

REFLECT

Reconciliation Action Plan



January 2021– January 2022

Western Sydney Community Legal Centre Limited

About Our RAP Artwork

Isaiah Sines is the artist.

Isaiah is a Dunghutti Man (Kempsey). Isaiah was raised in Mount Druitt and was victim to many systems growing up (child protection, Community Services and the Justice system). Isaiah participated in Youth Koori Court and is now a Just Reinvest NSW Ambassador and a strong advocate for Koori kids in the same situations as he was when growing up.

"I have experienced a lot in my life and that is why I wanted to become a youth ambassador with Just Reinvest. I hope to be able to use this position to advocate for other Koori kids who are going through what I went through and hopefully prevent the future generations from being affected by the same systems I grew up in - this artwork was inspired by my son. It has his handprints and footprints so he can start his journey."

About Western Sydney Community Legal Centre Ltd.

Western Sydney Community Legal Centre Limited (WSCLC) is a public company limited by guarantee, governed by a Board of volunteer skills-based Directors who are generally local residents and professionals with an interest in social justice. WSCLC is accredited by the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC).

WSCLC's work operates under two separate arms: a legal arm and a social justice arm.

The legal arm incorporates:

1. The Community Legal Centres Program (CLCP) including an Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP) – operating broadly across Western Sydney, administered by Legal Aid NSW with funding from the NSW and Commonwealth Attorneys General.
2. The Home Building Advocacy Service (HOBAS) – operating state-wide and funded by NSW Fair Trading.

The social justice arm incorporates:

1. The Western Sydney Tenants' Service (WESTS) – operating within certain sections of Western Sydney and funded by NSW Fair Trading.
2. The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS) – operating within certain sections of Western Sydney and funded by Legal Aid NSW.

3. The Children's Court Assistance Scheme (CCAS) team – operating within The Children's Court of NSW at Parramatta and Surry Hills and funded by Legal Aid NSW.
4. The Youth Education Program (YEP) –funded by NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).
5. The Central West Child Contact Service (CWCS) – operating within Western Sydney and funded by the Department of Social Services.

About This Document

WSCLC Ltd as a relatively new organisation, has chosen a Reflect RAP framework. A Reflect is suitable for our organisation allowing us to develop and establish relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and explore possibilities before commitment to future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

Our RAP Working Group consists of representatives from all WSCLC Programs and is supported by senior organisation leaders.

In developing this RAP document, we thank members of the RAP Working Group, Program Managers, CEO/Principal Solicitor and The Board.

About Our RAP - Contact

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Name: Michelle Ericoli

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Our Acknowledgment

Western Sydney Community Legal Centre Ltd would like to acknowledge the Burramattigal people of the Darug Nation who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our Parramatta and Rooty Hill offices are located, and the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and the and Ku-Ring-Gai people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we conduct our work.

We acknowledge and pay respects to Elders, past and present, who have given us time, knowledge and guidance. We appreciate the rich contribution and resilience that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and youth provide to WSCLC and the community.

WSCLC continues to work together with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and our non-Indigenous staff, to better our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the ongoing connection to the land, waters and seas.

We are committed to creating a genuine appreciation for the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their contribution to the workplace and community, and in turn, we are working towards reconciliation.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

Our Vision for Reconciliation

Western Sydney Community Legal Centre Ltd.'s vision for reconciliation via our legal and social justice services provided to the community is:

1. Recognising the past always -
 - To acknowledge the rich, deep and positive history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
 - To remember past experiences of trauma and unjust policies perpetrated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. Working within the present -
 - To acknowledge the past and its effects on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples accessing the services we provide.
 - To affect positive change to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access to justice by appropriately equipping our staff to practice in trauma-informed, equitable and targeted practices based on the community need.
 - To focus on a strengths-based practice to empower and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples both working within our service and being assisted through our services.
3. Looking forward to the future -
 - To acknowledge for all that there is always more that can be done.
 - To acknowledge that we can do things to make sure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can look forward with hope through community consultation and collaboration.
 - To acknowledge that our actions can be the driving force for successful access and engagement rates between our service and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Specifically, for WSCLC, reconciliation is recognised as a community forward service that is trusted, safe and known by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Our Business

Our Legal Arm

Offers direct legal services for individuals such as information, referrals, advice, tasks and representations – assistance to the justice system with priority to people with barriers to accessing justice. We aim for our services to be targeted, accessible, linked-up, proportionate and appropriate. Our legal arm also offers broader services to the community such as community legal education, community engagement/education, stakeholder engagement/interagencies and law and legal services reform work – aiming to empower and strengthen our communities and service networks.

Our Social Justice Arm

Plays a vital role in supporting clients through legal processes by offering hands-on community work such as referrals, information, case management and advocacy. Similar to the legal arm, also offers broader services to the community with an emphasis on connection, engagement and building strong networks.

Employment

Western Sydney Community Legal Centre Ltd currently employs 55 people, with 3 Aboriginal staff. WSCLC has no Torres Strait Islander staff members.

Our Activities

Western Sydney Community Legal Centre Ltd recognises the importance of our current partnerships and community relationships in successfully and appropriately engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We also recognise the efforts of our leadership team in developing internal processes, arranging training and raising awareness to better the provision of services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The activities we are already engaged in are an important foundation for our organisation to build on as we start out reconciliation journey and we are proud to participate in and offer the following activities:

1. Our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group is made up of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff, championed by WSCLC Chief Executive Officer and Principal Solicitor who are active in all the above events, as well as in raising internal and external awareness of our RAP commitments and activities.
2. All Legal and Social Justice programs participate in the following activities:

- Sorry Day events
 - National Reconciliation Week events
 - NAIDOC week celebrations
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness training
3. CLCP Program: Our team of Outreach Solicitors attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific legal outreaches with the following Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner organisations:
- Marrin Weejali Aboriginal Corporation
 - Daramu Aboriginal Youth Service
 - Koolyangerarra Aboriginal Child & Family Centre
4. CCAS Program: Our team is made up of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal team members and work in the Children's Court of NSW at Parramatta and Surry Hills weekly. In this work, CCAS works with the following Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations:
- Aboriginal Legal Service
 - Justice Health Aboriginal worker
 - First Nations Disability Network
 - Juvenile Justice Aboriginal worker
 - Daramu Aboriginal Youth Service (Marist)
 - Aboriginal Employment Strategy
5. CWDVCAS Program: Our team made up of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal team members who assist women experiencing domestic violence. In this work, CWDVCAS works with the following Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations:
- Parramatta Koori Interagency
 - Women's Safety NSW working group of Aboriginal Support Workers from Western Sydney
6. WESTS Program: Our team ensures that all clients who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are informed about the Aboriginal Tenants Advice and Advocacy service available to them, as well as partnering with the following organisations:
- Muru Mittigar in Penrith, where a weekly outreach service is run
 - Utilising the Tenants' Union's online Koori Network for appropriate resources
 - Sydney Regional Aboriginal Corporation to conduct community education seminars.

Our RAP

Our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan will be our first. It has been developed in acknowledgement of the gaps within our organisation and the continued improvements we can make. This Reconciliation Action Plan will drive and direct our work and thinking towards best practice and whole organisation cultural safety. We find it important to be held accountable to the commitments we make and want all staff to understand and follow the expectations and standards we set for ourselves. We believe that as a Community Legal Centre, our organisation has a particularly important responsibility in promoting respect and reconciliation.

Our RAP was developed by our RAP Working Group made up of staff members from across our various legal and community services and including our CEO, Principal Solicitor and other senior managers and program co-ordinators. The working group members include:

- Louise Coady
- Teresa Rubio
- Theresa Haines
- Veselko Cuic
- Stan Small
- Corinne Kew
- Michelle Ericoli
- Caitlin Comensoli
- Peter Longfield
- Shannon Pendreigh
- Joanne Rudd
- Zac Armitage who provided invaluable insight and guidance into the development of our RAP.



Section 1 - Relationships

WSCLC recognises the vital importance of having relationships that are built on mutual understandings of value, purpose and respect. These relationships span those with other community legal centres and services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. WSCLC recognises that these relationships must inform the types of services to be provided, and the way in which they are provided, to ensure that our relationships are effective, appropriate and long-lasting. The WSCLC RAP supports our organisation's commitment to ensuring that these relationships are sought out, valued and respected throughout all the services provided by WSCLC.

Relationships			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	• Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	Jan 2021	RWG Secretary
	• Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Mar 2021	Services for the Community Manager
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. Including on an all-staff SharePoint folder	May 2021	Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP)
	• RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May-3 June 2021	RWG Chair
	• Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May-3 June, 2021	RWG Chair
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	• Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	Jan 2021	Children's Court Assistant Scheme Coordinator

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. 	Mar 2021	Services for the Community Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 	April 2021	Multicultural Legal Service Senior Solicitor
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. 	June 2021	RWG Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	June 2021	HR Manager



Section 2 - Respect

The Western Sydney Community Legal Centre Ltd is committed to paying respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities. We recognize and continue to develop our understanding on the value and interrelation of culture, land, water and history which is needed to provide meaningful and effective services to our clients. Through our ongoing involvement with partner Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, as well as participation in celebrating and commemorating events such as NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week we demonstrate our dedication to increasing level of inclusion that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have for decisions that affect important aspects of their lives and development. We will ensure our staff undertake cultural awareness training annually and participate in significant cultural events to demonstrate our support and commitment to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the wider community.

Respect			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. 	Oct 2021	RWG Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. 	Jan 2021	ALAP

and rights through cultural learning.			
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	• Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	Oct 2021	RWG Secretary
	• Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Oct 2021	CWDVCAS Aboriginal Specialist Worker
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	• Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2021	Senior Generalist Solicitor Rooty Hill Office
	• Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	30 June -7 July 2021	Home Building Advocacy Service (HOBAS) Manager
	• RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2021	RWG Chair



Section 3- Opportunities

Western Sydney Community Legal Centre Ltd is committed to providing meaningful employment opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the legal and community sector. We value and recognise the depth of knowledge, experience and skills that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can contribute to WSCLC and its related services. We understand that this will ultimately enhance the quality of our service delivery to the community at large in a more culturally inclusive way. We support facilitating the active contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations through education, employment and development opportunities. We aim to support the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by purchasing goods and services from businesses they own.

Opportunities			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	• Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	June 2021	RWG Chair
	• Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	May 2021	RWG Chair
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	• Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	April 2021	WSCLC Finance Manager
	• Investigate Supply Nation membership.	April 2021	WSCLC Office Manager



Section 4 - Governance and Tracking Progress

We are committed to ensuring that our Reconciliation Action Plan is successfully implemented in a way that does not compromise authenticity. We will develop appropriate resources and management systems to track, measure and report on our activities to ensure compliance with our targets. We endeavour to publicly share our Reconciliation Action Plan so clients and stakeholders have evidence of WSCLC's commitment towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will take the knowledge, challenges and achievements from our current RAP and use it to assist the creation of our next RAP so that we are progressively working towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Governance			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	• Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	Jan 2021	RWG Chair

10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	• Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	Jan 2021	RWG Secretary
	• Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Jan 2021	RWG Chair
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Jan 2021	RWG Secretary
	• Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Jan 2021	RWG Chair
	• Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Jan 2021	Services for the Community Manager
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	• Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	September, 2021	ALAP
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	• Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	Oct 2021	RWG Secretary

Contact details
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