

FEBRUARY 2018-2020



RECONCILIATION

– ACTION PLAN –



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

INNOVATE

OUR - ORGANISATION -

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW ('the Society') is honoured to be adding a strong voice to reconciliation in our nation with the publication of this Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The Society has had strong connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for many decades and is committed to being guided by Traditional Owners, Elders, organisations and communities on how best to advance reconciliation.

The Society is a member and volunteer based organisation that has been assisting marginalised and disadvantaged people across NSW for more than 135 years. We are a practical organisation with a strong work ethic. Today there are close to 25,000 members and volunteers providing vital support to people experiencing disadvantage including food parcels and vouchers, financial assistance, help with energy bills and other debt, budget counselling, school items for children, and the provision of other material items such as furniture, clothing, bedding and other household items.

The Society is also a leading supplier of community services and has 115 services across NSW, including homelessness and assisted accommodation services; assistance to people seeking asylum, migrants and refugees; home, hospital, prison and detention centre visitation; Vinnies Shops and assistance centres, mental health programs; youth services; disability services; drug, alcohol and gambling counselling and rehabilitation services; financial counselling and food assistance.

The Society conducts all of its work with a drive to see an Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice. As a caring lay Catholic charity offering "a hand up" to people in need, we advocate on several pressing social justice issues such as homelessness, poverty and people seeking asylum. We live and work with the ideals of respecting human dignity, sharing hope, and encouraging people to take control of their own destiny.

Our Innovate RAP contains three priority areas of Respect, Relationships and Opportunities, and the Society is confident that all aspects of our work will be strengthened as a result of this focus.

For our RAP to be successful, there will be accountability in all areas of our work and a strong measurement framework to track our progress. We are grateful to Reconciliation Australia for their expert guidance as we developed this RAP and look forward to a long and rewarding partnership.



To read or download the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Reconciliation Action Plan please visit: vinnies.org.au/rap

UNIQUE - ACKNOWLEDGEMENT -

As part of our RAP development, we have drafted our own Acknowledgement of Country and Prayer of Acknowledgement. These words will be at the core of our reconciliation work:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the Traditional Custodians of this land, with deep respect. May Elders, past and present, be blessed and honoured. May we join together and build a future based on compassion, justice, hope, faith, and reconciliation.

PRAYER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Holy Spirit,

We invoke your blessing on this country and on us as we gather today. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders of this place, both past and present, and the continued cultural and spiritual connection to the lands and waters. We also acknowledge that our forebears came into these sacred spaces, and changed forever an older way of life.

Bless our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters and bless us. Help us to join our hands and hearts together. Help us to heal one another and the land, so that our lives may flow with harmony and that we may live with love and deep respect. Amen.

ARTIST CREDIT



Traditional Koori artist, proud Gamilaroi man and 2015 NAIDOC Artist of the Year Daren Dunn has designed unique artwork for the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW. Daren's work reflects our belief that the reconciliation journey is one of conversations. The circular patterns symbolise the camp-fire while the hands symbolise belonging. We are very proud to have Daren's work as the centrepiece of our RAP design. darendunn.com.au



OUR VISION FOR - RECONCILIATION -

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW's vision for reconciliation is for a just and equitable society. Our vision is firmly based on our core mission to offer a hand up to people experiencing disadvantage and to shape a more compassionate society.

We are acutely aware that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience discrimination and disadvantage at levels that cause great sorrow and shame to many Australians. At the Society we are deeply troubled by the extreme poverty, unemployment, poor health, and lower life expectancy experienced by our country's First Peoples. We pledge that with this and future RAPs, the Society will deliver reconciliation actions aimed at closing social and economic gaps in order to make a substantial difference in the lives of the people we engage, employ or assist.

We have the capacity to start thousands of conversations across NSW as our members, volunteers and staff go about their daily work. These conversations will build a foundation of respect for diversity and inclusion. We will foster a spirit of trust and mutual appreciation throughout the entire organisation, in all departments and across all geographic locations. We will engage in cultural awareness training to ensure our members, volunteers and staff work in culturally appropriate and accessible ways



that will become ever stronger and more embedded throughout the life of this RAP. We will also make every effort to ensure our workplaces and facilities are regarded by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as culturally safe places to work or engage with our services.

We seek to be reconciliation leaders in the non-government sector and use our reputation and influence to advocate for stronger recognition and respect for the cultures, spirituality, resilience and special identity of Australia's First Peoples. We will work tirelessly to extend a hand up with dignity, hope, love, justice, and compassion while valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' resilience, strength, and ageless connection with the land upon which we all live and work.

RAP PRIORITY AREAS - RELATIONSHIPS -

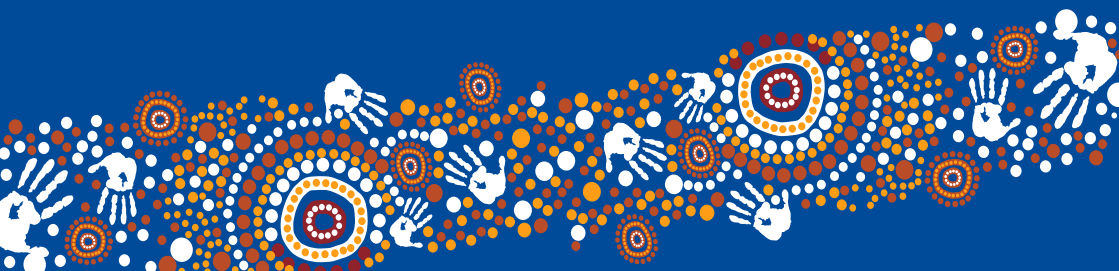
We seek positive and enduring relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and will use our reputation and influence to advocate for stronger recognition and respect for culture, community, and equal opportunity. We will work tirelessly to communicate this message and fight for social justice so that we may help to overcome disadvantage among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, educational achievement, disability support, and employment outcomes. We will achieve this by working with communities to create true partnerships, by employing more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and by ensuring our services are culturally appropriate.

Some key actions:

- The RWG will establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group consisting of external advisors and internal staff members. This group will provide cultural advice and guidance in the development of policy and engagement plans.
- The Society will organise at least one internal event for National Reconciliation Week each year and will encourage all staff, members, and volunteers across our Central Councils and Support Services to participate in a local NRW event.
- We will extend an invitation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to share their reconciliation experiences or stories and publish those stories with permission through our internal and external communication channels.
- We will develop an engagement plan to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in order to forge better partnerships with communities throughout NSW.
- Develop guiding principles for future engagement by launching a series of meetings and conversations with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
- Develop a unique St Vincent de Paul Society NSW RAP toolkit to assist staff, members and volunteers across the Society.
- Embed RAP awareness into all staff and volunteer inductions.



To read the full list of actions within the Relationships priority area please visit: vinnies.org.au/rap



RAP PRIORITY AREAS – RESPECT –

St Vincent de Paul Society NSW recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples and respects their cultures, lands, waters, histories, and rights to live in a society free of economic, social, and cultural oppression. All Society members, volunteers, and staff will acknowledge and adhere to these values in every aspect of their work.

We acknowledge and celebrate the deep, abiding pride that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in their diverse cultures and we place great value in the contributions they make to the wider Australian society. We welcome the chance to learn more.

Some key actions:

- Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness strategy document which defines cultural learning needs and competence of employees, members, and volunteers in all areas of our organisation.
- Appoint internal Ambassadors to record their own cultural awareness development and share with staff, members and volunteers.
- Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, partner services, and the people we assist, to review current programs in order to ensure services are delivered in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner.
- Design a unique Acknowledgement of Country plaque and, over time, display one in every St Vincent de Paul Society NSW premises. Every plaque unveiling will be accompanied by a Welcome to Country and, where possible, a Smoking Ceremony.
- Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country at significant events including the Vinnies CEO Sleepout and Annual Mass.
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff will be encouraged to participate with their cultures and communities during NAIDOC Week.
- All staff, members and volunteers will be encouraged to participate in a local NAIDOC Week event.



To read the full list of actions within the Respect priority area please visit: vinnies.org.au/rap

RAP PRIORITY AREAS – OPPORTUNITIES –

One of the most important reconciliation actions we can undertake as an organisation is to close the gap economically by providing employment and procurement opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and businesses. We must ensure our workforce and our supply chain reflect the diversity of the communities in which we work. We must also make every effort to provide volunteer opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A measure for any employer is retention rates for staff and volunteers and we will seek to provide rewarding opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who join our organisation. We envisage many professional development pathways will emerge as a result of our focus over the two-year lifespan of this RAP.

Some key actions:

- Develop and implement the Society's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention strategy (including traineeships, internships, career development/secondment opportunities). This will include:
 - Surveying current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, members and volunteers in order to inform future employment opportunities and aid in the setting of employment, member and volunteer target numbers.
 - Engaging with the Society's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group (which includes external advisors and internal staff member representatives) to provide input and oversight.
 - Advertising all job vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media.
 - Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional development program.
 - Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member and volunteer recruitment strategy.
 - Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, members, volunteers, and future applicants are given positive workplace opportunities and there are no barriers to professional development or advancement.



To read the full list of actions within the Opportunities priority area please visit: vinnies.org.au/rap





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