



Believing In  
Children,  
Young People,  
Families &  
Their Future.

## Berry Street's

# Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan Report

*July 2021*



Berry Street acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, skies and waterways across Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge Elders as the holders and protectors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. We pay respect to emerging Elders to come and support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in our care to connect to their countries, cultures and communities.

## Reconciliation Action Plan celebrations

To recognise Berry Street's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) we hosted six celebrations across office locations throughout February, March and April this year. For each event we liaised with the local Aboriginal Land Council and were privileged to have the Traditional Custodians of the lands open the events with a Welcome to Country. In attendance, we had many staff participate across the state, and warmly extended an invitation to staff employed by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in the areas in which we operate.

During this momentous occasion, members of our Board, Executive Leadership Team and the Senior Manager, Aboriginal Service Development delivered speeches that reflected key themes of our RAP and discussed projects that align with our vision for reconciliation.

Themes include:

- Truth-telling, as an organisation and country
- Cultural Safety
- Cultural Connection for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service users
- Aboriginal voice being heard, valued, respected and influential
- Celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

In addition to hearing from our leaders, we held break out rooms for staff to get to know each other by introducing themselves, who their mob was and what Traditional Country they were on. This also provided a space for staff to discuss how they can support reconciliation as an organisation and country.

Overall the energy was very positive, here's what several attendees had to say following the celebration of this significant reconciliation milestone.

"Momentous! A historic day!"

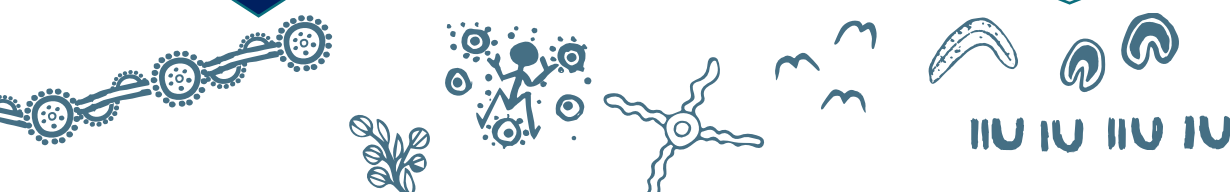
"Amazing sentiments, strong from the get-go, particularly from our CEO, verbally admitting historical compliance in past policies"

"Proud of the organisation. It has improved a lot. Changing past ways and honouring truth-telling."

"Really good vibe on the receiving end"

"What a powerful acceptance and ownership Berry Street are taking. Was wonderful to hear this."

"Breakout room I was in was very enthusiastic and they were excited."



## Our Reconciliation Progress

Berry Street is deeply committed to reconciliation, 365 days a year. This includes being honest about our shared histories, acknowledging historical injustice, while actively addressing the current injustice experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We believe in justice and equity for all.

Currently, Berry Street is in the implementation phase of the organisation's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan. During this time, we are undertaking authentic reflection and review of current practice, systems and relationships to develop meaningful understanding of how we support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and service users.

## Key Projects

### Revising the Apology



To reflect our commitment to truth-telling, our board is in the process of revising the 2016 Apology with a reconciliation lens. This revised document will ensure Berry Street takes responsibility for being complicit in the '1869 Aborigines Protection Act' that forcibly removed Aboriginal children from their families and communities.

In addition to this, we are working alongside our partners at Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) to ensure the document has oversight by survivors of the Stolen Generations.

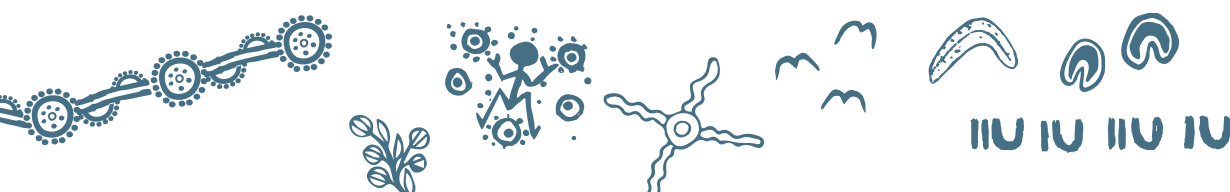
The revised Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will be released in the coming months.

To heal as an organisation, we will ensure we are honest about this sad chapter and are committed to learning from our mistakes. Berry Street has learned that connection to cultures, countries and communities instils pride, sense of self, belonging, protective factors and healing for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples we service.

### Cultural Safety

Berry Street is committed to providing an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. We know that cultural safety is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together.

To embed cultural safety across the organisation and through the services we provide, we have spent time reviewing our policies and procedures through a reconciliation lens. This included review of the code of conduct, supervision policy, reporting maltreatment policy, case management manual, foster care manual, child safety policy, workplace investigations, disciplinary



procedure, flexible working arrangements procedure and the parental leave procedure.

Next, we will update staff recruitment and selection, orientation, training and professional development, critical incident response and exiting procedures when leaving Berry Street, through the lens of cultural safety and cultural load.

In addition to this, Berry Street is proud to announce the development of an organisational Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group. This will be led by the Senior Manager of Aboriginal Service Development and is open only to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff. We look forward to updating you on this in future.

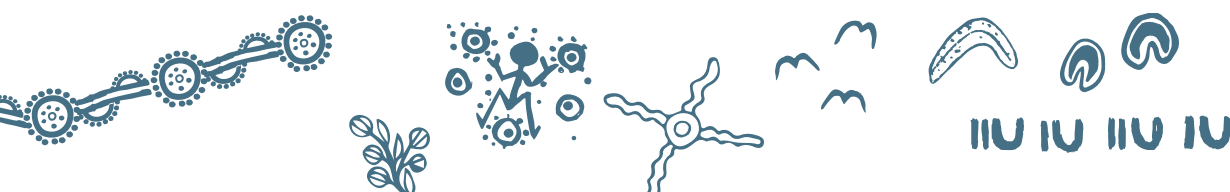
## Cultural Support Plan Project

Outlined in Berry Street's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is our commitment to connecting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young peoples to their cultures, countries and communities.

To support this commitment, we have a dedicated Cultural Support Plan (CSP) project. The purpose of this project is to gather information regarding compliance and to explore potential barriers that may impact putting key actions into practice. For example, staff's capacity to support, develop and implement CSPs. In addition to this, we will explore and identify systematic approaches to reducing cultural harm, utilising an evidenced-based methodology to support key recommendations to improve practice. Our aim is to provide the best service we can, supporting an environment that is culturally safe, where pride in identity flourishes. This includes every Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child and young person in our care, having a Cultural Support Plan.



Currently, Berry Street supports 205 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Throughout the CSP project, a total of 263 files will be reviewed to explore cultural connection for service users who access multiple programs. To date, we have reviewed over 200 files. We anticipate this project will be completed in August and will present the findings to the Executive Leadership Team and Board Quality and Risk Subcommittee in September.





## Aboriginal procurement

In support of self-determination, and respect for the longest living continuous culture in the world, Berry Street is now a member of Supply Nation. In addition to this, we have included guidelines for seeking quotes from Aboriginal businesses (where possible) in our procurement processes which are outlined in the draft Procurement Policy. This initiative cements our organisational commitment to reconciliation in the commercial space.



## Celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures

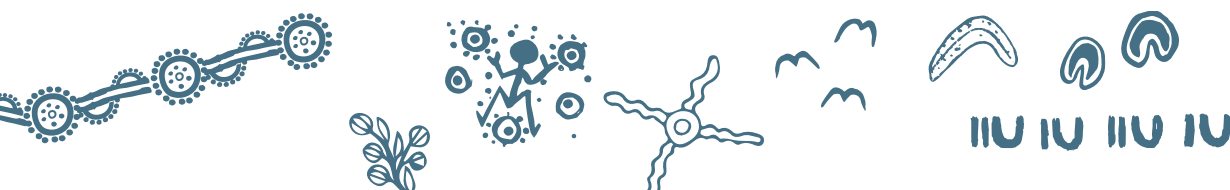
### 'Reconciliation in Action' at the Morwell Campus, Gunai/Kurnai Country

To recognise this year's Reconciliation Week theme "More than just a word- Reconciliation Takes Action", the Berry Street School committed to **'Learning Our Truth'** as their action. Tyrell Dalton (pictured on the right), a member of our Berry Street School, represented his Aboriginal Community by painting the Aboriginal flag on the faces of students and staff. In addition to this, students participated in an activity that included creating a reconciliation painting for their school located on Gunai/Kurnai Country. They did this while listening to Paul Kelly and Ziggy Ramo's *'From Little Things Big Things Grow'* and watching a section from the film *'In My Blood It Runs'*.



### NAIDOC WEEK

Berry Street recognises all significant dates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This year, we strongly encouraged staff to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people to connect to their country/countries. We acknowledged that healing country included returning children to country. For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children who were unable to return to country due to COVID, we provided staff with a range of online events to support cultural connection.





To celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures amongst our staffing group, we encouraged our teams to attend community-led events to celebrate the great strength and resilience of the longest living continuous culture in the world. We recognised that it is crucial for the wider population to engage in cultural opportunities to listen and learn from the Traditional Custodians of the land, whom we are privileged to live and work alongside.

In addition to this, we uploaded cultural resources to the Aboriginal Service Development WIKI hub. This included podcasts, documentaries, books, radio stations with cultural content, movies, cooking lessons, social media pages to follow and Aboriginal businesses to support.

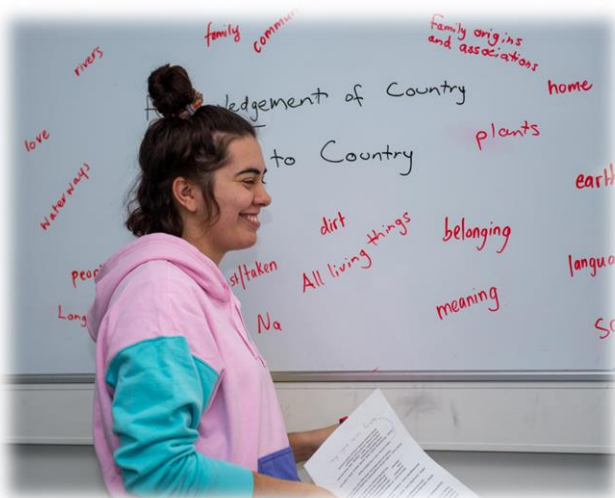
## Reconciliation at the Berry Street School

### The Narragunnawali Program

Last year, the Berry Street School registered for Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali Reconciliation Action Plan Program. This demonstrated the School's deep commitment to embedding a culture of reconciliation in the classroom, playground and in the community. Following registration, the Berry Street School's RAP committee was formed to ensure equal representation of schooling staff across the state. The RAP committee is co-chaired by the Principal, Joanne Alford, and Sarah Dawson, Senior Manager of Aboriginal Service Development.

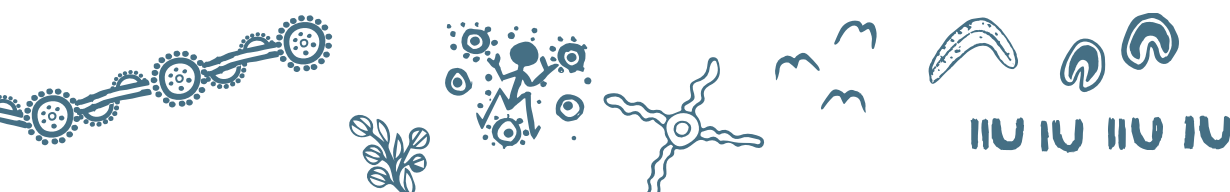


The RAP committee meet regularly to discuss Berry Street School's vision, vision actions and commitments throughout their first RAP. Currently, the Berry Street School has submitted their first draft Narragunnawali RAP to Reconciliation Australia and is awaiting feedback. We anticipate a launch later in the year.



While we are engaging in Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali RAP program, the Berry Street School is committed to including curriculum recommendations outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework.

**'The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority** provides opportunities for all students to deepen their knowledge of Australia by learning about the world's oldest continuous living cultures. Through the Australian Curriculum, students learn that contemporary First Nations Australian communities are strong, resilient, rich and diverse.'



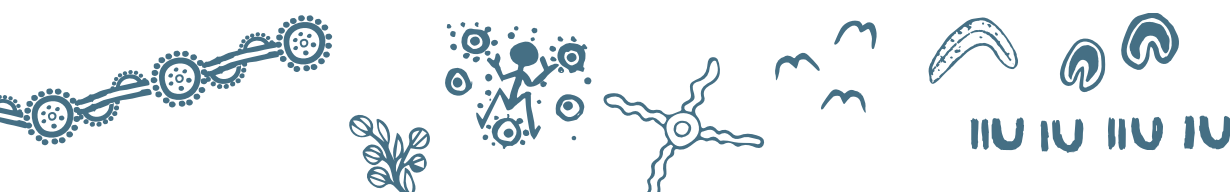
Hollie Johnson (pictured), led an educational activity from the framework regarding Traditional Country and place. Hollie unpacked the meaning behind an Acknowledgment of Country and a Welcome to Country, sharing her language “Wunman njinde” (culture is life in Gunai/Kurnai language), while providing opportunity for young people to create their own under her guidance. We thank Hollie for sharing her culture with students and for her continued reconciliation work throughout the semester.



## Upcoming projects

Project	Responsible
Review our agreements with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations	CEO
Truth telling- ensure Berry Street’s history is accurately represented in staff orientation and within our heritage services	Organisational Effectiveness and People & Culture
Establish an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Working Group	Organisational Effectiveness
Understanding the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employee life cycle	Organisational Effectiveness and People & Culture
Review training and explore cultural education opportunities, with a focus on culturally safe practice	Organisational Effectiveness and People & Culture

*Berry Street will be transparent throughout our reconciliation journey and recognise that Aboriginal leadership is critical to our success. We are deeply committed to reconciliation and will strive to provide a service where reconciliation lives in the hearts, minds and actions of all teams.*





*For further information regarding our Reconciliation Action Plan, please contact Sarah Dawson, Senior Manager, Aboriginal Service Development.*

Thank you,

Michael Perusco

CEO- Berry Street

