

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2022 – July 2023



About the artwork and artist



Tracey Linn Bostock
Artist

Walking on Country for Reconciliation (2022) is a painting by Tracey L. Bostock commissioned for Marrickville Legal Centre.

"My artwork expresses a community that is full of knowledge, richness in culture, strength and survival. *Walking on Country for Reconciliation* is about making an ongoing commitment to move forward with unity and integrity.

It's about accepting relationships and the broader community, getting to know and understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, its true history, the importance of family, health, education and employment.

During our journey we can have a platform to voice, listen and share the stories. Most importantly in this artwork is about how you walk the talk. Involving yourself actively within community and the people. Take time to reach out to your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and gain their insight and opinions.

I believe in taking those first small steps together on Country can embed a future with positive outcomes."

Tracey Linn Bostock is a Bundjalung woman born in Brisbane, QLD in 1961. Tracey moved to Sydney with her family in 1962 and now resides in the Inner West suburb of Tempe NSW.

Tracey's journey in the arts has been embedded with family influences from grandparents, her mother Euphemia Bostock as well as her Uncles Lester and Gerry Bostock with film, theatre and a strong lineage of advocates and activists for Aboriginal rights.

Her history began with The Eora Centre for Visual and Performing Arts, Redfern in 1984 and became a member of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative in the early 90's where she has exhibited her artworks and currently continues this membership.

Tracey's works have been collected privately, nationally as well as internationally including the Australian Museum and the Volkerkunde Museum.

Tracey acknowledges her Sister Cheryl, daughter Marlee, grandson Heath and close family members for their ongoing support and encouragement.

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Acknowledgement of Country

Marrickville Legal Centre acknowledges the Gadigal, Wangal, Guringal, Wallumedegai and Cammeraygal people of the Eora Nation who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land in which we work. We acknowledge that this land holds structures of law which were practiced for thousands of generations. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

RA CEO statement

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Marrickville Legal Centre to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Marrickville Legal Centre joins a network of more than 1,100 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 will lay the foundations, priming 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 increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Marrickville Legal Centre 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 first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Marrickville Legal Centre, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.



Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Foreword from MLC Managing Principal Solicitor

Marrickville Legal Centre (MLC) acknowledges the longstanding difficulties faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in accessing justice and strive to achieve better and fairer outcomes to facilitate #JusticeForUsAll.

Since our inception in 1979, MLC has endeavoured to provide free legal advice and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Part of our Strategic Framework 2020-2022, we aim to actively contribute to the national reconciliation movement.

As part of our Reconciliation Action Plan, we are dedicated to playing a vital role in working towards recognition in Australia and in breaking down barriers to justice. MLC is committed to developing strong, effective relationships based on mutual respect and trust. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' values, beliefs and cultures need to inform the services delivered by and in partnership with MLC. This assists us in maintaining positive working relationships and the fulfilment of mutual goals and ambitions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, Marrickville Legal Centre, and other stakeholders.

Given the barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing legal assistance such as intergenerational trauma, we are excited to launch our Reflect RAP and work towards developing and strengthening connections with community so that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients may feel comfortable to seek MLC's assistance.

MLC is committed to ensuring that we are an accessible, inclusive, and safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We aim to increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural

learning. We acknowledge that we need to venture outward and build long-term relationships with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community partners to provide real and meaningful access to justice for our community. We recognise the important and crucial role of community-controlled organisations and the importance of self-determination in the provision of culturally appropriate services.

Our commitment to reconciliation is an exciting time for MLC as we aim to make real commitments to building relationships, respect, and trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This Reflect RAP demonstrates our commitment to growing connections with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and actively breaking down barriers to justice. Working alongside our community, MLC strives to continue to grow our partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the lands and nations in which we work to achieve true reconciliation and #JusticeForUsAll.



Sincerely,

Vasili Maroulis
Managing Principal Solicitor
Marrickville Legal Centre

Our business

Marrickville Legal Centre (MLC) is a not-for-profit community legal centre based in Sydney's inner-west and working across NSW. We provide holistic support to people experiencing disadvantage in our legal system through free legal and related services. Our vision is to help people achieve better and fairer outcomes, and to create access to #JusticeForUsAll.

We recognise that some members of the community experience greater barriers to justice than others. We prioritise service delivery to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples, young people, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, people with a mental illness, people with a disability, people who have experienced family violence, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The Marrickville Legal Centre board is staffed by 10 volunteer directors who guide our Centre's policies and strategic direction. Marrickville Legal Centre operates out of two inner west locations, located at 338 Illawarra Road, Marrickville and 21/142 Addison Road, Marrickville. There are approximately 30 legal, administrative and support staff employed by our Centre, who are supported year-round by a workforce of around 480 legal and administrative volunteers.

Our holistic general legal service is strengthened by specialist services:

- Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Services (Inner West and Northern Sydney area)
- Family Law Service
- Domestic Violence Support Service
- Youth Legal Service NSW
- Strata Service NSW

Marrickville Legal Centre generally offers free legal advice and assistance to the community of the inner-west, south-west, southern suburbs of Sydney. Two of Marrickville Legal Centre's specialist services provide state-wide legal assistance for vulnerable groups – Strata Service NSW for targeted vulnerable strata owner-occupiers and Youth Legal Service NSW for young people aged 25 and under.



Our RAP

Marrickville Legal Centre acknowledges the Gadigal, Wangal, Guringal, Wallumedegai and Cammeraygal people of the Eora Nation who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land in which we work. We acknowledge that the land holds structures of law which were practiced for thousands of generations and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

As part of our Strategic Framework 2020-2022, Marrickville Legal Centre seeks to actively contribute to national reconciliation movement through development and implementation of Marrickville Legal Centre Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We'll know we've achieved this when our RAP demonstrates a clear and tangible commitment to reconciliation across our Centre's relationships, respect and opportunities.

Since our inception in 1979, Marrickville Legal Centre has endeavoured to provide free legal advice and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people experiencing social or financial disadvantage. In 2021, Marrickville Legal Centre assisted 140 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, which comprised 1.97% per cent of our total client base.

We recognise that the number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients who approach our Centre for assistance is not indicative of the number of prospective Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients in our catchment who need assistance. Given the barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing legal assistance (e.g. intergenerational trauma, mistrust of the justice system, language barriers, lack of awareness¹), Marrickville Legal Centre seeks to develop and strengthen connections with community so that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients may feel comfortable to seek our Centre's assistance.

1 NACLC 2017, Connecting and Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, Organisations and Clients

In the community legal sector in NSW, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) include the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW, Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Service, and four distinct Aboriginal Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services. These Aboriginal community-controlled legal services play a significant role providing access to justice to First Nations Peoples across Australia. We recognise the crucial role of community-controlled organisations and the importance of self-determination in the provision of culturally appropriate services. In support of the work of these services, we also recognise that there will be circumstances where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will opt to attend a Community Legal Centre (CLC), either by way of referral or choice. In such circumstances, national peak body Community Legal Centres Australia (formerly NACLC) emphasise that non-community controlled services must provide a culturally appropriate services to strengthen access to justice:

"NACLC strongly believes that community-controlled organisations, such as FVPLS and ATSILS, are the most appropriate organisations to provide legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, where community controlled organisations are not able to provide assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (for example due to conflicts of interest or unavailability of services), or where clients prefer to use a non-community controlled service, CLCs often fill that gap. As a result, it is vital that CLCs are able to provide culturally safe and appropriate services."

Marrickville Legal Centre ensures:

- All staff attend annual cultural awareness training;
- Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers through its cultural safety policies and procedures;
- Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders through attendance at cultural events and involvement through identified inter-agencies;
- Strategies and targets to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients accessing our service.

Our RAP journey

In 2016, Marrickville Legal Centre established an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander working group. This working group was created in response to a new Legal Aid Service Standard template pertaining to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety and Awareness. Activities undertaken included a review of HR documents and policies for culturally inclusive language to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants. This groundwork continued in 2019, when Marrickville Legal Centre committed to establishing a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan. Difficulties during the RAP period, including staff turnover and a global pandemic, identified the need for a consistent commitment of all service teams that is responsive to changing funding environments.

As part of this work, we created our RAP Working Group:

- Vasili Maroulis, Managing Principal Solicitor
- Justin Abi-Daher, Assistant Principal Solicitor
- Maeve Redmond, Fundraising & Communications Manager
- Chris Anderson, Operations Manager
- Lucy Carroll, Solicitor
- Tu Le, Community Education Lawyer
- Codie Croasdale, Tenancy Lawyer
- Kristen Tsiamis, Solicitor
- Kayleigh Yap, Tenants' Advocate
- Brooke Ristic, Executive Assistant

Managing Principal Solicitor Vasili Maroulis is MLC's RAP Champion. This means Vasili Maroulis is responsible for championing the RAP internally to keep staff focused and motivated.

The RAP Working Group is responsible for promoting the RAP within the organisation, identifying actions that Marrickville Legal Centre can take to progress implementation of RAP goals and reporting against RAP outcomes. The group is passionate about implementing the actions identified in our plan and is proud to present our plan to the public.

We acknowledge that to make Marrickville Legal Centre accessible to First Nations Peoples, we need to venture outwards. The most important aspect of RAP implementation for a community legal service is to increase access to justice for our local First Nations communities. We intend to approach this through long-term relationship building with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community partners, starting with a chat and cup of tea. Through conversation, existing and emerging legal issues impacting First Nations communities in our catchment can be identified, enabling MLC to actively engage and assist through service delivery and appropriate referrals.

Our partnerships & current activities

Marrickville Legal Centre acknowledges the importance of developing strong, effective relationships based on mutual respect and trust. Our Centre recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' values, beliefs and cultures need to inform the services delivered by and in partnership with Marrickville Legal Centre. This will assist in the maintenance of positive working relationships, and the fulfilment of future goals and ambitions of Marrickville Legal Centre, the community and other stakeholders.

Marrickville Legal Centre has a long record of participation in inner west NAIDOC week events and other community events. Our Centre consistently seeks opportunities to promote our services and network with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Sydney's inner west, south and southwest through our community partnerships. Recent examples include community stalls at Yabun Festival at Victoria Park conjointly with fellow community legal centres, and COVID-safe virtual staff events for National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week.

In 2021 Aboriginal community-led justice services organisation Deadly Connections joined Marrickville Legal Centre at its Dulwich Hill office in a colocation collaboration between January and September. The co-location offered an opportunity for our two organisations to work more closely and actively towards holistic community legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, increasing access to justice through warm referrals and program collaboration.

Through ongoing partnership with Deadly Connections, Aboriginal Tenants Advice and Advocacy Services, Wurringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre, and other local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations relevant to the community we serve; we will continue to build on our knowledge, commitment to and support for our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and enhance our learning, awareness of and respect for the histories, traditions and practices of First Nations peoples.





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. - Service leads to develop a centrally located online directory.	August 2022	Fundraising & Communications Manager
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	August 2022	Fundraising & Communications Manager
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2023	Fundraising & Communications Manager
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May-3 June 2023	Fundraising & Communications Manager
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May-3 June 2023	Fundraising & Communications Manager
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	September 2022	Managing Principal Solicitor
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	September 2022	Fundraising & Communications Manager
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	September 2022	Managing Principal Solicitor
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	April 2023	Assistant Principal Solicitor
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	April 2023	Assistant Principal Solicitor



Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights within our organisation.	April 2023	Fundraising & Communications Manager
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	April 2023	Fundraising & Communications Manager
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.	August 2022	DV Worker
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	August 2022	Fundraising & Communications Manager
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 2023	Senior Tenants' Advocate
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	First week in July 2023	Senior Tenants' Advocate
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2023	Senior Tenants' Advocate



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.	February 2023	Managing Principal Solicitor
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	February 2023	Managing Principal Solicitor
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.	November 2022	Fundraising & Communications Manager
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	November 2022	Fundraising & Communications Manager



Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	July 2022	Fundraising & Communications Manager
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	July 2022	Fundraising & Communications Manager
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	December 2022	Managing Principal Solicitor
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2022	Operations Manager
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	August 2022	Managing Principal Solicitor
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	August 2022	Operations 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.	30 September 2022	Managing Principal Solicitor
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	April 2023	Fundraising & Communications Manager

MARRICKVILLE LEGAL CENTRE

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**Marrickville
Legal Centre**
From the inner west,
serving NSW

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