

YWCA OF CANBERRA

Reconciliation Action Plan



2009 – 2010





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Our business

The YWCA of Canberra is a values led, non-profit community based organisation working and advocating for social justice within a feminist framework.

Our vision

Women achieving their potential.

Our purpose

Through the leadership of women and girls the YWCA of Canberra is building a better community for all.

Our work

The YWCA of Canberra has been providing community services and representing women's issues in the Canberra community since its establishment in 1929. We currently work with approximately 4,500 Canberran's through the delivery of 28 programs, across 20 physical locations, in the areas of children's services, community development, housing, youth services, personal and professional training, and women's leadership.

The YWCA of Canberra is a non-religious women's organisation that encourages the participation of women of all cultures, beliefs and ages. Strengthened

by diversity, the YWCA of Canberra draws together members who are committed to the value of every human being and who strive to create opportunities for growth, leadership and empowerment in order to attain a common vision: peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all people.

Through our members we aim to create a community of women who share common values of equality and social justice. Men are included in many of our programs and we have male staff and volunteers. Men are invited to become associate members of the YWCA of Canberra and their input is welcome and valued.

As part of an international movement, with a global outreach of 25 million women and girls the YWCA of Canberra seeks to play its part in working for a world where reconciliation, justice, peace, health, human dignity, freedom and care for the environment are promoted and sustained through women's leadership.



Cover image: Linda Huddleston led the participants of the WomenSpeak Canberra Gathering (2008) through the process of making a piece of jewellery using traditional Indigenous methods.



Our RAP Journey

Our vision for reconciliation

Our vision is that through progressing reconciliation and healing we will improve the wellbeing of both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the wider Australian community.

Acknowledging the continuing custodianship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of land and culture, we embrace a grass roots approach involving the whole of the YWCA of Canberra community - clients of our programs, external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, staff, members and Board in our reconciliation journey.

Our reconciliation journey

The YWCA of Canberra has been committed to reconciliation throughout its long history. For several years now we have worked to develop relationships; respect and opportunities for reconciliation, including in the following ways:

- concerted efforts in developing relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, particularly local women elders and custodians

- strengthening our acknowledgment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional ownership – in formal documentation, at events and through mechanisms such as our email salutation
- sourcing and displaying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources such as posters, flags and books to create more welcoming spaces at YWCA of Canberra programs
- initiating cultural awareness training for all staff
- participating in celebrations such as Sorry Day, Government Apology to the Stolen Generations anniversary and NAIDOC Week
- including ceremonial leave as an entitlement in our new Collective Agreement (2008 – 2011)
- introducing a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainee positions throughout the organisation
- significantly supporting local projects such as the WomanSpeak Gathering of 2008 and the 2009 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Diploma in Counselling and Group work.

Current members and staff continue to strive together to create a society which offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, together with women in the wider Australian community, equality of opportunity, respect for, and public recognition of the diversity of our roles and responsibilities. We want our history books to reflect the significant contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, along with women in the wider Australian community, have made to our country. We want our children to attend schools where they feel included and have a range of opportunities to contribute to the social, ethical and economic fabric of our society. We look to a sustainable future for our grandchildren with clean air and water and a healthy lifestyle.



Creating our RAP

Inspiration for a RAP

A number of different threads came together in 2008 leading to our determination to create a RAP:

1. Many staff across the organisation either attended, or gathered around televisions to watch the Government Apology to the Stolen Generation, made by the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. This event had a significant impact on the staff, Board and members of the organisation.
2. In June 2008, the YWCA of Canberra partnered with WomanSpeak to hold a gathering exploring ways in which women from the wider Australian community could support and stand in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Around 170 women attended, producing a set of recommendations for ways forward. We saw the RAP as a great framework for translating these ideas into action.
3. In 2008, as part of the YWCA of Canberra staff leadership development training, one group of staff participants elected to focus on 'Reconciliation with Indigenous Australians' in their collective project, producing a number of recommendations for the senior management team, including the development of a RAP.

Our RAP Commitment

The coming together of these various threads inspired our Organisation to revitalise and extend our Organisational commitment to reconciliation. We see the RAP journey as a valuable tool for enabling this commitment and in January 2009, during their annual planning day, the YWCA of Canberra Board endorsed the development of a RAP for the Organisation, recognising it as an undertaking in keeping with our values and strategic directions.

This is our first RAP and spans one year with a focus on extending and reviewing our current achievements in reconciliation and with a view to remaining active and reflective in this process of ongoing learning and exchange. We know we have a long way to go and are committed to the long haul.

Whole of organisation RAP ownership

Our desire is to ensure that our RAP is understood and supported at a grass roots level by all staff. To achieve this, our RAP working group, includes staff representation from across all program and management areas of the organization, including representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, our membership and our

Board. Our management and governance body have made a firm commitment to supporting the RAP with the inclusion of a standing agenda item at all monthly Managers and Board meetings and flowing on to the staff team meeting level from there.

In February, Reconciliation Australia came to a meeting of the RAP working group to inform members about what it means to undertake a 'RAP journey' and to join the RAP community, as well as to respond to our questions. This was another inspiring occasion and Program Managers went back to their staff teams to work through the RAP reflection tool. These documents have contributed to the development of both the Statement of Commitment, which was launched in March 2009, and the development of the RAP itself.

The growing level of staff energy for learning, engagement and self-reflection through our Organisational journey to develop our RAP has been encouraging. During February, several staff teams participated in breakfast and lunch events celebrating the anniversary of the Government Apology to the Stolen Generations. Staff teams who wanted a facilitated discussion during their anniversary celebrations utilised a set of questions devised in 2008 by the Senior Management Team to accompany the Apology DVD. Other teams have reflected on the Reconciliation Barometer and subsequent bulletins from Reconciliation Australia are now routinely emailed to all staff teams.

All staff were encouraged to participate in NAIDOC

Week 2009. The YWCA of Canberra held stalls at two ACT community events as well as partnering in a women's leadership event sharing stories of women leaders in the fight for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander rights. This included stories of women from the wider Australian community acting in solidarity. Again, various staff teams sought to celebrate at a local level within their own teams.

We have also talked about our RAP journey with a number of different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues outside of the YWCA of Canberra, inviting their comments on the RAP as it evolved and asking for more formal feedback as our RAP progressed into its final drafts. Their feedback and encouragement has been invaluable and very much appreciated. We would particularly like to acknowledge the more formal feedback provided by our following colleagues:

- Robyn Martin, Manager of Beryl Women Inc
- Julie Butler, Indigenous Sector Development Officer, ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS)
- Rhonda Woodward, Program Officer, Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Indigenous and Community Legal Services Branch, Social Inclusion Division, Attorney-General's Department.

We would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support and encouragement, throughout our RAP journey from the wonderful staff at Reconciliation Australia.

Relationships

The YWCA of Canberra believes in building strong and respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities as a way to benefit all Australians. Reconciliation is one of our stated values and strategic directions and it is through moving our values into practice that real, meaningful and personal change can be created.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Learn from and extend existing partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.	Senior Management Team and Y Program and Unit Managers	June 2010	Audit of existing partnerships is completed.
		Aug 2010	A plan on how those relationships can be extended is developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues.
		Sept 2010	A system for capturing and sharing learning through annual updates is developed and implemented.
2. Build on our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients with a view to improved client outcomes.	Senior Management Team and Y Program and Unit Managers	June 2010	Audit of existing internal processes for receiving feedback and measuring outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients is completed.
		Aug 2010	A plan on how those processes and outcomes can be improved is developed and implemented.
		Sept 2010	A system for sharing annual updates is developed and implemented.

Focus Area

To further support the development of strong relationships and partnership programs with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, organisations and clients.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
3. Review and update our Organisational policies and procedures to ensure principles of inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, members and clients are embedded across the Organisation - particular attention to be given to recruitment and retention strategies.	Advocacy, Membership & Organisational Support Team and Y Program and Unit Managers	Dec 2009	Timeline and project plan for the review process is developed and includes consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues
		Mar 2010	Current areas of success are identified and documented.
		Apr 2010	Areas for improvement are identified and documented
		Sept 2010	Policy and procedure manual is updated and distributed to all staff teams.
		Sept 2010	At least 70 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff state that their workplace is 'supportive, welcoming and committed to developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and fully meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients'.
4. Begin to develop a web based information tool for staff which provides advice, tools and resources for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and clients.	Advocacy, Membership & Organisational Support and Y Program and Unit Managers and external partners	Mar 2010	Working group formed with clearly stated processes for consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues.
		Dec 2010	Review workshop draft by YWCA of Canberra staff and external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners for input and feedback
		Mar 2011	Launch of web based information tool.



Respect

The YWCA of Canberra believes that respect is based on understanding and that reconciliation requires a commitment to continually improve our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and contemporary issues. Respectful relationships and good communication are the foundations required for effective program delivery and ensuring we meet the needs of our members, clients and colleagues.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Strengthen YWCA of Canberra procedures for acknowledgement of traditional custodians of the land.	Senior Management Team and Advocacy, Membership & Organisational Support Team	Dec 2009	Procedures are reviewed, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues.
		Mar 2010	A list of recommendations is submitted the Senior Management Team to formulate into an action plan.
		Sept 2010	Outcomes of the action plan are implemented, including the delivery of training to all Y Program Managers.
		Sept 2010	A system for sharing annual updates is developed and implemented.
2. Training opportunities about the history, cultures and current issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are made available to all staff, including options for both beginner and enrichment levels, acknowledging that new issues are always emerging.	Deputy Executive Director and Training Unit	Dec 2009	Internal training course list is produced and distributed and all staff attend at least one training per year.
		Sept 2010	Internal training course lists will be updated and distributed to staff on an annual basis.
		Sept 2010	All staff to undertake Share our Pride introductory web based training (on the Reconciliation Australia website), to help guide other training.

Focus Area

Increasing our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and contemporary issues, of variations within those cultures. This will include how the various Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures interact with the cultures and current issues of the wider Australian community.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
3. A workshop is developed to explore how the cultures and current issues of the wider Australian community, including issues of 'white privilege' interact with the cultures and current issues of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and clients.	Senior Management Team	Dec 2009	Working Group formed, including members from YWCA of Canberra, the broader community sector and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory group.
		May 2010	Draft workshop completed.
		July 2010	Feedback and input into the draft by Y Program Managers and external partners is completed.
		Sept 2010	Workshop delivered to YWCA of Canberra staff.
4. Participate in NAIDOC Week and other Reconciliation events.	Advocacy, Membership and Organisational Support Team	Jan 2010	Staff teams report monthly to the Board on their participation.
	Y Program and Unit Managers	Monthly	Staff teams report monthly to the Board on their participation.



Opportunities

The YWCA of Canberra believes that everyone who is part of the community has the right to contribute to, and share equally in, the benefits of the community's social, cultural and economic development. Our program delivery is more effective when members and staff are supported by a policy framework that embeds consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations as a matter of course.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1. Ensure current leadership opportunities offered by the YWCA of Canberra are accessible and support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership.	Executive Director and Advocacy, Membership & Organisational Support Team	Sept 2010	At least two young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women participate in the YWCA of Canberra leadership program 'Women Out Front'.
		Sept 2010	At least one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman participates in YWCA of Canberra's Governance Structure.
2. Create specific project opportunities to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to achieve their potential.	Executive Director and Advocacy, Membership & Organisational Support Team	Dec 2009	Consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and organisations is undertaken to determine what kind of project to develop.
		Sept 2010	Project to develop a leadership resource, led by young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from the local area is completed.

Focus Area

The YWCA of Canberra will identify specific opportunities, in terms of governance, membership, employment and service delivery, to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, especially young women, are supported to *achieve their potential*.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
3. Ensure membership activities offered by the YWCA of Canberra are accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.	Advocacy, Membership & Organisational Support Team and Membership Committee	Dec 2009	Review membership opportunities in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the YWCA of Canberra and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
		Sept 2010	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women will make up at least 5% of the YWCA of Canberra's membership.
4. Actively recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.	Executive Director and Y Program and Unit Managers	Sept 2010	YWCA of Canberra recruitment policies and procedures include strategies to actively recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff (refer to Relationships action 3 above).
		Sept 2010	All Program and Unit Managers have undergone training in how to recruit and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
		Sept 2010	Recruit Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff in the coming year so that they make up 2% (8 staff) of the YWCA of Canberra's workforce.



Tracking Progress and Reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
The RAP working group continues to meet on a regular basis to have an overview of the implementation and tracking of the RAP.	RAP Working Group convener	Quarterly	RAP working group meets face to face at least 4 times per year.
Feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander external advisors.	Executive Director and Advocacy, Membership & Organisational Support Team	Twice per year	Feedback is incorporated into the annual RAP report and refresh.
RAP is a standing agenda item at all YWCA of Canberra team, management and Board meetings.	Executive Director and Y Program and Unit Managers	Fortnightly	RAP is a standing agenda item at all team meetings.
		Monthly	RAP is a standing agenda item at all Y Program and Unit Manager meetings.
		Monthly	RAP is a standing agenda item at all Board meetings
Progress in implementing the RAP is reported on a regular basis.	Executive Director and Advocacy, Membership & Organisational Support Team	Quarterly	RAP report is provided for the Board and Y Program Managers. The Board and Y Program and Unit Managers provide feedback on RAP progress.
RAP reported on and refreshed annually.	Executive Director and Advocacy, Membership & Organisational Support Team	Sept 2010	RAP report and refresh available on YWCA of Canberra and Reconciliation Australia websites.
		Oct 2010	RAP refresh available on YWCA of Canberra and Reconciliation Australia websites.





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