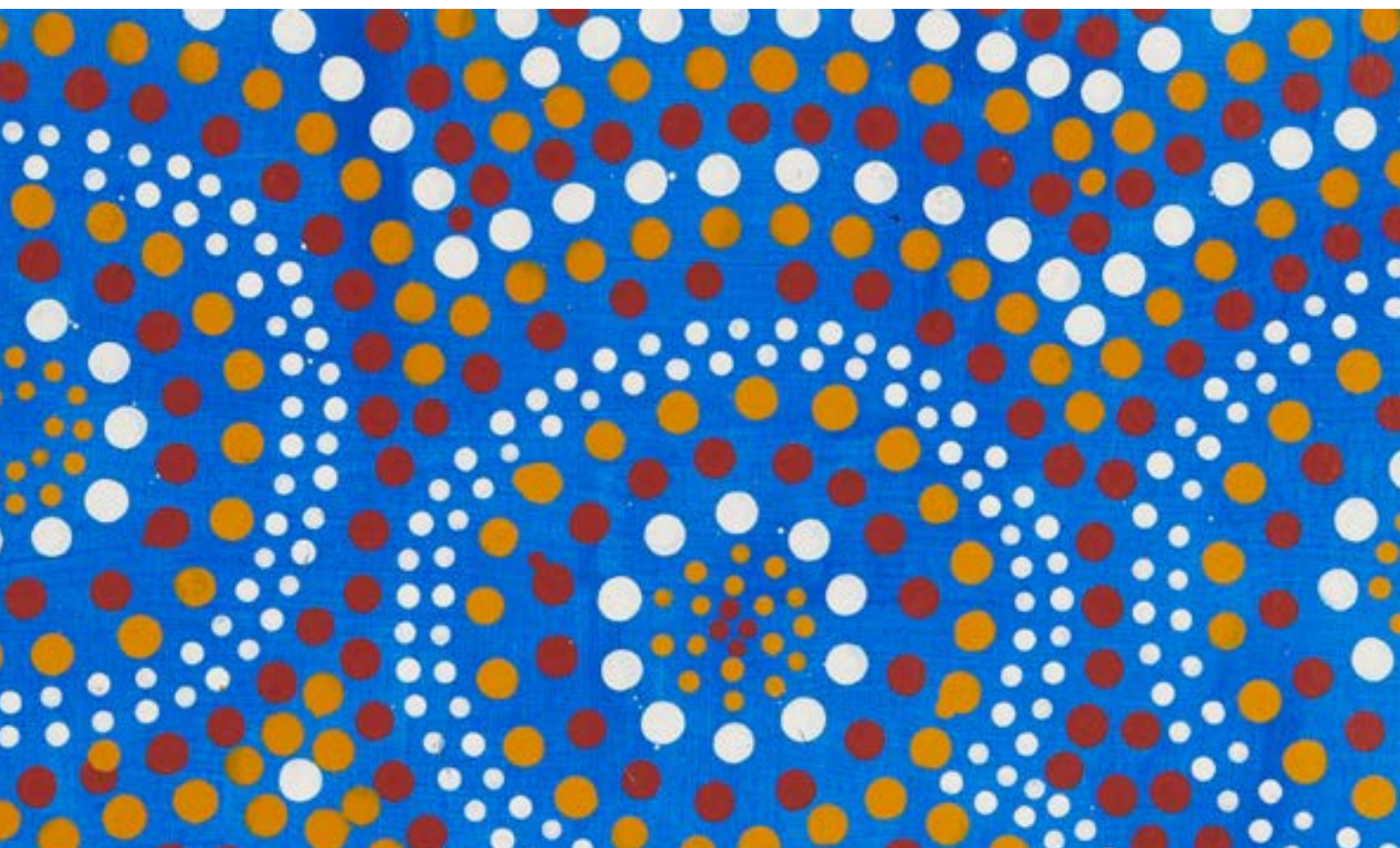
## RAP Working Group

The VHA has implemented governance processes to inform and guide the implementation of this 18-month Reflect RAP, to measure its actions and deliverables, and lay the foundations for future RAPs and a wider embedded approach to incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander considerations into VHA operations and activities.

The VHA's RAP working group is represented by members of the VHA staff 'Diversity and Inclusion Committee'. Our working group has met fortnightly, with its progress regularly reported back to our executive leadership team and the VHA Board. Each of the VHA's three main internal departments (Corporate Services, Policy and Advocacy and Sector Capability) are represented on the working group, with each individual taking responsibility for implementing deliverables across the organisation. In addition, senior VHA leaders are accountable for ensuring specific deliverables align with current partnerships and activities involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

We presently have no members who identify as First Nations – in the coming months, we intend to seek and invite First Nations representation on our working group from within the VHA's membership and stakeholders.

Our designated RAP champion is our General Manager - Corporate Services.



## Our partnerships and current activities

The VHA has been engaged by the Victorian Department of Health to review Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander hospital patient experience and referral pathways. The overarching aim of this project is to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experience of emergency department and bed-based care within Victoria's public hospital system. The impetus for this project emanated from the Victorian Population Health Survey, which identified healthcare settings as the second-most common setting where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience racism. In addition, there was general lack of understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander holistic health that considered connection to community and kin, self-determination, and spiritual health.

The VHA has been a supporter of and regular attendee at the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum since inception in 2021. This is a strategic collaboration between the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector, the mainstream health sector, and the Victorian Department of Health that seeks to build a health system that is holistic, culturally safe, accessible, and empowering.

We are also working closely with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) in advancing principles of self-determination and addressing the gaps in healthcare outcomes – there are mutual objectives within the memberships of both organisations that work towards better health and healing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Relationships

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</p>	<p>Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our sphere of influence.</p>	<p>Dec 2024</p>	<p>General Manager, Policy and Advocacy</p>
	<p>Research best practice and principles that support collaborations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</p>	<p>Dec 2024</p>	<p>General Manager, Policy and Advocacy</p>
<p>Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)</p>	<p>Disseminate Reconciliation Australia's resources and material across the VHA and membership.</p>	<p>May 2025</p>	<p>Manager – Communications and Engagement</p>
	<p>RAP Working group members to participate in an external NRW event.</p>	<p>27 May – 3 Jun 2025</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager- Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Encourage staff and members of the leadership team to participate in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</p>	<p>May 2025</p>	<p>CEO</p>

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation across the VHA.	Oct 2024	Manager, Communications and Engagement
	Publish the approved reflect RAP on the VHA website and save in SharePoint for all staff access.	Oct 2024	RAP Working Group /Digital Communications and Marketing Officer
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	Nov 2024	RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations and stakeholders that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	Nov 2024	RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	Dec 2024	General Manager-Corporate Services
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions and future needs.	Feb 2025	General Manager-Corporate Services

# Respect

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>Increase understanding, value, and recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural leaning</p>	<p>Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value, and recognition of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.</p>	<p>May 2025</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Conduct a review of local cultural learning needs within our organisation. Build on our existing mandatory annual offering to all new staff members.</p>	<p>Oct 2024</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services</p>
<p>Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols</p>	<p>Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.</p>	<p>Nov 2024</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Develop an understanding of the local traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and water within our organisations operational area.</p>	<p>Nov 2024</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services</p>

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating dates of significance including NAIDOC week</p>	<p>Raise awareness and share information across the VHA about the meaning of NAIDOC week.</p>	<p>Jun 2025</p>	<p>Manager, Communications and Engagement</p>
	<p>Introduce our staff to NAIDOC week by promoting external events in our local area and events which are supported by VHA members.</p>	<p>Jun 2025</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager- Corporate Services</p>
	<p>RAP working group to participate in an external NAIDOC week event.</p>	<p>First week in Jul 2025</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager- Corporate Services</p>

# Opportunities

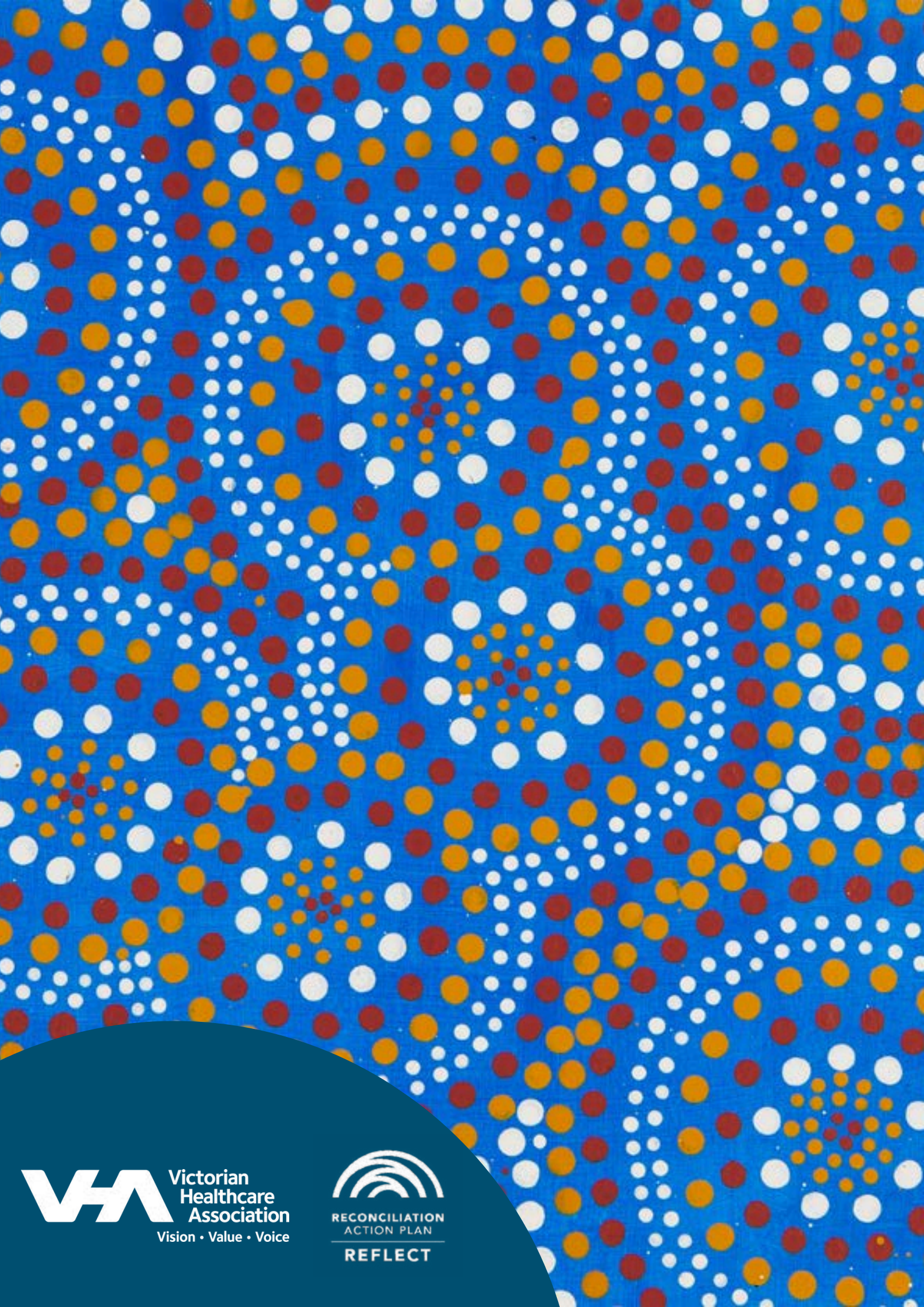
Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>Improvement employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development</p>	<p>Develop a business case for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisations.</p>	<p>Sep 2025</p>	<p>General Manager - Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.</p>	<p>Dec 2025</p>	<p>General Manager – Corporate Services</p>
<p>Increase Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes</p>	<p>Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.</p>	<p>Apr 2025</p>	<p>General Manager – Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Investigate Supply Nation membership to support supplier diversity.</p>	<p>May 2025</p>	<p>General Manager – Corporate Services</p>

# Governance

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>Establish and maintain an effective RAP working group (RAPWG) to drive governance of the RAP.</p>	<p>Maintain a Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RAPWG) to govern RAP implementation</p>	<p>Oct 2024 &amp; Apr 2025</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager- Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP-WG.</p>	<p>Jun 2025</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager- Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Review and update (if necessary) the terms of reference for the RAP-WG.</p>	<p>Oct 2024 &amp; Oct 2025</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager- Corporate Services</p>
<p>Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments</p>	<p>Define resource needs for RAP implementation.</p>	<p>Oct 2024 &amp; Oct 2025</p>	<p>General Manager- Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally.</p>	<p>Oct 2024 &amp; Oct 2025</p>	<p>CEO</p>
	<p>Engage members of the leadership team in the delivery of RAP commitments.</p>	<p>Oct 2024, Apr 2025 &amp; Oct 2025</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager- Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.</p>	<p>Dec 2024</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager- Corporate Services</p>

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learning both internally and externally.</p>	<p>Complete and submit the annual RAP impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia</p>	<p>30 September annually</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>June annually</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services</p>
	<p>Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.</p>	<p>1 August annually</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services</p>
<p>Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP</p>	<p>Register via Reconciliation Australia website to begin developing our next RAP.</p>	<p>October 2025</p>	<p>RAP Working Group / General Manager-Corporate Services</p>

**For more information about the VHA Reflect RAP, please contact:**  
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**Victorian  
Healthcare  
Association**  
Vision • Value • Voice



**RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN**  
**REFLECT**