



DECEMBER 2023 -
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Melba Support Services Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan



Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia congratulates Melba Support Services on continuing its reconciliation journey by formally endorsing Melba Support Services' second Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Through this plan, Melba Support Services continues to play an important role in a network of more than 2,500 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 continues the journey and primes 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 to increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Melba Support Services 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 steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Melba Support Services on your second Reflect RAP, and I look forward to following your continuing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



The artwork

Gerard Black (Artist) Worimi

Title: Watja Bambi (Light the Fire)

The artwork tells the story of Melba embarking upon their journeys with understanding, embracing and celebrating a deep connection to First Nations culture, sustainability, and inclusive nature. The vibrant colors and intricate patterns represent the diversity and uniqueness of each individual within the Melba community.

At the center of the artwork, we see a powerful symbol of Mother Earth, the fire of the beginning of creativity surrounded by people sitting together and a star above each person representing every person has a unique spirit and connection to the dreaming this also symbolising our interconnectedness with the land, water, and sky. The swirling patterns surrounding the symbol represent the continuous cycle of life and how we can impact the future with our positive energy and actions it also shows the importance of sustainability in all our actions and choices, the water flowing through the meeting place and people is a representation of life, how if we embrace the beauty of water in our lives, for example the way water easily adapts and flows with its surroundings with a gentle and steady approach, but it also has a great energy and power to create change and even forge its own path creating new life and endless opportunities.

The artwork also depicts a diverse group of people, representing the inclusive nature of Melba Disability Services. Each person is portrayed with respect, dignity, and equality, highlighting the core values of the organization.



The artwork celebrates the individuality and strengths of each person, emphasizing the personalized and self-directed approach that Melba takes in supporting individuals to live a fabulous life.

Through this artwork, I wanted to convey that every person is valued, heard, and empowered to make choices that shape their own lives. The artwork serves as a visual representation of the deep connection between First Nations culture, communities, and the values of that Melba embraces.

Artist bio

Gerard Black

Gerard Black is a proud Worimi Man. After a 10 year career as a tattoo artist Gerard is now focusing on his painting, drawing and digital art.

His work reflects his Indigenous background, storytelling and his love of nature and draws on his strong design background from tattooing to produce a unique style of art. This together connects ancient Indigenous art with modern design and medium, bringing them together into the future, creating a new modern style promoting reconciliation and connection.

Gerard's work establishes a link between landscapes, reality and the spirit within, as Gerard often uses actual topographic maps as the basis for his artwork. He uses the physical colours, shapes and landmarks as a jumping off point. He then uses ancient designs and patterns to symbolise the different aspects of his art, tap into his Indigenous heritage with designs, shapes, colours and themes.

Every single work of art that Gerard produces has a story connecting the art to a specific place, area or theme, every stroke has meaning, nothing is random.

Gerard Black has worked with Rip Curl, Adobe (Adobe Ambassador), The Australian Open (Marriott Bonvoy), The NRL Newcastle Knights, NSW EPA and National Parks and won the Koorie Heritage Trust Koorie Art Show 2 consecutive years for 2021 and 2022 People's Choice Award – to mention just a few recent career highlights of this emerging yet already highly accomplished Artist.



Our business

At Melba Support Services, we've decided to continue with our Reflect level RAP, despite the option to progress to an Innovate RAP. Our choice is rooted in a commitment to ensuring that our dedication to reconciliation is deeply embedded in every aspect of our organisation.

Our Reflect level RAP has initiated meaningful conversations, but we recognise that more work is needed before advancing. We want to “get it right” by ensuring our efforts are sustainable and inclusive as building a solid foundation is crucial as reconciliation is an ongoing journey.

Melba supports people with disability to live a fabulous life. Our range of services include accommodation, individual supports, support coordination, enterprises, lifestyle and community programs. We are a not-for-profit and deliver our services through NDIS participant funding, state government contracts and donations.

Since 1972, we have been providing disability support services that focus on supporting people to dream big, be happy, and do what they choose and value. We open up a world of opportunities and make things happen for people to live life – proudly, joyously, creatively, adventurously – the way they want.

We currently have approximately 1,500 employees, the vast majority of whom are our skilled and dedicated support workers. We also have office-based and administration employees across the state, helping to make Melba Support Services one of Victoria's leading disability service providers.

We currently have one identified Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee and are aware that 11 people we support identify as Aboriginal People. Our commitment extends beyond the present moment, as we are resolute in our dedication to cultivating trust and mutual respect that will create greater opportunities for individuals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds in the future.

Our reach is throughout Victoria including areas from Melbourne to the Central Highlands and Wimmera, and across to Gippsland. Our office locations include Dandenong, Lilydale, Ballarat and Morwell; however, our accommodation and other services extend well into the rural areas surrounding those regional centres.



Our RAP

At Melba Support Services, we are deeply committed to establishing and nurturing a workforce that embodies diversity, equity and inclusivity. As an integral part of this commitment, we acknowledge the necessity of developing a comprehensive plan to engage effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Our aim is to build and sustain respectful relationships, foster trust and provide opportunities for employment.

Furthermore, our organisation is dedicated to delivering disability support services that are culturally sensitive and tailored to the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the regions where we operate. Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) represents a significant step towards Melba's overarching vision for reconciliation on a national scale. This vision entails ensuring that every Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individual with a disability enjoys unfettered access to and the ability to actively participate in every facet of life according to their own choices.

In essence, the development of our RAP reflects our readiness to embark on the next phase of our collective reconciliation journey.

At Melba, our **Special Projects – Finding Fabulous!** David Glazebrook, serves as our dedicated RAP Champion. David, as a senior leader within our organisation, assumes the responsibility of driving and championing internal awareness and engagement with our RAP. He will also provide regular progress updates directly to our Leadership team.

Our strategy for RAP implementation places a strong emphasis on direct engagement with First Nations stakeholders to seek their invaluable guidance and advice. To ensure the meaningful integration of our RAP throughout our entire organisation, we have entrusted the most crucial actions to our senior managers and members of the Leadership team. We are adopting a top-down approach to embedding our RAP deeply into the fabric of our organisation.

Importantly, our commitment goes beyond token gestures. We are fully dedicated to implementing these actions across our entire organisation, with a keen focus on a timeline that ensures continuous employee awareness of our unwavering dedication to reconciliation.

Currently, we are on our second Reflect RAP and are proud of our steps towards reconciliation to date. Since our last Reflect RAP, we have:

- > Established a Reconciliation Working Group, with representation from two General Managers from Outcomes, one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative, one representative from the Board, and a diversity subject matter expert

- > Continued on our journey of establishing cultural learning for staff and conducted a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation
- > Participated in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week
- > Enhanced awareness, appreciation and acknowledgement of the rich cultures, histories, knowledge and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through cultural education and learning
- > Increased staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.



Our partnerships/current activities

Reconciliation Victoria

Cultivating a robust partnership with Reconciliation Victoria, we are proud to collaborate closely on the development and implementation of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This partnership underscores our unwavering commitment to reconciliation, aiming to embed its principles deep within our organisation. With Reconciliation Victoria's expert guidance and insights, we are shaping impactful strategies and initiatives that drive positive change in our workplace and the wider community. Together, we are laying a strong foundation for reconciliation, acknowledging the past, and working towards a more inclusive and equitable future for all Australians.

Worawa

We're thrilled to announce our evolving partnership with Worawa College, a school dedicated to empowering Aboriginal youth through education. Together, we're exploring opportunities to support their mission and promote cultural exchange, fostering a deeper connection and shared growth.

Community Housing Limited

Currently, we are actively fostering a partnership with Community Housing Limited, aimed at collaborating on meaningful reconciliation activities. Together, we aspire to strengthen our commitment to reconciliation, fostering a sense of unity and understanding within our community.

National Reconciliation Week

At Melba, we believe in the power of unity, respect and reconciliation. During National Reconciliation Week, we proudly came together to celebrate the rich cultures and heritage of Australia's First Nations peoples.

Our Scoresby and Ballarat offices hosted events that brought our staff and local First Nations communities together. These gatherings included Welcome to Country ceremonies led by First Nations Elders, setting the tone for a week of reflection and appreciation.

In Ballarat, we organised a traditional smoking ceremony performed by Aboriginal Corporation, Wadawurrung, it was an experience that allowed us to connect with traditions and deepen our understanding of the land.

We had catering by Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-op and Mabu Mabu, who showcased their culinary talents and introduced us to the flavours of Australia's First Nations cuisine.

In our commitment to supporting the broader reconciliation movement, we purchased a breakfast table at Reconciliation Victoria's event, contributing to their vital work in fostering understanding and collaboration.

Throughout Reconciliation Week, we sent out communications highlighting the significance of this week and the importance of reflection and celebration. We encouraged our team to take the time to learn, engage and show their support for reconciliation.

As we reflect on Reconciliation Week and the journey towards unity, we remain committed to fostering a workplace and a society where all voices are heard and First Nations cultures are celebrated. Together, we can build a more inclusive and harmonious future for all Australians.



Our partnerships/current activities (continued)

NAIDOC Week

For NAIDOC Week, we prioritised supporting and promoting local events that showcase the richness of First Nations cultures in our community. Through our internal channels like Melba News and our active social media presence, we dedicated ourselves to sharing information about these events with our staff and our followers. We actively encouraged and rallied our staff to take part in these events. By doing so, we aimed to foster a deeper connection between our team and our First Nations communities, providing opportunities for learning, growth and engagement.

Yes Vote

While the referendum results may not have aligned with our hopes, our commitment to the principles of equality, inclusion and recognition for all remains steadfast. We take pride in the fact that our CEO has signed the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which reflects our unwavering dedication to the cause.

We maintain our advocacy for the vital and long-overdue recognition of First Nations peoples in Australia's political landscape. To continue championing this cause, we've launched a video series that features candid conversations between our CEO and a respected First Nations employee. Together, they delve into the significance of the Voice to Parliament and its potential to empower First Nations communities in shaping their own future.

We understand that real change starts with awareness and understanding. Therefore, we remain committed to dedicating space in our internal communications, such as Melba News, to share our advocacy efforts, foster discussions, and keep our staff informed about ongoing efforts to advance the recognition and rights of First Nations peoples in Australia.





RELATIONSHIPS

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	A. Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	Dec-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous
	B. Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Dec-24	Head of PMO
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	A. Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May-24	Head of Marketing & Communications
	B. RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 June 24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous
	C. Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 June 24	Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	A. Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	May-24	Head of Marketing & Communications
	B. Continue to identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	Mar-25	General Manager – Finding Fabulous, Research Lead – Practice Quality and Safeguards
	C. Engage with other like-minded organisations to grow RAP relationships to approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	Mar-25	General Manager – Finding Fabulous



RESPECT

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	A. Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	May-24	Service Design Delivery Stream Lead
	B. Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions and future needs.	Dec-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.; Senior Advisor Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	A. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	Aug-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.; Senior Advisor Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
	B. Plan to address cultural learning needs and conduct cultural training for Board and senior leadership and commence training for operational staff.	Dec-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	A. Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	Dec-24	Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion
	B. Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Dec-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	A. Raise awareness and share information among our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	Jun-24	Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion
	B. Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	Jun-24	Head of Marketing & Communications
	C. RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2024	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.



OPPORTUNITIES

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	A. Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	Oct-24	General Manager, People and Culture; Senior Business Development Manager
	B. Employ an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff member at a senior level to drive our reconciliation journey.	Dec-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.; Senior Advisor Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
	C. Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	Oct-24	General Manager, People and Culture
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	A. Continue to increase procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses to 3%.	Mar-25	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.
	B. Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers.	Aug-24	Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion
10. Maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	A. Maintain an RWG to govern RAP implementation.	Jun-25	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.
	B. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Mar-25	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.
	C. Review Terms of Reference for the RWG.	Dec-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.



GOVERNANCE

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	A. Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Dec-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.
	B. Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Nov-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.
	C. Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Apr-24	General Manager – Finding Fabulous.
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	A. 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 annually	Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion
	B. Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August annually	Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion
	C. Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September annually	Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	A. Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	Mar-25	Senior Advisor, Diversity and Inclusion

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**RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN**

REFLECT



melba
support services

