

INNOVATE RAP

JULY 2022 - JULY 2024



**RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN**

INNOVATE



About the Artwork:

GURUBALA GABANMALA (connect heal)

A story of an Aboriginal person's journey of healing with support from services, community and family

About the Artist:

Ms Donna Gayford McLaren, Gamilaraay nation, from the Cain and Leslie families of Burra Bee Dee near Coonabarabran, NSW

Our vision for reconciliation Our vision for reconciliation is to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, particularly those with cognitive impairment, supported and empowered to fully participate in their pursuit of justice, equity and understanding in a culturally safe and respectful environment that promotes the rights of the individual.

Our mission for reconciliation

Our mission for reconciliation is to address barriers and increase access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, particularly those with cognitive impairment, along with empowering them to understand and advocate for their legal and human rights.

About the Innovate RAP

The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is about organisations from every sector turning good intentions into real actions and rising to the challenge of reconciling Australia. A RAP is a business plan that uses a holistic approach to create meaningful relationships, enhance respect and promote sustainable opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Our aim in implementing the Innovate RAP is to develop a pathway that will upskill and increase the knowledge of our workforce and stakeholders by raising awareness of the history, culture and complexities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, particularly those with cognitive impairment. By developing a culturally informed and sensitive workforce we strive to better support and understand the circumstances of the individual and to better address the issues they are experiencing within the justice system and life more generally. By understanding the history of our own unique communities and the truth that lies within that history we look forward to a deeper understanding, empathy and respect for the people we work with.

About IDRS

The Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS) is a specialist legal information and advocacy service for people with disability, particularly intellectual disability and other cognitive impairments. We work with and for people with disability to exercise and advance their rights across the state of NSW.

We do this by providing legal advice, NDIS appeals and assistance; casework and support; advocating for improvements to laws and policies affecting our clients; providing assistance and education to legal and other professionals supporting our clients; and providing information to service providers and the community about the rights and needs of people with disability, including cognitive impairment.

IDRS is a state-wide service and has advocates and volunteers attached to 21 offices that cover Sydney as well as the regional, rural and remote areas of NSW.

We employ approximately 50 staff and coordinate more than 150 volunteers who support clients across NSW.

IDRS currently has 3% Aboriginal staff and 2% Aboriginal volunteers. Through the development of this RAP, we hope to expand opportunities for recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers in our organisation.

Our RAP

IDRS has already commenced the reconciliation journey by building informal relationships with local Aboriginal organisations and ensuring that we commence all meetings with an Acknowledgement of Country. IDRS is committed to continuing to work with and build on these relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Our aim is to increase our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures so that our services are both culturally appropriate and respectful. Our RAP was developed with the input of staff, including our Aboriginal co-educator and an Aboriginal justice advocate.

Our RAP is championed by representatives of each IDRS service – JAS (Justice Advocacy Service), Legal Help, Parents Program, Education, NDIS appeals and the Disability Royal Commission advocate – and is developed with the assistance of Reconciliation Australia. Our RAP also has the strong support of our Board.

RAP Working Group: Dean McLaren (Aboriginal engagement worker), Margot Morris (Principal Solicitor ARC), Mitch Mulqueen (NDIS Appeals and DRC Team Leader, ARC), Margo Anderson (Justice Advocate Team Leader – Bourke), Kelly Watson (Regional Manager – JAS), Lee Wilson (Justice Advocate, JAS – Sydney Metro), Kent Kingston (Justice Advocate, JAS – Newcastle), Jillian McCarthy (Justice Advocate, JAS – Sydney West, Eliza Kidd. Catherine Hillard, Justice Advocate

We have 2 Aboriginal Members in our RAP working group

Our Partnerships / Current Activities

IDRS will continue forming relationships with relevant state-wide organisations, including Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS), and other Aboriginal services in local regions. Our education team, in conjunction with local Aboriginal community members in the Northern Rivers and our Aboriginal engagement worker within IDRS, has developed culturally specific volunteer training to encourage Aboriginal people across the state to engage with our organisation. Our Disability Royal Commission advocate is working with Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation in supporting clients to tell their story of abuse in disability facilities such as group homes.

IDRS holds a NAIDOC and Reconciliation week gathering every year (COVID-19 restrictions permitting). This includes a smoking ceremony, stories and cultural activities – community members and stakeholders are invited. Elements of the gathering are live streamed and recorded for all staff – the recording is also accessible through IDRS Facebook site.

Over the next two years our organisation commits to:



Relationships

Our organisation believes strong relationships are integral to successful outcomes for our clients. Our relationships with clients, stakeholders and community depend on respectful encounters, honesty and transparency. We rely on our clients to engage in the process to facilitate positive outcomes, our stakeholders as a source of, and destination for referrals, and our community to build connections, credibility and reliability of service delivery. Reconciliation cannot be achieved in isolation. Strong, resilient relationships are key to learning, adapting and improving the way we do our business. By working collaboratively, we enhance the opportunity to achieve a common goal: positive outcomes and experiences for our clients.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	Aboriginal engagement worker	July 2024	Scope a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and stakeholders that we could approach to assist us in our understanding of the potential activities in our future RAPs
	Aboriginal engagement worker	July 2024	Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Engagement strategy in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities to build long term relationships of trust and respect, as well as providing a platform for ongoing communication and information-sharing
	Aboriginal engagement worker & JAS team leaders	June 23	Meet with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our sphere of influence to develop guiding principles for future engagement

2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Aboriginal engagement worker	May 2023, 2024	Provide staff and volunteers with information on NRW events and encourage them to attend in their local area
	NDIS Appeals manager	May 2023, 2024	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials among our staff
	IDRS education officer	May 2023, 2024	Raise awareness of National Reconciliation Week through IDRS social media
	Aboriginal engagement worker	May 2023, 2024	Celebrate National Reconciliation Week by hosting an internal event for all staff
	IDRS education officer JAS Advocate	May 2023, 2024	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	Aboriginal engagement worker	July 2022	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff
	RAP working group chair	Nov 2022	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce
	RAP working group chair	July 2022	Encourage RAP Working Group members, senior leaders & all staff to attend community events such as NAIDOC, RAP Lunching gatherings Promote local community events through team meeting agendas and internal emails to encourage engagement

	IDRS Executive officer	July 2022	Present our RAP to the board to raise awareness about our RAP commitment
	ARC Principal solicitor and JAS regional managers	August 2022	Present our RAP at a JAS talk and at an IDRS, ARC (Ability Rights Centre) staff meeting to ensure that all staff have an understanding of the RAP actions and how they can contribute to the RAP
	IDRS education officer	August 2022	Publish RAP on the IDRS website
	Aboriginal Engagement worker / JAS regional managers Principal solicitor	August 2022	Disseminate, and go through RAP with all new staff within induction process
	RAP working group	Review, July 2023	Disseminate RAP to all existing volunteers by email and new volunteers at training
	Regional managers JAS & ARC	July 2022	Make RAP a standing agenda item at all team meetings so that any new knowledge and/or information can be shared
	JAS Advocates ARC Education	June 2023	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey
	JAS Advocate RAP working group	June 2023	Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey

4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies	Principal solicitor	July 2023	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs
	Principal solicitor	June 2023	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation
	Principal solicitor	June 2023	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy
	IDRS executive officer	June 2023	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism
5. Increase community engagement in local Aboriginal communities	IDRS executive officer	July 2022	Encourage all staff and senior leaders to keep updated by reading relevant information and reports in the IDRS SharePoint drive collated by the Aboriginal engagement officer and other staff
	Aboriginal engagement worker	July 2022	Advertise, provide information and promote IDRS services to Aboriginal community organisations in local regions
	JAS regional managers	July 2022	Attend and participate in organised activities hosted by local Aboriginal organisations



Respect

Our organisation believes the journey of reconciliation begins with respect. To build respect, there needs to be a truthful understanding and appreciation of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both pre and post colonisation on a local, regional and national level. Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people require education and guidance to build knowledge and understanding of culture, lore and customs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Through an appreciation of the history, cultural diversity and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we aim to build the mutual respect necessary to build strong, meaningful and respectful relationships.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
6. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning	Aboriginal engagement worker & education	July 2022	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation
	Aboriginal engagement worker	Nov 22	Capture data and measure staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements
	IDRS executive officer	June22	Staff and volunteers to attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training to increase their understanding and appreciation of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
	IDRS education officer Aboriginal engagement worker	July 2022	Engage with relevant First Nations parties/bodies to consult on a cultural learning strategy

	Education officer and Aboriginal engagement worker	July 2022	Develop targeted training for volunteers based on the results of the volunteer needs survey
	Education officer	Dec 2022	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff

7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	Aboriginal engagement worker	July 2023, 2024	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event
	Aboriginal engagement worker	July 2023 2024	Organise and display appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imagery, such as posters and artwork, including artist acknowledgement and story of artwork in all offices where possible
	Aboriginal engagement worker and Education	July 2023, 2024	RAP working group members to hold an internal event
	RAP working group	July 2023, 2024	Promote community NAIDOC week events in our local area amongst staff, including displaying posters in each office promoting the event
	JAS team leaders	July 2023, 2024	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week, which includes information about local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities

8. Demonstrate respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	JAS regional managers	August 2022	Purchase and display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in all offices across IDRS and JAS
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peoples by observing cultural protocols	JAS regional managers	August 2022	Ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational areas
	IDRS executive officer	Julye 2022	Ensure an Acknowledgement of Country is included as standard on all outgoing communications such as email signature and public website
	IDRS executive officer	July 2022	Ensure an Acknowledgement of Country is given at the beginning of any team/staff or board meeting
	JAS regional managers	Nov 2022	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year
	JAS regional managers RWG	Nov 2022	Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness and understanding of the meaning and significance behind Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols, including any protocols relevant to the local area of each office

9. Recognise and raise awareness of dates of cultural significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	IDRS manager	July 2022, 2023	Enter important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community dates/events into each service's calendar
	JAS regional managers IDRS manager	July 2022, 2023	Communicate to all staff and encourage staff to use Reconciliation Australia's Share Our Pride online tool
	NDIS manager	July 2022, 2023	Encourage all staff to investigate who the Traditional Owners are of the lands and waters in local areas, including any significant events in Aboriginal history that may have occurred in their local region. Information to be shared back at team meetings



Opportunities

Our organisation believes that equity and access is integral to the engagement and successful outcomes for our clients who are recognised as vulnerable people. We strive to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all aspects of our service delivery. We encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply for employment and volunteering opportunities, engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service in procurement of services, consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop culturally appropriate training packages for our staff, volunteers and stakeholders and provide cultural leadership from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Our core business is to walk alongside our clients, protect and promote their rights and endeavour to afford every opportunity for our clients to achieve positive outcomes during their contact with the justice system.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
10. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development	Aboriginal engagement worker IDRS executive officer	October 2022	Scope, develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy policy to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants for work placement, volunteer and paid positions within IDRS
	Aboriginal engagement worker	August 2022	Identify and build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers to inform future employment and development opportunities
	IDRS executive officer	August 2022	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategies

	IDRS executive officer	October 23	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace
	Aboriginal engagement worker	July, 2022	Advertise any IDRS vacancies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment agencies and local Aboriginal networks such as KOORI interagency networks, social media and local community radio; eg, KOORI radio
	JAS program director	July, 2022	Ensure that on all vacancies advertised at IDRS include “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply”

11. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes	Aboriginal engagement worker	Jan 2023	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy
	Aboriginal engagement worker	August 2022	Investigate Supply Nation membership
	Aboriginal engagement worker	Jan 2023	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses
	Coordinator of intake and information	July 2022, 2023, 2024	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses
	Coordinator of intake and information	July 2022	Develop and circulate a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that supply goods and services to be purchased for use at any internal or external events

12. Identify culturally appropriate education opportunities for staff and stakeholders	JAS education manager	July 2022	Continue to work closely with Aboriginal community in developing culturally appropriate training materials
	JAS education manager	July 2022, 2023	Continue to develop culturally appropriate educational material for all IDRS external training programs, including Justice Advocacy Service(JAS) volunteer training and Ability Rights Service (ARC) rights and relationships sessions for community and services
	Aboriginal engagement worker	Report on June 2023, 2024	Continue to provide ongoing cultural education for all staff and volunteers



Governance			
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
13. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP	Aboriginal engagement worker	Review July, annually	RAP working group to meet every eight weeks to coordinate and monitor the implementation of our RAP and development of future RAPs
	JAS regional managers	July 22	Email staff and volunteers to see if there is any interest in joining the current RAP Working Group
	NDIS manager JAS Advocate	June 2023, 2024	Ensure that there is always at least one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person on the RAP Working Group
	RAP working group	July 2022	Establish Terms of Reference for the RAP Working Group
14. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Aboriginal engagement worker Education	July 2022	Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation, including increasing the use of technology
	Aboriginal engagement worker	July, October 2022	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments

	Aboriginal engagement worker	August 2023	Define systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP activities
	IDRS executive officer	August 2022	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management

15. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, both internally and externally	JAS advocate	June22	Keep staff up to date with the current RAP activities and progress through quarterly staff meetings and lunches
	Education officer	From July 2022	Communicate progress against RAP actions to Board members, quarterly
	RAP working group chair	September annually	Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia
	RAP working group chair	1 August annually	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.
	RAP working group chair	June, annually	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.
	RAP working group chair	June 2024	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.
	Aboriginal engagement worker	June, annually	Publicly report RAP achievements in IDRS Annual report
	Aboriginal engagement worker	April 2024	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer

16. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP	Aboriginal engagement worker	April 2024	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP
	Aboriginal engagement worker	April 2024	Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new IDRS RAP based on learnings, achievements and challenges
	Aboriginal engagement worker	April 2024	Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal review and endorsement

With the creation of this Stretch RAP, the NIAA continues to be a member of the ever-growing community of RAP organisations that have taken goodwill and transformed it into action.

Karen Mundine

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