

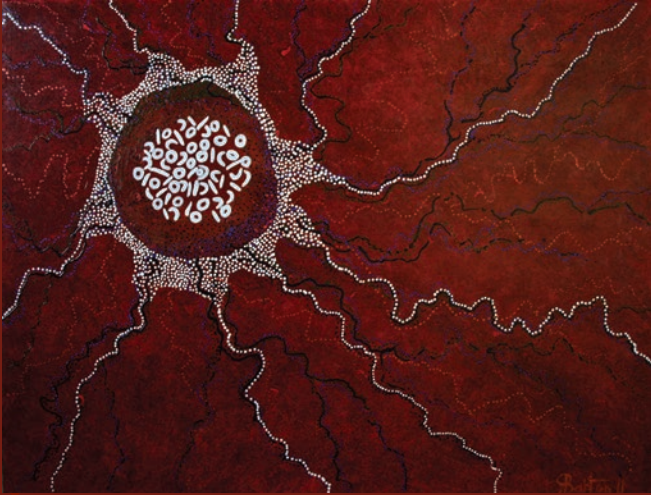


Reconciliation Action Plan review

Our first 12 months

2012 - 2013

Acknowledgement



'We Walk Together' by Robert Barton, was commissioned by UnitingCare Queensland to celebrate the launch of our Reconciliation Action Plan. It details the many different paths that have been taken on UnitingCare Queensland's reconciliation journey. The dotted features of blue, green and white lines contrasted against the deep red ochre background symbolises the complex weave of people, stories and histories coming together through the shared vision of reconciliation.



Message from UnitingCare Queensland CEO, Anne Cross

It is with the greatest of pleasure that I write these words as we mark the completion of the first year of our Reconciliation Action Plan. I would like to congratulate the members of the Advisory Group on Reconciliation for their contribution to achieving the goals we had set ourselves a year ago when we launched the Reconciliation Action Plan at kuril dhagun in the State Library in Brisbane.

To see our RAP brought to life through their commitment, determination and hard work and through the work of our UnitingCare Indigenous Advisory group and many other individuals in our service groups is immensely gratifying. Through their efforts we see our good intentions turn into actions.

The feedback I have received from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants during the development of the RAP, which started two years ago when we publically committed to our intention to develop a reconciliation action plan, is that the process has been a time of healing and sharing. I genuinely believe that there has been a deepening of our relationships and that we have developed a better understanding of, and increased respect for, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues, their history and their culture.

Quite apart from achieving the tasks we set out to complete through our RAP, there have been other outcomes, perhaps less tangible but nevertheless, genuine. From my observations and those of others with whom I have spoken, the RAP process to date has also been a time of maturing, of changing of attitudes and of an increased application of our values – Compassion, Respect, Justice, Working Together and Leading through Learning.

One of the ways that this has been exemplified is the consultation process during the workforce planning

process for the new St Stephen's Hospital in Hervey Bay – a great example of "Working Together". Norelle Watson, a Blue Care Indigenous Workplace Advisor has played a key role in this process through the drafting of an Indigenous Workforce Plan which will be incorporated into the St Stephen's eHealth Workforce Plan. The community engagement approach to the new hospital project has meant that meeting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders has been a key priority - one that Norelle has facilitated.

Another expression of our commitment to reconciliation was recently demonstrated through the work that Blue Care did to support the transition of aged care and drug and alcohol services in far north Queensland. This has considerably increased our capacity to provide culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and we welcome close to 140 new staff, the majority of whom are Indigenous, to the UnitingCare Queensland service network.

Reconciliation has been important to UnitingCare Queensland for some years but the RAP process has crystallised what we need to do now, and in the future, to continue to build respectful and honest relationships.

Together we have started the journey and I look forward to the next stage with optimism. Clearly there is still a long way to go but we have every reason to believe that the steps we have taken, and those we will continue to take, will result in a shared and more equitable future.

Thanks again to all of you who have contributed to that vision of the future and who have opened their hearts to embrace this opportunity.

Anne Cross
CEO



Thoughts on Reconciliation – how far have we come?

David Conlon

Indigenous Workplace
Advisor, Blue Care,
UnitingCare Queensland
and UnitingCare Health



"The launch of the RAP was a crucial step for UnitingCare Queensland in its quest to provide culturally legitimate services. Over the past year I have noticed signs of a stronger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce that has representation across most levels of the organisation. The participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees on the Advisory Group on Reconciliation has been valued by the Executive and Board. It is also noticeable that our service groups have an enhanced commitment to increase employment opportunities and improve access to services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Our hospitals, residential and community services are actively engaging with Elders and community members to increase knowledge and understanding of important historical information. I look forward to continue "Working Together" to ensure we demonstrate reconciliation in action across our organisation."

Our first 12 months

The UnitingCare Reconciliation Action Plan was launched in February 2012 and the milestones contained in the Plan are due to be completed at the end of two years. Together we have completed all the tasks as scheduled and are on track to conclude all elements by the end of 2013.

Our RAP focusses on ensuring that relationships, respect and opportunities are demonstrated across a number of focus areas. This document outlines some of our achievements.



Relationships

Healthy relationships in UnitingCare Queensland between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other people are vital and essential to reconciliation. Relationships that thrive within the organisation and through the work of all UnitingCare service groups demonstrate respect, trust, connection and practical understanding of how people work together (RAP Plan 2012/2013).

Our achievements

Advisory Group on Reconciliation

We have established an Advisory Group on Reconciliation (AGR) that drives and monitors the actions that we have committed to achieve in the period covered by our RAP. The group chaired by Anna Moynihan, Director of Strategy, includes five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across our service groups plus a member of the Calvary Presbytery, Uniting Church (which represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander congregations in Queensland) and a representative from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Services Coalition. Other members include the UnitingCare Health Director of Mission and senior staff members in Marketing, HR and Training from across our organisation.

Dedicated support to facilitate connections/networking

The AGR meets a minimum of three times a year (more than the target twice a year) and has been successful in achieving a number of key actions including a dedicated support at UnitingCare Queensland Group Office to facilitate connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff (David Conlon) and developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander network within service groups.

Supporting staff to celebrate NAIDOC week

A NAIDOC week sub committee has been set up with representatives from each of the service groups to coordinate a joint stall at the Musgrave Park celebrations and to organise a special event for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues from each of our service groups to help celebrate NAIDOC week.

Thoughts on Reconciliation – how far have we come?



Adriana Leonardi

Director of Support Services
Sunshine Coast Private
Hospital

"I believe that a greater level of respect and understanding has been developed since the launch of the RAP. From the perspective of The Sunshine Coast Private Hospital, I am happy to say that we have made several practical contributions to building stronger relationships including cultural awareness training for all departmental heads and the inclusion of Welcome to Country at all major events. We had a Welcome and Smoking Ceremony at the recent opening of our new Mental Health Service which has been named "Cooinda" - the local Aboriginal name for "Happy Place".

We also participated in the first joint stall at Musgrave Park NAIDOC celebrations last year and are actively seeking employment opportunities for members of our local Indigenous community."

Thoughts on Reconciliation – how far have we come?

Anna Moynihan

Director, Strategy,
UnitingCare Queensland;
Chair Advisory Group on
Reconciliation



"It's been a real privilege to chair the Advisory Group on Reconciliation (AGR) over the last twelve months and to see the progress that we have made so far. I've enjoyed the energy, goodwill and expertise in the group that has meant we've been able to deliver on our first year commitments. We've introduced protocols and guidelines that have been taken up across our diverse organisation, adopted a capability checklist developed by UnitingCare Community, and also agreed to tap into Indigenous expertise in Blue Care so UnitingCare Health and Group Office can share some human resources. We're underway with our second year and I'm looking forward to working with the AGR to drive this important commitment".

Relationships in Action

For the first time, UnitingCare Queensland Group Office and service groups took a joint stand last year at the NAIDOC celebrations in Musgrave Park. As well as having plenty of merchandise to give away and information to pass on, we had an Elders rest area with comfy sofas and tea making facilities where people could rest and have a yarn. There was also a colouring competition for children and our RAP film for visitors to watch.



Respect

Demonstrating listening and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their beliefs and values through a commitment to self determination and knowledge of culture, language and history that will lead to genuine understandings and relationships within UnitingCare Queensland (RAP Plan 2012/2013).

Our achievements

Cultural awareness training

Executives and managers from Blue Care and UnitingCare Health have participated in cultural awareness training this year – some for the first time. This has been a positive move towards improving their knowledge of the cultural traditions and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The training has been provided by Corporate Culcha, an Indigenous owned and operated company which was established to support Indigenous organisations, business and Australian industry, in building and developing sustainable Indigenous workforces.

In addition, the AGR has developed a cultural training package – a PowerPoint presentation which is now being used for all new employees as part of their induction process. In addition, a workshop for staff across the organisation which is to be run by a trained cultural facilitator, is in development.

Visits to Country

There have also been a number of group visits to Country including a visit by the Executive Leadership team (ELT) to North Stradbroke Island when Minjerribah Moorgumpin Elder, Aunty Margaret Iselin, shared her cultural knowledge and history of her people. Other teams from UnitingCare Community, UnitingCare Health and Group Office have visited the Ration Shed museum at the former mission in Cherbourg. Blue Care and UnitingCare Health executives have also been to Riverlife Mirrabooka at Kangaroo Point where they shared in the rich Aboriginal culture presented by the Yuggera Elders.

Thoughts on Reconciliation – how far have we come?



Norelle Watson

Indigenous Workplace
Advisor, Blue Care

“UnitingCare Queensland’s Reconciliation Action Plan has created multi-dimensional opportunities to take our organisation and our community to a place of true Reconciliation. As an Aboriginal woman, mother and grandmother, I am passionate about self-determination, social justice, and equal opportunity for my people and all Australians. Our RAP has created an opportunity for me to broaden my scope of work within Blue Care to work with UnitingCare Health towards the provision of mechanisms for long term sustainable employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the soon to be completed St Stephen’s Hospital, Hervey Bay. Lessons we learn on this journey will help us to develop and refine future projects and build upon the RAP objectives. Our RAP is creating a path less travelled which is more challenging, productive and rewarding in terms of closing the socio-economic gap for my people.”

Thoughts on Reconciliation – how far have we come?

Susan Cook

Senior Practitioner -
Financial Counsellor,
UnitingCare Community



"It was an honour to be part of the team that initially put together the Reconciliation Action Plan with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other staff from UnitingCare Queensland and then to be nominated to help drive and monitor the actions arising from the plan. As an Aboriginal woman, the challenge to support UnitingCare Queensland to implement the actions from the plan has so far been rewarding with staff embracing the cultural awareness training and Welcome to Country. Closing the Gap with Elders from the Gumba Gumba Elders Group and the children and staff from Boopa Werem Kindergarten was a highlight for us this year. I am looking forward to the next steps in our journey together towards reconciliation."

Adoption of cultural protocols

After consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community leaders, we have developed and introduced an official policy for Acknowledgement/Welcome to Country ceremonies. This means that Elders from traditional owner groups are invited to perform Welcome to Country ceremonies at all our public celebrations and events e.g. openings, anniversary celebrations etc. This includes the adoption of making an Acknowledgement at all staff meetings at every level. Recent examples include a Welcome and Smoking Ceremony at the opening of the new Mental Health Unit at The Sunshine Coast Private Hospital and the Welcome to Country at the opening of Blue Care's refurbished Mareeba Garden Settlement performed by Senior Elder Mervin Riley of the Koko Muluridji People.

A copy of our Welcome to Country/Cultural Protocols document is available on each service group Intranet and on the UnitingCare Queensland Intranet.

Cultural Capability Checklist

A Cultural Capability Checklist has been developed to assist our services and work sites to welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and be responsive to their needs. The application of the checklist across all work sites which covers a range of categories from a service's working environment, right through to how we train our staff, is an important contribution to our RAP. It will assist our staff and volunteers to determine how 'culturally capable' their service or work site is and if necessary, to implement an improvement strategy as part of an ongoing journey to build relationships that are underpinned by knowledge, respect and trust.

Respect in Action

UnitingCare Queensland visitors to the Ration Shed museum at Cherbourg have been profoundly moved by the experience. Among other things, they learned that from around 1901, Aboriginal people from throughout Queensland were forcibly removed to Cherbourg where they were required to live and where they had every aspect of their lives controlled by the government administration. Children were placed in dormitories and were rarely allowed to see their parents and the residents were severely punished if they tried to leave the settlement. David Conlon, Indigenous Advisor shared the story that his grandmother actually managed to escape from Cherbourg at the age of 16.



Opportunities

Our collective communities will benefit from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce that comprises people who are respected and supported to reach their potential. This is achieved by UnitingCare Queensland committing to improving work opportunities and the work environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to fully participate within a culturally appropriate workplace. (RAP Plan 2012/2013).

Our achievements

Workforce

Increased efforts have been made to attract and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and to develop and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture within the workforce. Currently 2.3 per cent of UnitingCare Queensland staff are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which is just below the proportion of Indigenous people in the Australian population – 2.5 per cent – but which compares less favourably to the Queensland average of 3.6 per cent.

Traineeships

87 traineeships were provided across UnitingCare Community and Blue Care this year. Traineeship roles include Youth Workers, Disability Support Workers, Case Workers and a small number of Supervisor/Team Leader positions. Blue Care's traineeships range from Certificate II to Associate Diploma levels in diverse areas including office administration, aged care, disability care, maintenance and hospitality. In addition it funded six Indigenous Enrolled Nursing Scholarships. UnitingCare Community provided scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff pursuing Certificate IV in a number of subjects and for others studying for Diplomas in Management and Counselling.

Cultural Calendar

An annual events calendar that promotes culturally significant dates, celebrations and events has been developed and has been made available to all staff via the service group and UnitingCare Queensland Intranets.

Marketing material

Marketing material, including corporate publications has been developed with positive images and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.



Staff awards

Blue Care has developed an Indigenous award as part of their annual staff awards and UnitingCare Health is developing a staff awards program which will include an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander category.

Opportunities in Action

Deadly Learning Kits have been developed by UnitingCare Community's Inclusion Support Agency for use in their child care centres. Jo Goodwin, Inclusion Support Agency Manager, said that the kits contain a variety of resources that promote, acknowledge and celebrate the unique aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and enables the centres to consider what they do to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inclusion.

"An important part of these kits is the reflection exercise, where the centres examine how the resources were used, what the learnings were for both children and educators and to consider 'where to next' for their service," Jo Goodwin said.

Inclusion Support also offer the 'Journey of Discovery' – an action based research learning project that provides an introductory session followed by four three-hour sessions to help child care centres explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and how they can progress inclusion in their services on a daily basis.



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network

An action under the UnitingCare Queensland Network Reconciliation Action Plan was to develop a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within service groups to enable them to connect and share stories, resources and experiences. You can join by emailing David Conlon on reconciliation@ucareqld.com.au. If you have any relevant information for the newsletter David produces or know of anyone who should be part of the network, please get in touch with David on 0448 757 207.

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Our Values: Compassion • Respect • Justice • Working Together • Leading through Learning

UnitingCare Community • UnitingCare Health • Blue Care