



REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Jan 2022 - Jan 2023





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waterways and skies across Australia.

We thank Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for sharing and caring for the land on which we live, work, learn and play.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.



FOREWORD

“MAKARRATA IS THE CULMINATION OF OUR AGENDA: THE COMING TOGETHER AFTER A STRUGGLE. IT CAPTURES OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR A FAIR AND TRUTHFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA AND A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN BASED ON JUSTICE AND SELF-DETERMINATION.”

- *The Uluru Statement from the Heart 2017*

It is with excitement that we present our first Learning Links Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan symbolises our commitment to walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the search for justice, truth and positive lasting change. Learning Links supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We believe that reconciliation is at the heart of a fair, just and humane society.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have demonstrated strength, resilience and a dedication to learning and growing over many tens of thousands of years. For Learning Links, a commitment to reconciliation is essential to achieving our organisational mission of supporting all children and young people who have difficulties learning to realise their full potential.

Reconciliation is about building deep relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognising the wrongs of the past so we can create a positive future together. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people too often face systemic difficulties and ongoing hurdles that make the realisation of their potential more difficult than it should be. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children do not yet enjoy equal educational opportunities and outcomes.

Learning Links has worked with Aboriginal peoples in many of the communities we serve. We have seen first-hand the life-changing outcomes that can be achieved for Aboriginal children when evidence-based approaches are applied in a culturally safe way, guided and directed by Aboriginal peoples and their Elders. We have come to understand the importance of listening and placing the voices, experiences and wishes of Aboriginal peoples at the centre of our work.

With this Reconciliation Action Plan, we make a formal commitment to action, and as an organisation we commit to embrace continuous learning and to embed these principles firmly in how we work and the systems that support us.

Our reconciliation journey started over 18 months ago as we commenced a cultural education and learning experience across all levels of the organisation. We are grateful for the guidance provided to us by Dharawal Elder and cultural educator, Uncle Dr Shayne Williams, and Kamilaroi woman and consultant, Dr Lana Leslie. Thank you for your invaluable insights, support and encouragement as we continue to learn and grow as an organisation. Thank you also to Gadigal Elder and artist Aunty Deanna Schreiber who worked with us to help capture the essence of our Reconciliation Action Plan in the beautiful artwork displayed in this Plan.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan reflects our commitment to supporting positive change, cultural learning and growth. In making this commitment, we look to the future with optimism in the hope that our actions as an organisation will also make a lasting contribution to reconciliation in our country.



Greg Wallace
Chairperson



Birgitte Maibom
Chief Executive Officer

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO OF RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Learning Links to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Learning Links 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 over 2.3 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 Learning Links 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 Learning Links, 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



RAP ARTWORK

Learning Links commissioned Deanna Schreiber in 2021 to create our RAP artwork. Deanna is a Gadigal woman born in Sydney. She has been an artist for many years and is an active member of the community and Chairperson of the Kurranulla Aboriginal Corporation. The artwork is a bright and joyful reflection of the learning, play and work we do with children and families that captures the combined essence of Reconciliation in Australia and Learning Links.



RAP DESIGNER

Amy Allerton is the owner and founder of Indigico Creative and an Aboriginal digital artist and graphic designer. Descended from the Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung nations, she was born and raised on Gamilaroi country in Tamworth NSW, where she is based with her husband and two children.

Amy has been providing graphic design services Australia-wide since 2014, collaborating with businesses and partnering with communities to creatively communicate the stories that bring us together. Amy is driven by her personal and professional vision that every story is given value and a voice, to revitalise communities, reconnect to culture and restore identities to build a stronger future.



OUR BUSINESS

Learning Links is a charitable, not-for-profit organisation established in 1972 by parents concerned about the lack of appropriate education and support services to meet their children's needs. Today, our focus is to prevent learning difficulties from causing disadvantage by making high quality services available to children and young people in need, and by advocating on their behalf.

We work in collaboration with schools, early childhood settings and parents to help children with learning disabilities and difficulties participate in mainstream settings. These children are often anxious, lack confidence, have trouble communicating and making friends, and many have behavioural issues. We work with the children throughout their early years and into young adulthood by providing additional literacy, numeracy and allied health supports. Our work also involves supporting and educating their parents, carers and families. An important aspect of what we do is to help build the capacity of schools, early childhood services and professionals to ensure inclusion and sustainable change are achieved.

We deliver services to children and families across the Sydney Metropolitan area in our six learning centres at the following locations:

- Alexandria, Gadigal Country
- Bella Vista, Dharug Country
- Gledswood Hills, Dharawal Country
- Liverpool, Dharug Country
- Oatley, Bidjegal Country
- Peakhurst, Bidjegal Country

Aside from the programs we deliver in our Learning Centres, schools and community venues, Learning Links also supports children, families and professionals on an outreach basis through the provision of online programs and webinars. Teachers, therapists and psychologists support children by providing individual and/or group-based supports via online professional learning. Learning Links' national reach is realised through the delivery of webinars for education and allied health professionals, with participants attending from states across Australia.

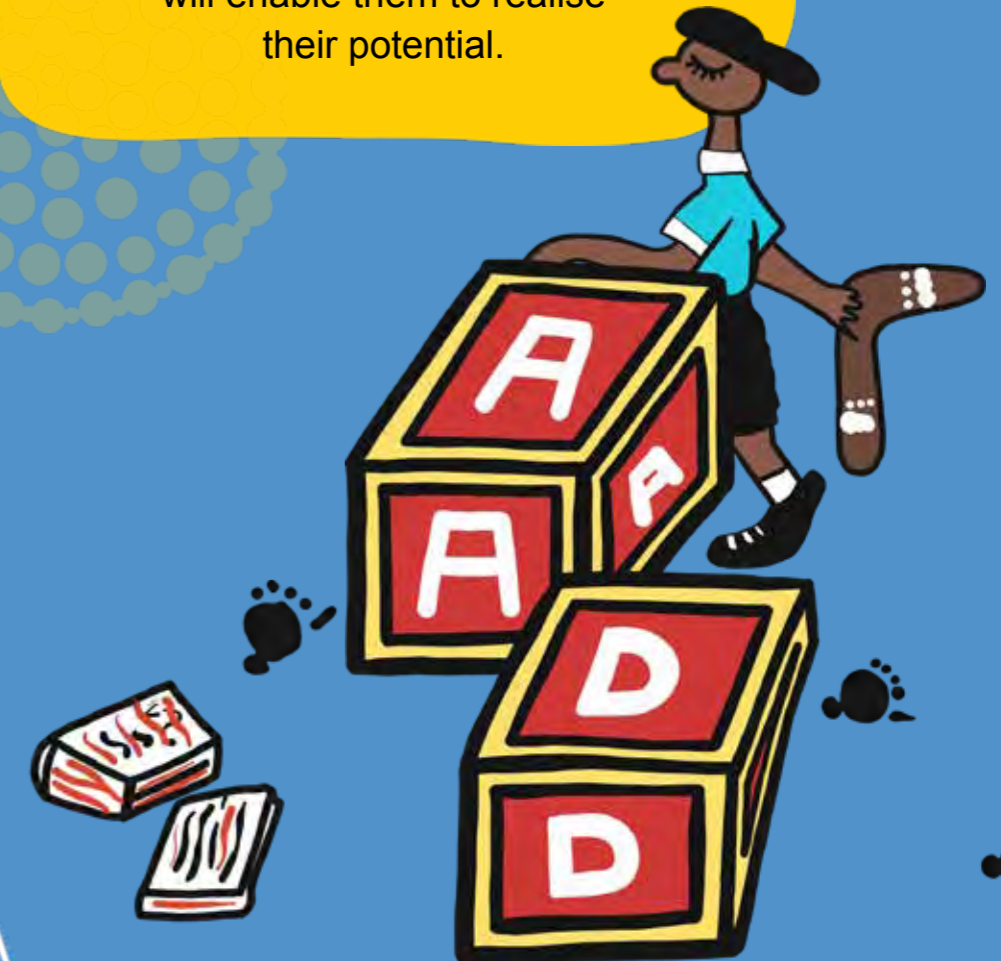
Of our 223 professionals and staff, one currently self-identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. We value the unique knowledge, skills and lived experiences our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff bring to the children, families and communities we support.

OUR VISION

A community where difficulties learning are no longer a barrier to a fulfilling life.

OUR MISSION

To provide children and young people who have difficulties learning with the skills, services and family support that will enable them to realise their potential.



OUR RAP

Learning Links is developing a Reconciliation Action Plan to help our country heal and strengthen the movement towards the reconciliation of Australia as a whole. The Reconciliation Action Plan offers an opportunity to enhance our cultural education and practice and seek out ways to be allies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In developing the plan, we acknowledge our role in supporting all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to have a life filled with opportunity and for our organisation to be part of the fabric of Australian society and change.

The development of the RAP began in July 2020 with discussions between our Chief Executive Officer, Birgitte Maibom and Kamilaroi woman and Consultant, Dr Lana Leslie from Lana Leslie Consulting. Discussions focused on what was involved in developing a Reconciliation Action Plan and Dr Leslie's recommendation to engage with an Elder on Country to begin Learning Links' cultural education.

Following discussions, contact was made with Uncle Dr Shayne Williams, Dharawal Elder who collaborated with Dr Leslie to plan an On-Country excursion at Kamay Botany Bay Environmental Education Centre (also known as Kurnell) for the Learning Links Board and Senior Leadership team. The excursion was held on 14 November 2020 and focused on the perspective of a Dharawal Traditional Owner on Australia's contact history. The workshop included opportunities for insights into Dharawal peoples and culture, including connection and relationship with the land.

Five information sessions for Learning Links staff and the Board were held from 15 April to 6 May 2021. The duration of each session was approximately 30-60 minutes and included information about reconciliation, the Reconciliation Action Plan program developed by Reconciliation Australia, and the reasons Learning Links was developing a RAP. The sessions also sought people to join the Learning Links RAP Working Group. Once the working group was formed, planning began for the upcoming RAP Working Group.



In the development stage, the Working Group met to participate in four meetings from 15 June to 16 August 2021. Most meetings were online due to lockdowns and restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. RAP Working Group meetings focused on discussing information to inform the development of the RAP, as well as developing relationships within the group and having a focus on culture. Optional cultural education self-directed learning activities were forwarded to the RAP Working Group with each agenda. The development stage also included the Chief Executive Officer participating in one-on-one cultural education sessions with Dr Leslie. Each session focused on a different topic including white privilege, naming and terminology, racism, cultural safety, and effective communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Once all meetings were complete, the RAP was finalised and submitted to Reconciliation Australia for review and later endorsement.

The implementation stage will involve the RAP Working Group meeting regularly to put into practice the plan, and to monitor the actions and deliverables.

Birgitte Maibom, the Chief Executive Officer at Learning Links, champions and supports the development and monitoring of the RAP through her role.

The RAP Working Group consists of the following members:

- Birgitte Maibom, Chief Executive Officer, Co-Coordinator of RAP Working Group
- Diane Peacock-Smith, General Manager Service Quality, Co-Coordinator of RAP Working Group
- Dr Lana Leslie, Principal Consultant, Lana Leslie Consulting, Co-Coordinator of RAP Working Group (Development stage only)
- Nicolle Dawkins, Executive Assistant
- Rachel Brodie-Browne, Head of Fundraising
- Nyree Voysey, Marketing and Fundraising Specialist
- Rebecca Flegg, Speech Pathologist
- Hiral Dhawan, Senior Psychologist
- Sharon Webster, Teacher
- Melanie Tran, Speech Pathologist
- Nives Limare, Preschool Educator
- Jessica Stuart, Customer Care Representative



OUR PARTNERSHIPS & CURRENT ACTIVITIES



Community Partnerships



Between 2018 and 2019, Learning Links worked in partnership with NGROO Education, a not-for-profit organisation working to improve opportunities for Aboriginal children in early childhood education and care, to provide individualised education support for Aboriginal children in Years 1 and 2. The program was co-designed by NGROO and Learning Links to combine Learning Links' expertise in providing numeracy and literacy support to children who are struggling to learn with NGROO's expertise in fostering a culturally safe and respectful environment to support learning. As part of the co-design, Learning Links management and teaching staff participated in a Cultural Awareness training day facilitated by NGROO to establish a common understanding of the aims of the program. Two trained teachers from Learning Links were selected to deliver the program and spent time with local Aboriginal Elders to develop a greater understanding of the community. An integral part of the program was the participation of a local Aboriginal Elder who attended and participated in discussions with the children, and supported literacy and numeracy activities throughout the day on a fortnightly basis.

In Dubbo in Far West NSW, Learning Links delivers Reading for Life, a literacy program that incorporates a variety of fun activities and games to encourage engagement and interest that is proven to help students make valuable gains and develop lifelong literacy skills. In this program, Aboriginal secondary students are trained as reading Buddies to younger Aboriginal children in primary school, working weekly 1:1 to deliver semi-structured literacy sessions. The program benefits the secondary students by developing their mentoring and teaching skills, and the primary students by developing their literacy skills, self-esteem and confidence as they bond with their Buddies.



In 2020, Learning Links formed a partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and the Liverpool AECG. The AECG is a not-for-profit Aboriginal organisation that provides advice on all matters relevant to education and training with the mandate that this advice represents the Aboriginal community viewpoint. The collaboration involved an agreement for teachers from Learning Links to work alongside Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) employed within the school to build capacity in the school community. To date, Learning Links has worked with AEOs at Ashcroft Public School and Miller Public School.

Learning Links delivers the HIPPY program in Cabramatta and Riverwood. The HIPPY program is a home-based, early learning and parenting program for families with young children. Learning Links delivers six Aboriginal stories and related activities across the year to participating families to develop an understanding of Aboriginal culture and learning. Learning Links schedules age-appropriate early learning activities for children and events for families to celebrate NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day. Staff delivering the HIPPY program undertake professional development and learning that focuses on building their knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, the lands on which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions and peoples.

Learning Links shares experiences and resources with several organisations who share a commitment to reconciliation. Our corporate partners, foundations, and other organisations take an active role in building relationships with, and empowering Aboriginal children by funding our Aboriginal Education Programs. We continue to explore ways to work alongside Ramsgate RSL with Aboriginal young people at The Settlement in Redfern, which provides a range of programs, including an Aboriginal youth health support program for children, young people and families. Through our mutual supporter, Leagues Clubs Australia, we are building relationships with the Clontarf Foundation which exists to improve the education, discipline, life-skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men.

Learning Links has developed a relationship with Dr Lana Leslie, Kamilaroi woman and Principal Consultant of Lana Leslie Consulting, an Aboriginal Consultancy business specialising in leadership and strategic planning, cultural support and advice, education programs and research. Lana has worked with Learning Links on a consultancy basis co-facilitating the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan, working with Uncle Dr Shayne Williams to deliver the On-Country excursion to Kamay/Kurnell, and has provided specialised one-on-one cultural education to Birgitte Maibom, Chief Executive Officer of Learning Links.

Learning Links has developed a relationship with Uncle Dr Shayne Williams, Dharawal Elder, who provided cultural education to staff including an On-Country excursion to Kamay/Kurnell on the site of Captain Cook's landing. Participants in the excursion were the Senior Leadership Team and Learning Links Board members, who participated in a half day education session. Uncle Shayne has also delivered cultural presentations at staff development days.

Internal Activities and Initiatives

Learning Links celebrated National Reconciliation Week in 2021 with various activities including: celebrating with morning and afternoon teas at our Learning Centres, conducting a quiz about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and enjoying a bush tucker tasting with a Lemon Myrtle Cake baked by Birgitte Maibom, our Chief Executive Officer. Our Preschool activities during National Reconciliation Week included an Acknowledgement of Country followed by the children participating in art and craft activities, engaging with puzzles and books, and enjoying music and dancing.



2021 NAIDOC Week activities were limited due to COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns. The Preschool was on school holidays and therefore NAIDOC activities were shared with families to encourage them to celebrate NAIDOC Week at home. When Preschool resumed the theme of NAIDOC Week: Heal Country, was discussed and adapted to the Preschool environment.

Aboriginal perspectives are embedded in the Learning Links Preschool program through activities such as:

- Aboriginal families attending to read stories.
- Learning about the colours and meaning of the Aboriginal flag.
- Discussions and drawing of Aboriginal symbols in the sand using Mat Man, a sensory tool that addresses issues associated with sensory processing and additional needs.
- The use of red, black and yellow wool during outdoor play to decorate trees.
- Children doing Aboriginal-themed puzzles.
- Books read to the children including 'I'm Australian Too' by Mem Fox and 'How the Birds Got Their Colours' by Mary Albert and Pamela Lofts.
- Learning Aboriginal themed songs including 'Red, Black and Yellow' and 'The Wheels on the Holden' from the Growin' Up Strong CD, and 'Taba Naba' by the Wiggles, featuring Christine Anu.



Learning Links' marketing supports reconciliation through internal communications with staff and external communications via social media, including Learning Links Instagram and Facebook posts. Posts include celebrating and promoting National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, as well as posts that commemorate important dates such as Sorry Day.

Learning Links regularly communicates the progress of the Reconciliation Action Plan internally through staff briefings, special communications, client service emails and our regular newsletter to clients and families. In our Preschool, we utilise the platform 'Storypark' to showcase reconciliation activities to our families.

The physical environment in our Learning Centres has begun to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maps and images. Five of our centres have full sized, framed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maps to highlight the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal themed artwork activities will be available at our centres for children.

Respect for cultural protocols is practiced where an Acknowledgement of Country is done prior to the commencement of Leadership, Management and Board meetings.



Cultural education in Learning Links has included: encouraging all staff to complete the 'Share Your Pride' online training developed by Reconciliation Australia; Preschool staff attending a training day called Koori Curriculum, as well as an Aboriginal Conference; the On-Country excursion at Kamay/Kurnell for the Learning Links Board and Senior Leadership Team; the Chief Executive Officer participating in one-on-one cultural education sessions with Dr Lana Leslie; and the RAP Working Group accessing optional cultural education activities during the RAP development phase including the 'Share Your Pride' online training, episodes of 'First Australians' and other recommended materials such as 'The Australian Dream' documentary.



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.	February 2022	Head of Fundraising
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	May 2022	Marketing and Fundraising Specialist
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2022	Executive Assistant
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	May 2022	Customer Care Representative
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May 2022	Chief Executive Officer
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	Bi-monthly (March, May, July, September, November 2022)	Chief Executive Officer
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	April 2022	Head of Fundraising
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	April 2022	Head of Fundraising
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	February 2022	General Manager Service Quality
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	February 2022	General Manager Service Quality



RESPECT

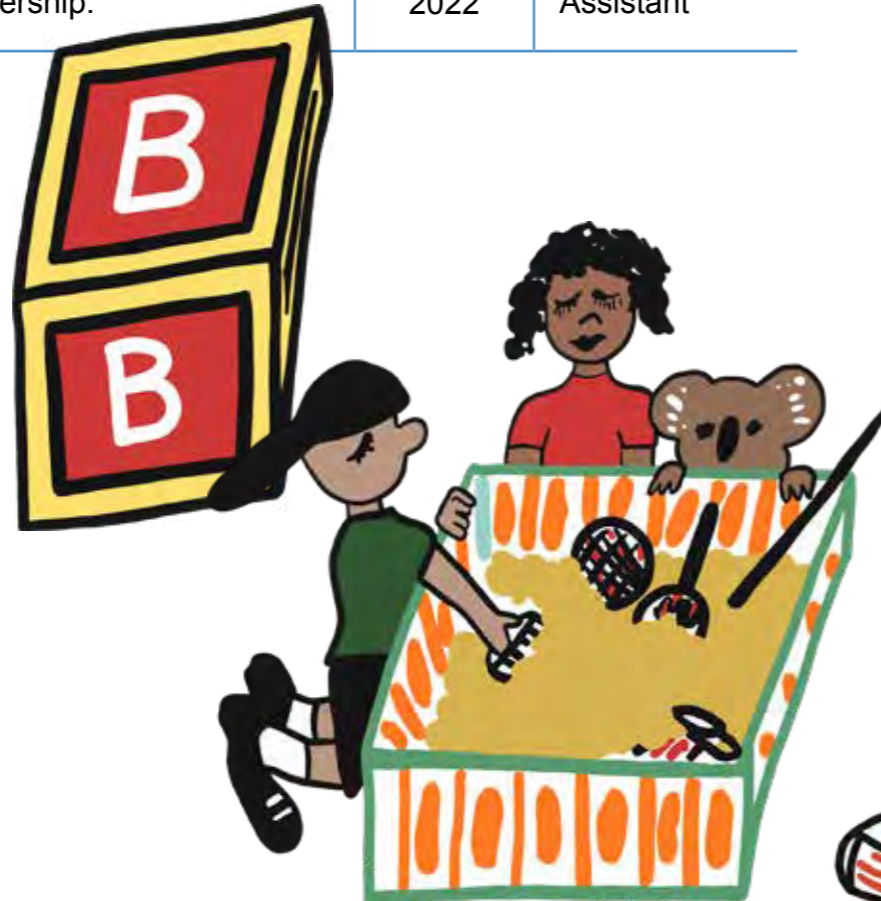
ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	April 2022	Chief Executive Officer
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	April 2022	Speech Pathologist
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.	April 2022	Customer Care Representative
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	April 2022	Senior Psychologist
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.	July 2022	Speech Pathologist
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2022	Customer Care Representative
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2022	Customer Care Representative





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.	April 2022	Chief Executive Officer
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	February 2022	General Manager Service Quality
9. Investigate 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.	April 2022	Global Business Manager
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	February 2022	Executive Assistant



GOVERNANCE

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (WG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	January 2022	Executive Assistant
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	January 2022	Executive Assistant
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	January 2022	Chief Executive Officer
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	February 2022	Chief Executive Officer
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	February 2022	Chief Executive Officer
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	January 2022	General Manager Service Quality
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	General Manager Service Quality
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	August 2022	General Manager Service Quality



For public enquiries about our RAP contact:

Birgitte Maibom | Chief Executive Officer | E: bmaibom@learninglinks.org.au

Learning Links | P: 02 8525 8222 | E: mail@learninglinks.org.au

Suite 3, Level 1, 140 Bourke Road, Alexandria, NSW 2015

www.learninglinks.org.au