



**Lutheran Church of Australia
Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan
June 2020–June 2021**



Acknowledgement of Country

The Lutheran Church of Australia acknowledges that our loving Creator God first gave the land on which we are placed, to the peoples of the First Nations who have walked and cared for this land since before recorded time.

We thank God for the land's Traditional Custodians and pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging as we travel this journey of reconciliation in Australia.



Message from Reconciliation Australia



Reconciliation Australia is delighted to welcome the Lutheran Church of Australia to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program and to formally endorse its inaugural Reflect RAP.

As a member of the RAP community, the Lutheran Church of Australia joins over 1,000 dedicated corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have formally committed to reconciliation through the RAP program since its inception in 2006. RAP organisations across Australia are turning good intentions into positive actions, helping to build higher trust, lower prejudice, and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Reconciliation is no one single issue or agenda. Based on international research and benchmarking, Reconciliation Australia defines and measures reconciliation through five critical dimensions: race relations; equality and equity, institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance. All sections of the community—governments, civil society, the private sector, and Aboriginal and Strait Islander communities—have a role to play to progress these dimensions.

The RAP program provides a framework for organisations to advance reconciliation within their spheres of influence. This Reflect RAP provides the Lutheran Church of Australia a roadmap to begin its reconciliation journey. Through implementing a Reflect RAP, the Lutheran Church of Australia will lay the foundations for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

We wish the Lutheran Church of Australia well as it takes these first critical steps in its reconciliation journey. We encourage the organisation to embrace this journey with open hearts and minds, to grow from the challenges, and to build on the successes. As the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation reminded the nation in its final report:

“Reconciliation is hard work—it’s a long, winding and corrugated road, not a broad, paved highway. Determination and effort at all levels of government and in all sections of the community will be essential to make reconciliation a reality.”

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend the Lutheran Church of Australia on its first RAP, and look forward to following its ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer Reconciliation Australia

'Many Eyes'

"It's about how there is one God and there are lots of people... we are all different—that's a good thing—because we can all see different parts of God and share that with each other... That way we can all learn from each other."

Henry, aged 9, an Eastern Aranda and Wangkangurru boy (2018)—Artist

RAP artwork inspiration

Many eyes, many people, many tasks

There are 'many eyes' surrounding the cross. There are many views of what reconciliation is. There are many people who have walked and journeyed before us. There are many things that are yet to be done. There are many people who are needed to get these things done.

Many journeys

Many coloured dots make up the cross, representing the many different journeys of reconciliation, side-by-side, together. There are no straight or uniform pathways, however. Each journey is unique. Reconciliation is complex.

The blue palette

The blue palette represents all peoples under the sky, and the rivers and oceans which are their intersecting stories.

Flowing waters

The flowing shades of blue are the river and the sea, which meet at the centre of the cross. In baptism we each receive personal reconciliation with Christ at the heart of the cross. Here we find our common identity as children of God.

God's loving eye

God's love for every one of us is represented by the eye at the centre of the cross. He watches over every one of us as we come and we go, ever calling us back to himself, the only place where we will find true and lasting reconciliation.

Our witness

There are 'many eyes' watching us from outside the cross. What do they see? - how we treat each other, how we listen to each other, how we respect each other, how we bless each other. What is our witness of reconciliation to them.



'Many Eyes' (2018) Artist – Henry, aged 9 (Eastern Aranda and Wangkangurru)

Statement from the Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Australia

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

The worth, dignity and equality of human beings is core to the Christian faith. We are made in God's own image. We see that image best in Jesus Christ. He was no respecter of race, status or privilege. He transcends all those boundaries. He is the saviour of the world.

Despite this basic belief that all are made equal, and therefore all are equally saved, we are often painfully separated by race, culture, power and prestige. In a world shaped by power, wealth and influence, Christians must work hard to remain true to the equality of all. Sometimes, we do well. Too often, we fail. Through Christ we are sorry for our sin and ask for and receive forgiveness from God and from each other. Then, by God's grace, we have the strength to continue our journey together as human beings reconciled in Christ.

This Reflect RAP is a step in that forward-looking journey. It began way back when we were created equal. It continued when God so loved the world that he sent his Son to be our saviour, without discrimination. The journey resumes when we step out together side by side, First Peoples and other Australians, listening to each other, respecting and learning from each other, deepening our relationships and discovering who we are to be and what we are to do.

May God bless this RAP, and our journey together.



John Henderson

Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand



Reconciliation Vision Statement

Inspired by the Gospel and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the vision of Reconciliation for the Lutheran Church of Australia is...

'to bring to life an expression of our ministry that helps all peoples recognise, understand, value and respect the histories, cultures, lands and contributions of First Nations peoples, as we honour our common humanity and provide each other with equal opportunity to flourish, as together, we grow as God's people'



Our Business

The Lutheran Church of Australia ('LCA' or 'church'), which includes the Lutheran Church of New Zealand, is part of a worldwide community of Christians in the Protestant tradition, numbering around 80 million. Across Australia, over 170,000 people identify as Lutheran. There are about 45,000 baptised members.

We share the same mission as all other Christian churches around the world: to live out and to share the good news of Jesus Christ, through whom we believe God has redeemed the world. In this spirit, the LCA tagline, 'where love comes to life', reflects our vision and practical intention.

The LCA, together with its agencies and affiliated bodies, employs more than 8000 individuals, including:

- pastors* (ministers of religion) and other (non-ordained) pastoral and support workers (in congregations/worship centres) (600+)
- schools and early learning centres (5000+)
- other community services (3000+)
- church governance and administration (100+).

Across Australia and New Zealand, making a significant contribution to the work of the church and the community, are large numbers of congregational and community volunteers.

The specific number of staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the LCA is unknown. Establishing systems and processes to accurately monitor employment of First Nations peoples within the Lutheran Church of Australia is one of the intended actions of our proposed Reflect RAP.

We have 22 ordained Aboriginal pastors*, with a smaller number of pastors and evangelists in training. Our schools, early learning centres, community services and other agencies employ a number of First Nations staff.

Geographically, the church covers all of Australia and New Zealand. Although the LCA is a small church compared with other larger Christian denominations in Australia, we have significant representation within this community through about 80 schools, 60 early childcare services and 24 aged-care and community-care facilities.

Increasingly, congregations of people from Asian, European and African countries contribute to the cultural diversity of our church. We are proud to include in our Lutheran family around 7000 First Nations peoples.

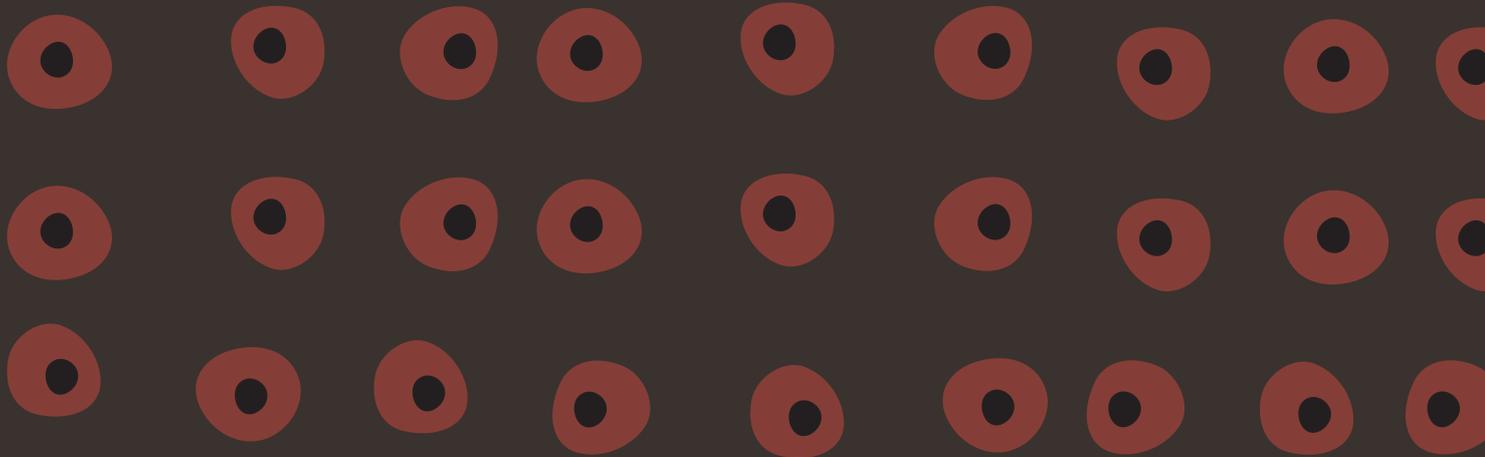
The LCA has connections with more than 40 First Nations communities across Australia, predominantly in Central Australia, Far North Queensland, in the far west of South Australia, and to a lesser extent, also in urban areas.

The churchwide (national) office of the LCA is located in Adelaide. There are six jurisdictional arms (called 'Districts') of the church, with their offices located in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, and Wellington (NZ). Each of the Districts have oversight of the activities linked to the church that are relevant to their regional constituency. The office of Australian Lutheran World Service is located in Albury NSW. In addition, there are offices for local services (eg worship centres, schools, aged-care centres, community care services) across Australia and New Zealand, though many of these in regional communities are very small.

**Pastors have a unique relationship in serving in the church. The Lutheran Church of Australia describes it as such: 'The relationship between a pastor and the church, district, parish, congregation or other body the call of which he has accepted is personal, spiritual and sacred and is not intended to create any legal relationship or any employment relationship between the pastor and any member of any part of the Church.'*

Lutheran Church of Australia Constitution and By-Laws, clause 5.4.4

Our RAP



For more than 150 years, the LCA has had a deep engagement with First Nations peoples, commencing first as 'mission' work and gradually progressing to a culture of working 'with' rather than 'to' an estimated 7000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

Consistent with our understanding of baptism, we believe that we live reconciled with each other in Christ and that each day presents a new opportunity to grow in relationships with the people God has placed in our neighbourhoods, workplaces and communities. Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) will assist us in living out this calling on a daily basis.

Our long history of ministry in a number of First Nations communities throughout Australia has been an important and significant part of the journey of reconciliation for the LCA. We acknowledge the injustices and trauma inflicted upon First Australians as a result of colonisation. In 2000, our highest governing body, the General Synod, made a formal *acknowledgment and apology* to Aboriginal peoples. This was followed by a *rite of reconciliation*. For another 18 years, however, no formal action to progress and sustain reconciliation was taken.

In October 2018, however, we made a great leap forward in recognising that reconciliation cannot be achieved by words alone, when over 400 delegates at the General Synod overwhelmingly approved the establishment of an LCA RAP. Championed by the churchwide *Bishop*, the General Church Board, LCA's lead decision-making body, formally introduced this RAP *proposal* to the Synod.

Our Community Partnerships

Whilst initially the history of the Lutheran Church's engagement with First Nations peoples began as mission outreach, today these relationships continue to exist and have grown albeit in an evolving context.

Strong partnerships exist in the areas of congregational ministry, education, community services and historic record keeping. Identified, however, as a key action in our RAP, is a commitment to develop a more comprehensive map and understanding of all our community partnerships and activities across Australia.

Congregation and worship ministry

Around 7000 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples identify as Lutheran, with high concentrations of community partnerships in the following locations:

- Northern Territory: Central Australia (from circa 1877)
- Queensland: Far North – Hope Vale area (from circa 1885)
- South Australia: Port Lincoln (from circa 1838) and Far West Coast (from circa 1898).

School partnerships

Over the years, Lutheran schools and other educational institutions have fostered and built connections and partnerships with a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These relationships range from educational institutions developing their own Narragunnawali RAPs and engaging with their local First Nations communities, to journeying to actual communities to value-add to their learning and understanding of First Nations histories, languages and cultures, particularly as they relate to the learning curriculum.

Additionally, there are a number of Lutheran schools and colleges that provide a customised hosted boarding program, supporting First Nations students' access to educational opportunities

and post-secondary transition pathways, beyond their local environment. Of note, there are several Lutheran schools with focused curriculum and learning environments responsive to the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, from which they draw their students.

Tertiary education partnership

A special partnership exists between Australian Lutheran College (the LCA's tertiary institution for theological studies) and First Nations communities in the training methodology for their local pastors. In Central Australia, this is facilitated by the Finke River Mission via bush courses of four or five days in length, several times a year. Multilingual interpreters enable participation and engagement in theological studies relative to the pastors' experiences, in language, in an open-air bush environment similar to their own community. The provision of resource and worship materials collaboratively developed over a number of years in local languages has been particularly helpful.

Community services partnerships

Lutheran Community Care (SA) has an extensive presence in Central Australia, with an intentional policy of employing local First Australians to serve the community. Likewise, Lutheran Services (Qld) has intentionally created a partnership with a wholly First Nations owned design and media agency, Carbon Creative. This company has been engaged to prepare the design concept for our LCA RAP.

Lutheran Archives

Lutheran Archives (national archive of the LCA) holds a wide range of records relating to the history and activities of First Nations peoples, covering the period 1838 to the present, from ten Lutheran Church missions in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. A range of organisations, groups and individuals regularly reference these records. Lutheran Archives has a memorandum of understanding (established May 2000) with Link-Up SA, Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc. This relationship enables records relating to First Nations peoples to be accessible to Link-Up SA as they assist members of the Stolen Generations in their journey home.

Our Current Activities



For a number years, across the agencies of the church, there has been an increase in acknowledging and raising awareness of significant dates for First Nations peoples, including participation in events for the Anniversary of the National Apology, Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, as well as Indigenous Children's Day.

Print and digital communications inform readers of these events and other activities relevant to ministries inclusive of First Nations peoples within Lutheran communities. The LCA's church wide magazine's coverage of reconciliation and other issues affecting First Nations peoples has been recognised in the Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA) Awards across more than a decade, including two gold and one bronze awards for coverage of the National Apology in 2008.

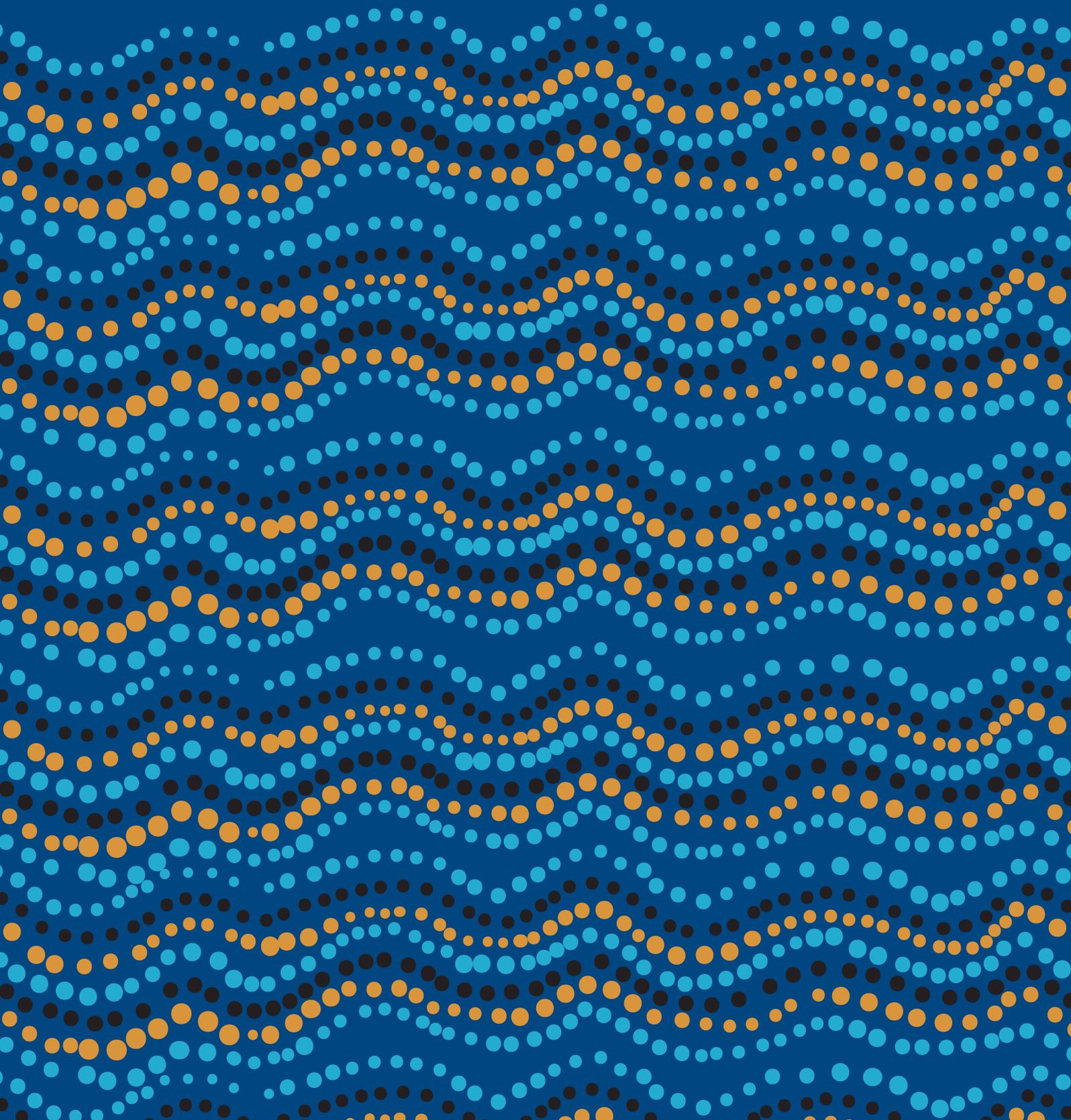
To broaden the scope and understanding of matters pertaining to First Nations peoples, LCA staff have subscriptions to relevant organisations and e-communications, including, but not limited to, Reconciliation Australia, state Reconciliation Advisory Councils, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Healing Foundation, SNAICC, Tear Australia, Common Ground, Common Grace, Creative Spirits, Australian Institute of Family Studies and similar.

Members of the LCA RAP Project Team engaged in the inaugural Reconciliation Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan conference in 2018.

Over the years, the church has both commissioned and purchased various First Nations artwork, including a piece specifically designed for the RAP journey, entitled 'Many Eyes', painted by a young Aboriginal boy whose family legacy extends from Eastern Aranda country in the Hart Ranges of the Northern Territory to Wangkangurru country in northern South Australia.



Our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan



Relationships



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	– Identify First Nations stakeholders and organisations nationally, within each district and spheres of influence	June 2021	Executive Officer of Local Mission
	– Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with First Nations stakeholders and organisations	August 2020	RAP Project Chair RAP Project Officer
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	– Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials across the organisation in each district, including (but not limited to) worship centres/congregations, agencies and affiliated bodies of the LCA, volunteers, employees, leaders and decision makers	May 2021	Executive Officer of the Church
	– RAP Working Group and Project Team members to participate in an external NRW event in their respective states across Australia, and share this experience through national communique	27 May– 3 June 2021	RAP Project 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 2021	Manager Church Worker Support Department
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	– Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to members, volunteers, employees, leaders and decision makers within LCA Districts, worship centres/congregations, agencies and affiliated bodies	July 2020	Manager Communications Department
	– Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey	August 2020	RAP Project Officer

	– Continue to engage with and actively seek advice from the LCA First Nations Advisory group	June 2021	Office of the Bishop
	– Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey, including agencies and affiliated bodies of the LCA that have existing RAPs or are developing RAPs	March 2021	RAP Project Officer
	– Develop and implement a communication strategy that aims to raise awareness amongst LCA worship centres/congregations, districts, agencies, affiliated groups, ministry areas, and community groups that the Lutheran Church works alongside about our RAP commitments	June 2020	Manager Communications Department RAP Project Chair
	– Share the long history of engagement with First Nations people, highlighting the current ministries/relationships shared with congregations and communities across the LCA	April 2021	Manager Communication Department Director of Lutheran Media Department
	– Develop a database of key stakeholders who can support the reconciliation journey within the LCA eg Lutheran Education, youth mission groups, community services, disability services, Aboriginal focused agencies and groups	September 2020	RAP Project Officer
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	– Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination	January 2021	Manager Professional Standards Department Cross Cultural Ministry
	– Conduct a review of LCA HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs	June 2021	Manager of Church Worker Support Department Secretary of the Church

Respect



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	– Explore and document the contribution First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge and rights have had, and continue to make, in the LCA	June 2021	Lutheran Archives RAP Project Officer
	– Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation	November 2020	Manager Church Worker Support Department
	– Communicate and encourage staff to use Reconciliation Australia’s Share Our Pride online tool	August 2020	Manager Church Worker Support Department RAP Project Chair
6. Demonstrate respect to First Nations peoples by observing cultural protocols.	– Support Lutheran Church of Australia Districts, congregations, agencies and community groups to identify and develop an understanding of who are the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within their local area	June 2021	Executive Officer Local Mission
	– Increase understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including, but not limited to, Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols across the LCA	August 2020	Office of the Bishop

7. Build respect for First Nations cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	– Raise awareness and share information amongst the LCA about the meaning of NAIDOC Week	July 2020	Executive Officer of the Church
	– Engage LCA Districts to promote NAIDOC Week events in their local areas, including events outside the churches area of influence	July 2020	Executive Officer of the Church
	– RAP Working Group and Project Team to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event	First week in July 2020	RAP Project Chair
8. Celebrate and acknowledge the role of the church in reconciliation.	– Identify education material that acknowledges the origins of the national week of prayer and its journey to reconciliation	June 2021	RAP Project Officer
	– Investigate and collate a calendar of significant dates both, for First Nations peoples and those within the history of the LCA and their engagement with First Nations communities	October 2020	Lutheran Archives RAP Project Officer

Opportunities



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing the training, recruitment, retention and professional development of First Nations peoples.	– Review the current LCA's practice for the recruitment, retention and professional development of First Nations people	February 2021	Manager Church Worker Support Department Secretary of the Church
	– Build understanding of current First Nations staffing to inform future employment and staff development opportunities	February 2021	Manager Church Worker Support Department
	– Explore current and potential future for First Nations pastoral and laity opportunities within the Lutheran Church	March 2021	Office of the Bishop Secretary of the Church
	– Investigate opportunities for education, learning and training scholarships for First Nations peoples within the Lutheran Church	January 2021	RAP Project Officer
10. Increase supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes for First Nations peoples.	– Explore and develop procurement opportunities from First Nations owned businesses	January 2021	Business Manager RAP Project Chair
	– Investigate Supply Nation membership	August 2020	Business Manager Secretary of the Church
11. Identify learning and mentoring opportunities for our church.	– Bring together and resource a First Nations advisory group to provide guidance with a national perspective, to the Office of the Bishop, on matters impacting First Nations peoples	June 2020	Office of the Bishop Secretary of the Church
12. Continue to create an awareness of and promote Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education to affiliated bodies within LCA sphere of influence.	– Further promote the awareness of and encourage engagement in Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education program within LCA-affiliated educational bodies	June 2021	Executive Director of Lutheran Education Australia

Governance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	– Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation	October 2020	RAP Project Officer
	– Draft Terms of Reference for the RWG	October 2020	RAP Project Officer
	– Establish First Nations representation on the RWG	October 2020	RAP Project Officer
14. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	– Define resource needs for RAP implementation	June 2020	General Church Board Chair
	– Engage senior leaders (College of Bishops and General Church Board) in the delivery of RAP commitments	June 2021	General Church Board Chair
	– Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments	June 2020	General Church Board Chair
15. 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 2020	General Church Board Chair
16. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	– Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP (Innovate)	February 2021	General Church Board Chair

Our sincere thanks and gratitude goes to the many contributors across Australia, inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australian voices, in the development of this Reflect RAP.

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