



INNOVATE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

March 2020 to March 2022

SUMMARY



A MESSAGE

FROM BLUE SKY COMMUNITY SERVICES' CEO

Ruth Thompson
CEO, Blue Sky
Community Services

Blue Sky Community Services has been delivering programs on the NSW Mid North Coast for over 45 years. The organisation works to create more inclusive communities and support people to thrive. We have worked in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and communities in our region, towards positive outcomes, and continue to do so. We greatly value these partnerships and acknowledge the tremendous strengths that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples bring to the communities we work in.

We acknowledge the unique history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the challenges they have faced. We acknowledge that while there have been some positive steps forward, there is a great deal of work still to be done to achieve reconciliation between Australia's First Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. Blue Sky Community Services has previously put in place a number of initiatives towards reconciliation and has developed this Reconciliation Action Plan to articulate and strengthen our organisation's commitment to reconciliation. We very much look forward to working collaboratively with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and local communities as we work towards achievement of the Plan's goals.



HOW OUR RAP WAS DEVELOPED:

This Reconciliation Action Plan was created with the assistance of Elders and other members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities located across the Mid North Coast, and we sincerely thank all those that guided us for their support. Internally the Plan was guided by an RAP Working Group including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff as well as members of the Management and Executive Teams. The voices of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members are combined with the guidelines of Reconciliation Australia to create a Reconciliation Action Plan with the goal of being responsive to our local communities and reflecting national best practice.

**We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we live and work and their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community.
We pay respects to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future.**



OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

Blue Sky Community Services has a vision for a community where everyone belongs. Reconciliation is essential for creating a place where all people can thrive, and everyone is included. Our vision for reconciliation is:

INCLUSION AND BELONGING:

- Where inclusion means every person is valued, has the opportunity to develop their strengths and make their own choices, and fulfil their cultural responsibilities

RECOGNITION:

- Of the importance of connection to Country, and connection between people

PARTNERSHIP:

- Accountability and transparency in the work we do, including the implementation of reconciliation activities
- Cultural appropriateness
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are supported to achieve their goals and dreams in a way that recognises their rich history and culture, unique strengths and unique challenges



OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN (OUR RAP)

As a non-Indigenous organisation, Blue Sky Community Services is a strong proponent for reconciliation. We recognise the importance of not speaking on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples. We value, respect and learn from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, staff, participants and communities. It is their voices that we have listened to, and made every effort to reflect, throughout our Reconciliation Action Plan.

Outlined in the following pages is a summary of our initiatives and actions. All of our actions are supported by detailed deliverables and deadlines to ensure they are achieved in a timely manner; please see our full RAP for further details.



RELATIONSHIPS

Blue Sky Community Services values strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Blue Sky Community Services acknowledges that relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are essential to understand, appreciate and connect appropriately to the many and varied groups and communities. Blue Sky Community Services also acknowledges the importance of kinship systems, protocols and family connections to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that the relationship to Country is important. Blue Sky Community Services is committed to improving relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and respecting the relationships that are important to them.

Outlined below are our commitments in this area.

- **Celebrate National Reconciliation Week to strengthen relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and other staff.**
- **Build, maintain and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes.**
- **Raise external awareness of our RAP to promote reconciliation across Blue Sky Community Services and the sectors that are influenced by Blue Sky Community Services.**
- **Listen to and include a wide range of people from a range of communities.**
- **Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.**



RESPECT

Blue Sky Community Services is committed to showing respect for Country, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ancestors, Elders past, present and future, land and waters. Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is essential for delivering services that are person-centred and that appreciate the strengths that every person possesses. Supporting and facilitating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that are guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will ensure a respectful approach.

Outlined below are our commitments in this area.

- **Celebrate NAIDOC Week**
- **Increase knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements**
- **Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities by embedding cultural protocols as part of the way our organisation functions**
- **Show respect to local communities through office decorations and publications**



OPPORTUNITIES

Blue Sky Community Services employs and develops staff in a way that optimises opportunities for reconciliation in our team. When choosing suppliers Blue Sky Community Services supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and operated businesses wherever possible.

Outlined below are our commitments in this area.

- **Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and retention**
- **Increase use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers**



GOVERNANCE, TRACKING AND REPORTING

The Blue Sky Community Services Board of Governance and Executive is committed to the successful implementation of our Reconciliation Action Plan. Communication on the progress of the implementation and associated learnings is also a high priority to continue to build community capacity and promote reconciliation within our sector.

Outlined below are our commitments in this area.

- **Create opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development**
- **RAP Working Group actively monitors RAP implementation**
- **Ensure that the Blue Sky Community Services Board of Governance and Executive has a connection with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**
- **The RAP is implemented and evidence regularly provided to the Blue Sky Community Services Board**
- **What we learn from implementation of the RAP is shared with others**
- **Review and check-in with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members**
- **Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments**

- **Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally**

- **Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP**



OUR BUSINESS

Blue Sky Community Services has its headquarters on Gumbaynggirr Country in Coffs Harbour, and delivers services and projects across the Mid North Coast of NSW and beyond.

We deliver programs that support youth, families, people with disability, older people and other people who are experiencing vulnerability. We also deliver projects that build strong and inclusive communities. All of our services work to increase opportunity for reconciliation, working with and in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples wherever possible. Blue Sky Community Services has had a long-standing commitment to reconciliation and employs Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working on Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti, Biripi and Worimi homelands. At the time of RAP commencement we employ 65 staff with 5 staff (7.7%) identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

For more information please contact Terry Robb, Executive Manager: Service Delivery & Quality, via terryrobb@bluesky.org.au or 02 6651 1788.



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