



**RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN**

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**REFLECT**



**Cairnmillar**  
INSTITUTE

# **REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN (RAP)**

The Cairnmillar Institute (CMI)

June 2025 to October 2026

# Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia

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Reconciliation Australia welcomes The Cairnmillar Institute to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Cairnmillar Institute joins a network of more than 3,000 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 The Cairnmillar Institute 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 Cairnmillar Institute, 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



# Introduction

At the Cairnmillar Institute (“Cairnmillar”), reconciliation is not just an ideal but a lived commitment that we pursue across all facets of our work in mental health and education. Since its founding in 1961 by Professor Emeritus Dr Francis Macnab, Cairnmillar has held a steadfast vision of providing accessible, compassionate mental health services for all. Our dedication to inclusivity, diversity, and cultural sensitivity is fundamental to our mission and drives us to make meaningful contributions to reconciliation in Australia.

Our journey with reconciliation began with our recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enduring connections to lands and waters (which have not been ceded), communities, cultures, and customs. As a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity, we have integrated this respect into our work in psychology, counselling, research, and training. With campuses and clinics across Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong Country and a strong network of telehealth services, we strive to make mental health support accessible and culturally relevant to Australians everywhere, including in remote areas and, recently, through outreach programs in Papua New Guinea.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) reflects our commitment to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and contribute to a future where mental health services are not only accessible but affirming of cultural strengths and histories. Our RAP aligns with our core values of trusted partnerships, compassionate engagement, inclusivity, evidence-driven practice, and creative problem-solving, aiming to create pathways for self-determination, respect, and healing. This approach extends to our education programs, which prepare the next generation of mental health professionals to understand and respect the diverse needs of all communities, with specific attention to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspectives. These programs involve guidance from the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (led by Bardi woman Professor Pat Dudgeon), and our Cairnmillar Aboriginal Scholar (Darumbal woman Fairlie Morgan). To further strengthen these efforts, broader consultation may occur on an as-needed or as-directed basis, supporting our goal of deepening meaningful, community-based relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As we continue our reconciliation journey, we aim to foster strong, respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. Through our RAP, we seek to embed reconciliation into the heart of our institution, supporting initiatives that promote cultural awareness, eliminate barriers, and create a culturally safe environment for both our staff and the communities we serve. Our vision is to be a leader in mental health education and care, setting a benchmark in cultural sensitivity and inclusivity that resonates across Australia.



# Our Vision for Reconciliation

Cairnmillar's vision for reconciliation is one where mental health care is accessible, inclusive, and interwoven with respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. We are committed to fostering genuine partnerships that bring about social, cultural, and mental health improvements. As a leading institution in psychology and counselling, we aim to set a standard for reconciliation in the mental health sector, embedding a culture of respect across all our programs and services. Our RAP serves as a foundation, guiding us toward a future where the values, knowledge, and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are celebrated and honoured, contributing to a stronger, healthier, and more inclusive Australia.



**Ash Thomas Yorta Yorta/Wiradjuri people *There's a Lot Goin' On*, 2025**

*Sometimes in life there's lots of things goin' on that can be hard and trying, or easy and happy, but my artwork gives me strength to see out the bad times. This is my Country before colonisation. The lines are like a map representing how our people shaped the Country with their spiritual connections told in songs and stories. The blue water and the red oxide land show my journey line with places I've stopped along the way. The small linear patches of dots are all the different mobs and families around Country. The brown patterns and shapes are mountain ridges and waterholes representing time past. The diamond patterns are from patterns on our old shields. Their colours represent connection to culture and the red dirt and many coloured sands that make up our beautiful Country. The group of Elders sitting with their spears are telling stories of Bunjil the eagle, our Creator, and passing down their knowledge of tracking and hunting. The goannas are my Ancestors watching, mesmerised, over their Country and culture.*



This artwork was created through The Torch, a not for-profit organisation that provides art, cultural and arts industry support to First Nations people currently in, or recently released, from Victorian prisons.



# Our Business

The Cairnmillar Institute is one of Australia's leading centres for psychology and counselling services and an industry leader in psychology education and training. Founded in 1961, the Cairnmillar Institute pioneered counselling and psychotherapy in Australia.

Cairnmillar has developed a unique mental health model – the 'Triple Helix' – whereby our three pillars of training, research, and clinical practice are integrated through all of our programs and services, with each pillar reinforcing and informing the other two, therefore strengthening and building our expertise in mental health.

As a registered higher education and accredited Vocational Educational and Training (VET) provider, we are focused on providing mental health training through a range of courses spanning from micro-credentials and short courses to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (Bachelor of Psychology & Counselling through to Doctor of Psychology (Clinical Psychology)). Our programs equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to make a meaningful impact in their communities. Our short courses and community programs are designed by industry experts and taught by experienced practitioners. Our courses are delivered face to face at Hawthorn East and virtually.

For more than 60 years, Cairnmillar has been at the forefront of clinical psychology and psychotherapy services with a strong reputation for clinical excellence and community engagement. Our clinical and 'translational' research focuses on taking basic psychological theory and empirical findings and turning them into evaluated and applied outcomes that benefit the community. Our clinics operate out of Dandenong, Hawthorn East, North Melbourne, and Melbourne CBD (Naarm), all of which are located on the Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People.

As a not-for-profit organisation and a registered health promotion charity, we seek to leverage our expertise and deliver real benefits to the communities we serve beyond our classrooms and clinics. We travel across Australia, and internationally to conduct short courses, community programs, and School Principal Supervision. We offer our clinic services via Virtual Care (telehealth) to ensure that individuals across the nation can access mental health support. We travel Victoria-wide, and more recently, to Papua New Guinea, to conduct short courses, community programs and School Principal supervision. One hundred per cent of all donations are directed to Cairnmillar's no cost counselling services.

Cairnmillar currently employs 94 permanent staff (including one First Nations staff member), 28 casual staff, and around 20 volunteers. The work of our dedicated staff along with our partnerships in the community, including collaborations with Latrobe Community Health Service, Queensland Health, Bendigo Kangan Institute, and various schools, exemplify our commitment to providing comprehensive mental health services and fostering a more compassionate, inclusive society. At Cairnmillar, we constantly work towards a future where Better Mental Health™ services are not only accessible but also culturally sensitive and responsive to the unique needs of all Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



# Our RAP

An effective RAP is crucial for actualising meaningful reconciliation involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In committing to a RAP, we recognise our role in advancing reconciliation by supporting and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, grounded in the pillars of Relationships, Respect, and Opportunities. These guide us in promoting mental health equity through clinics, research, and education, acknowledging that “when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a genuine say in the design and delivery of policies, programs, and services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved.” Our dedication is embedded at the highest levels of leadership, with our CEO and Provost, Professor Kathryn von Treuer, serving as the Chair of our RAP Working Group. We are also a member of the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project in our commitment to decolonising our curriculum to increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the mental health workforce.



*Our RAP Working Group includes leaders and members from key departments:*

- *CEO and Provost*
- *Cairnmillar Aboriginal Scholar*
- *General Manager*
- *Director of Finance*
- *Marketing Coordinator*
- *Senior Librarian*
- *Executive Assistant to the CEO*
- *Representatives from the Cairnmillar Clinic, Faculty of Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy (the Faculty), and the Professional Development and Short Courses team.*
- *RAP Champion as voted by RAP working group (currently the Curriculum Decolonisation Working Group Lead Chair)*



The group includes the Lead Chair from our Curriculum Decolonisation Working Group, aiming to embed reconciliation within our practices.

We have also hired Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation for our RAP workgroup (Cairnmillar Aboriginal Scholar), and maintaining such representation remains a key priority to ensure this approach is well-rounded and authentic. Our aim is to have an ongoing relationship with and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on our RAP Working Group to enable the development and implementation of our RAP.

Our approach to implementing our RAP will involve building meaningful, long-lasting partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We will be guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on matters of direct relevance to them, following the principle of “Nothing about us, without us.” We plan to engage with other organisations that have established RAPs for mentorship while also aiming to mentor other organisations in the future. Our goal is to be a leader in reconciliation within the mental health and education sectors.

Practically, we will engage our staff, volunteers, and students through internal activities, cultural awareness modules, and events led by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. Additionally, we will use our social media and communication platforms to promote cultural awareness and advocacy for issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will continue to facilitate professional development opportunities for our staff and students, such as compulsory cultural awareness modules and participation in relevant events hosted by organisations like Koorie Heritage Trust.

Our reconciliation journey, though in its early stages, has already made significant progress. In addition to being a member of the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project to decolonise our curriculum, we also aim to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge about mental health—such as social and emotional wellbeing—is incorporated into our programs, creating a more culturally aware workforce.

We have organised events led by local Aboriginal community members, such as Welcome to Country ceremonies at key events, and we provide ceremonial leave for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Through partnerships like Your Mob Learning, we offer compulsory cultural awareness modules for new staff and students. Our staff also attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-related professional development opportunities. We have publicly supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues such as the Voice, Indigenous Literacy Day, Reconciliation Week, and NAIDOC Week. Furthermore, we have undertaken procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led and operated businesses including Welcome to Country ([www.welcometocountry.com](http://www.welcometocountry.com)) and Your Mob Learning, ensuring that our supply chain also contributes to our reconciliation goals.

In the future, we aim to engage more meaningfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about the opportunities to access our services across education, research, and treatment. We are committed to ensuring that our reconciliation journey is ongoing, meaningful, and impactful.



# Our partnerships/ current activities

Our reconciliation journey at Cairnmillar has evolved through steady, impactful actions to honour and amplify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and cultures. This journey began with fundamental commitments, like becoming a member of Supply Nation to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led businesses and embedding cultural competencies in our programs. Over time, we've built partnerships and supported initiatives that cultivate a culturally safe environment for students, staff, and the communities we serve.

In 2018, we deepened our dedication to cultural safety by hosting a colloquium led by an Aboriginal psychologist, which encouraged staff and students to reflect on the importance of this approach within mental health services. Around the same time, we began including Welcome to Country ceremonies in our graduation events, ensuring that each gathering is grounded in respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Our internal initiatives grew in 2019 with the introduction of an Acknowledgement of Country displayed in our foyer, a visible reminder of our commitment to reconciliation. By 2020, cultural awareness training became mandatory for staff, marking a critical shift toward organization-wide competency in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, supported by ongoing professional development opportunities and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainers and educators.

In 2021, our focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities extended to literacy initiatives, further enhanced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander merchandise at events to celebrate and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Decolonising our curriculum became a priority in 2022, formally integrated into our Inclusivity and Diversity Advisory group, which has guided the institution in fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

The following year, 2023, marked our 60th anniversary—a celebration that commenced with a Welcome to Country, setting a respectful tone for the occasion. Our ongoing commitment to learning also saw us seek out Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander psychologists for teaching opportunities, expanding the knowledge shared within our programs and continuing the journey of meaningful engagement and reconciliation.

Through each of these milestones, we have strengthened our understanding and commitment to reconciliation, consistently working to create an environment that supports and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, perspectives, and contributions.



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.	May 1, 2025	RAP Champion
	· Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	May 1, 2025	RAP Champion
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	· Circulate Reconciliation Australia’s NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff and students	May 2025 and 2026	Marketing Coordinator
	· RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June, 2025 and 2026	RAP Chair
	· Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May- 3 June, 2025 and 2026	RAP Champion (lead)/ Marketing Coordinator (support)
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	· Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff and students	June 2025 December 2025	RAP Chair
	· Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	May 1, 2025	RAP Chair (lead), RAP Champion (support) General Manager (support)
	· Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	May 1, 2025	RAP Champion
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	· Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	Oct 1, 2025	General Manager
	· Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	Oct 1, 2025	General Manager



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.	Dec 1, 2025	CEO
	· Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Dec 1, 2025	General Manager (lead)/ Dean (support)/ Director of Clinical Services (support)
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.	May 1, 2025	RAP Champion
	· Increase staff’s understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	May 1, 2025	General Manager (lead)/ RAP Champion (support)
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 2025 and 2026	RAP Chair (lead)/ Marketing Coordinator (support)
	· Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2025 and 2026	RAP Chair (lead)/ Marketing (support)
	· RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2025 and 2026	CEO (lead)/ Marketing (support)




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.	Jul 1, 2026	CEO (lead)/ General Manager (support)
	· Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	Jul 1, 2026	General Manager
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.	Aug 1, 2025	Director of Finance
	· Investigate Supply Nation membership.	Aug 1, 2025	Director of Finance



Governance			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	· Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	May 1, 2025	RAP Chair
	· Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	May 1, 2025	RAP Chair
	· Establish and maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Jan 1, 2026	RAP Chair
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	· Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Jun 1, 2025	RAP Chair & Director of Finance
	· Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	May 1, 2025	CEO
	· Appoint and maintain RAP champion	May 1, 2025	RAP Chair
	· Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	May 1, 2025	RAP Chair (lead) & Director of Finance (support)
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	· 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.	June 2025 and annually	RAP Chair
	· Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August annually	RAP Chair
	· Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September annually	RAP Chair
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next	· Register via Reconciliation Australia's <a href="#">website</a> to begin developing our next RAP.	Jul 31, 2026	RAP Chair



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 [www.cairnmillar.org.au](http://www.cairnmillar.org.au)

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