



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

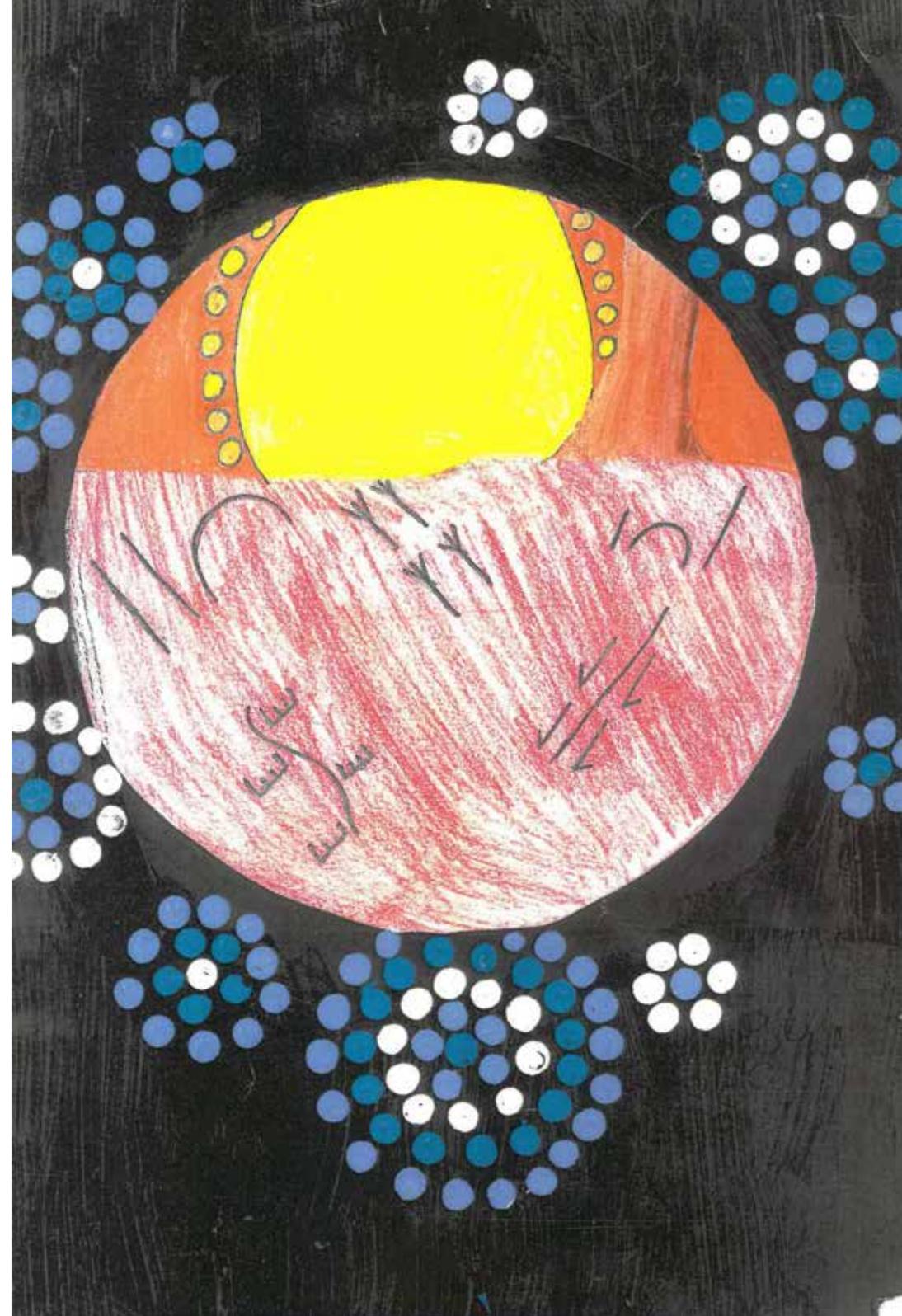
**ourplace**

education is the key to the door

COLMAN  
EDUCATION  
FOUNDATION —  
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REFLECT —  
RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

April 2022 / April 2023



# About the Cover Art



Tanisha Welsh was a student at Seymour College, which is a school involved in the Our Place initiative. Her love of drawing and painting is inspired by her aunts who have been teaching her the meanings and stories behind Aboriginal artworks.

One of Tanisha's teachers talked to her about her artwork and she noted that the school lacked any vibrant and lively displays of Aboriginal culture, ones that

would engage its youth. Tanisha initiated conversations with the school staff about this challenge and these discussions sparked the idea to openly display Aboriginal artwork within the school.

Tanisha was asked to design a piece that would tell the story of Seymour College; to consider how it could be displayed in a way that the entire school community could engage with it.

The motifs and symbols of Tanisha's artwork reflect the community of Seymour College. The large circle represents the sun, the daylight and school hours. It is also symbolic of new days and fresh starts. The tree trunk and its colour represent nature and reflect belonging to the earth. The animal tracks of the emu, lizard and kangaroo represent the different people and cultures of Seymour College coming together. And the group of dots represent the families and support groups that are of different sizes to reflect the different type of care.

After much thought and many designs, the school council endorsed a project to take one of Tanisha's artwork and paint on a school building wall. The project promotes the diversity of Seymour College by introducing and celebrating a piece of Australian Aboriginal culture, in a creative and open way.

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Our Place acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia, the Traditional Custodians of the lands that we live and work on. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

In Victoria, Bunjil's lore states that those who walk on this land must care for the Country and waterways as well as care for the children and young people and Our Place is committed to upholding Bunjil's lore.

# Message from Reconciliation Australia CEO



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

Our Place 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 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 Our Place 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 Our Place, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine  
Chief Executive Officer

# Message from Colman Education Foundation | Our Place CEO

I am proud to present the first Our Place Reconciliation Action Plan.

Our Place is a holistic place-based approach to supporting the education, health and development of all children and families in disadvantaged communities by utilising the universal platform of a school. Through our work, we are committed to developing our knowledge and practice in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Reconciliation is founded on respect for, and consideration of, cultural beliefs, customs and practices in our everyday interactions to ensure the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all facets of life. Specifically, reconciliation aims to address any existing norms, attitudes and practices that might pose barriers to inclusion and participation.

This concept is at the heart of what Our Place aims to achieve for all children, families and communities that we work with. Utilising the universal platform of a school, we work to increase access to services for children and families to enable them to achieve their aspirations for education health and wellbeing.

However, we know there are unique and entrenched barriers and issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples owing to the suffering and loss they have experienced since Europeans arrived on

the Australian continent. Reconciliation Action Plans are an important mechanism to look beyond simple and tokenistic actions to ones that really address inequities, promote healing and create empowerment.

The Our Place Reconciliation Action Plan 2022–2023 expresses our aspirations to help achieve tangible positive changes in the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader community. It also provides us with the mechanism and framework to keep ourselves accountable to our commitment.

The development of our first Reconciliation Action Plan has involved a cross-section of passionate employees. Throughout the development process, the whole team has actively engaged in sharing views and thoughts on reconciliation as well as encouraging each other to learn more about the realities facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in everyday life while recognising and celebrating the culture, beliefs and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

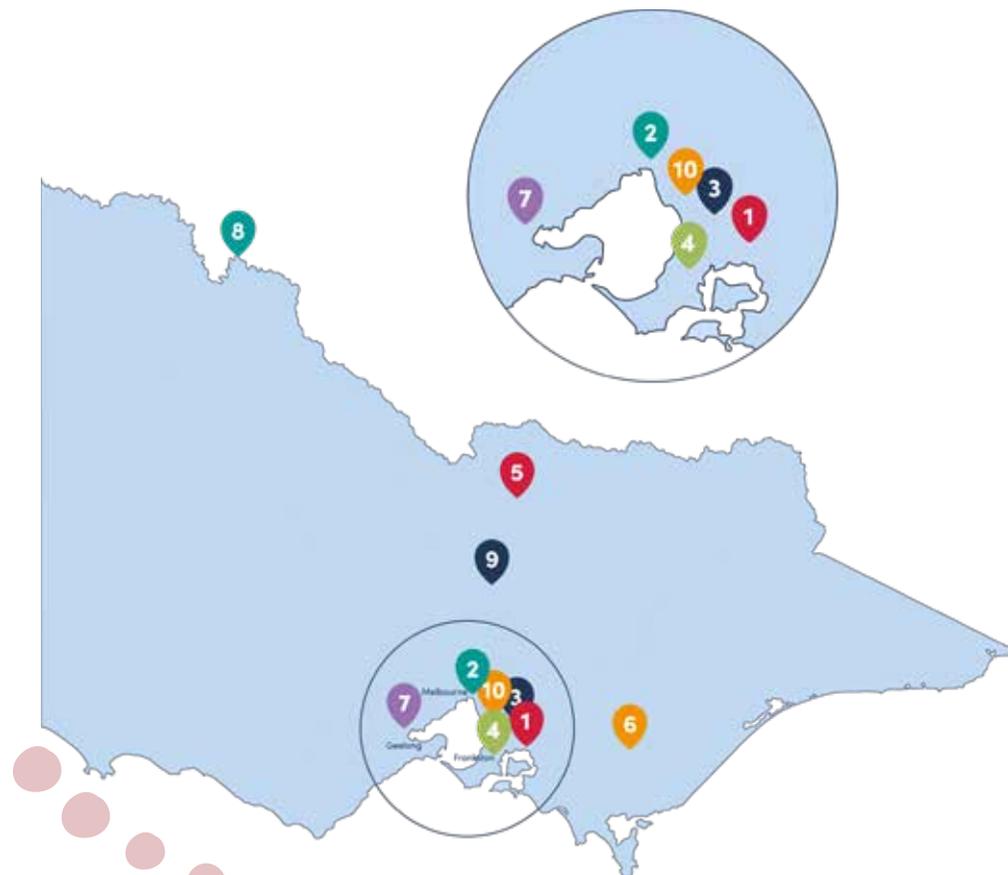
I feel confident that the Our Place team share my commitment to seeing our Plan successfully implemented. I am also excited to work with our partners to achieve our aspirations in this Plan.

# Our Business



Our vision is one where all children and their families succeed in life. And to achieve that vision, Our Place takes a holistic place-based approach to supporting the education, health and development of all children and families in disadvantaged communities by utilising the universal platform of a school. We aim to reshape the service system by influencing changes in policies and practices that address the structural causes of disadvantage. Evidence indicates that education is the key to lifting the aspirations and improving the lives of children and their families. We refer to our role as 'The Glue', as we facilitate partnerships that enable the school to be the central place for learning and support services that overcome barriers to education achievement.

Our Place is an initiative of the Colman Education Foundation. Through the Foundation's ten-year partnership with the Victorian State Government, the Our Place approach is being implemented in ten school sites across Victoria, with the support of philanthropic partners and other agencies.



## KEY

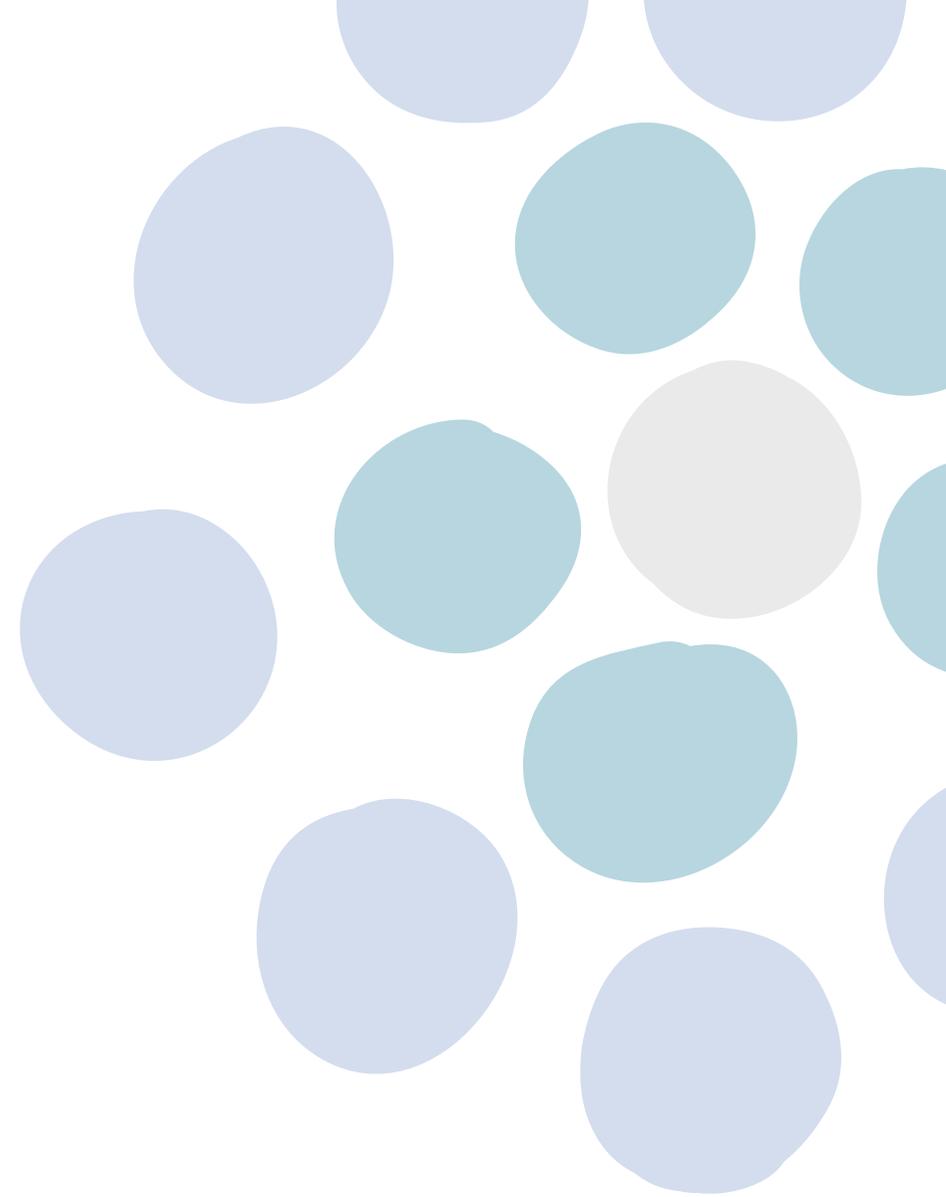
- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 Bridgewood      | 6 Morwell      |
| 2 Carlton         | 7 Northern Bay |
| 3 Doveton         | 8 Robinvale    |
| 4 Frankston North | 9 Seymour      |
| 5 Mooroopna       | 10 Westall     |





We commenced operations in November 2017, and currently have 40 staff employed. We are a relatively new organisation and are keen to explore and start capturing data on the number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff we have.

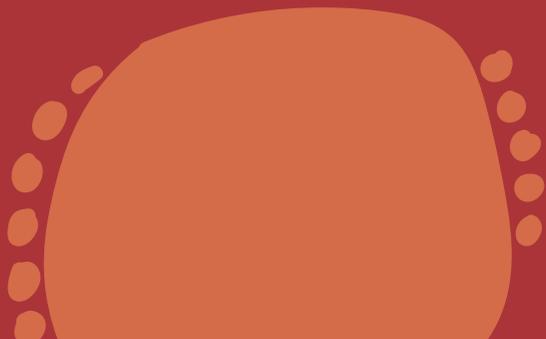
The lands on which we are based are both regional and metropolitan in Victoria; Robinvale, Seymour, Morwell, Mooroopna, Corio Bay, Doveton, Officer, Carlton, Frankston North and Westall.



# Our RAP



Our Place staff recognise the inherent value of reconciliation and many of us practise the basic tenets of building relationships, respect and looking for opportunities to improve the socio-economic outcomes of all children and families in communities – especially Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities. However, we need to elevate our good intentions and adhoc approach to a more strategic approach that will reaffirm our commitment to reconciliation and support authentic action and progress towards our vision.



# Our journey so far



Many of the staff at Our Place have a heightened awareness and thirst to learn more about the First Nations Peoples' histories, cultures, and way of life. To that end, the following are a sample of our practices:

## Rituals and Norms

- We practice a ritual for all staff meetings of Acknowledging Country and sharing information and knowledge about the country that each team is located on. This same ritual is practiced at many opportunities, from the first time someone comes to know us, at internal and external meetings, and at other significant occasions.
- We participate in activities that celebrate NAIDOC, National Reconciliation Week and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander festivals
- Staff maintain a dedicated channel for informal sharing of resources that promotes learning and awareness (webinars, documentaries, films, podcasts, children's books, literature, non-fiction, music and paintings).

## Learning and Growing

- As part of the organisation's Building Capability priority, we run learning series encouraging staff to immerse themselves in learning and reminding ourselves of what it means to practice the concepts of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion.
- On an annual basis, we are committed to investing in cultural capability training for our staff and auditing our practices and systems to assess where we need to make changes.
- We regularly engage and seek to learn from our partners (philanthropy government and others) as to best practices, resources and other insights from their own journey towards reconciliation.

## Relationships and Partnerships

- Given that each of the Our Place sites is located on school premises, part of our work is to identify and connect with Aboriginal-led services agencies and school resources such as Koorie Education Support Officers.
- Our Seymour site has connected with the Taungurung Land and Water Council and the Local Aboriginal Network and have identified opportunities to collaborate on local projects.
- Our Robinvale site has established a connection with the Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-Operative - a key pillar of the collaborative and strategic group shaping the community's future.
- Our Corio Bay site has a relationship with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operation and actively looks for opportunities to work together.

# Our RAP Working Group



We have established a working group that is a cross section of the organisation.

As a group we are committed to the following guiding principles when determining how to best engage with reconciliation, that is:

- To be authentic and not just 'ticking a box'
- To embed the actions in our day-to-day work
- To practice leadership; understanding and articulating our own agency, responsibility, and power (including privilege) that we bring to decisions we make.

Our RAP champions have been working through each of the actions and the deliverables, unpacking them and determining how to best meet these in an authentic and sustainable manner. The group consists of the following staff:

CEO, (RAP Sponsor)

Director Capability (Leadership member)

Director Services, Development (Leadership member)

Partnership Manager, Robinvale

Community Facilitator, Seymour

Community Facilitator, Northern Bay

Partnership Manager, Mooroopna

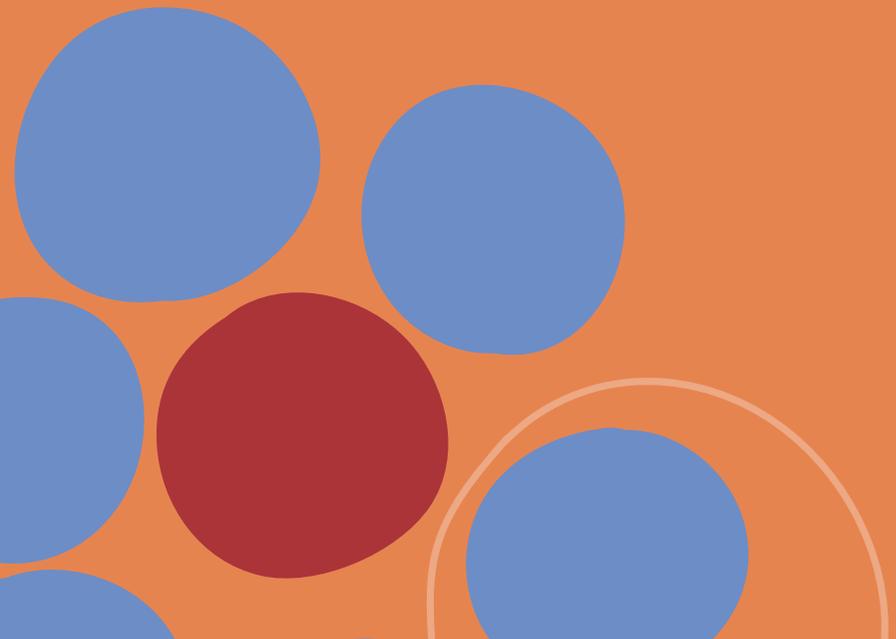
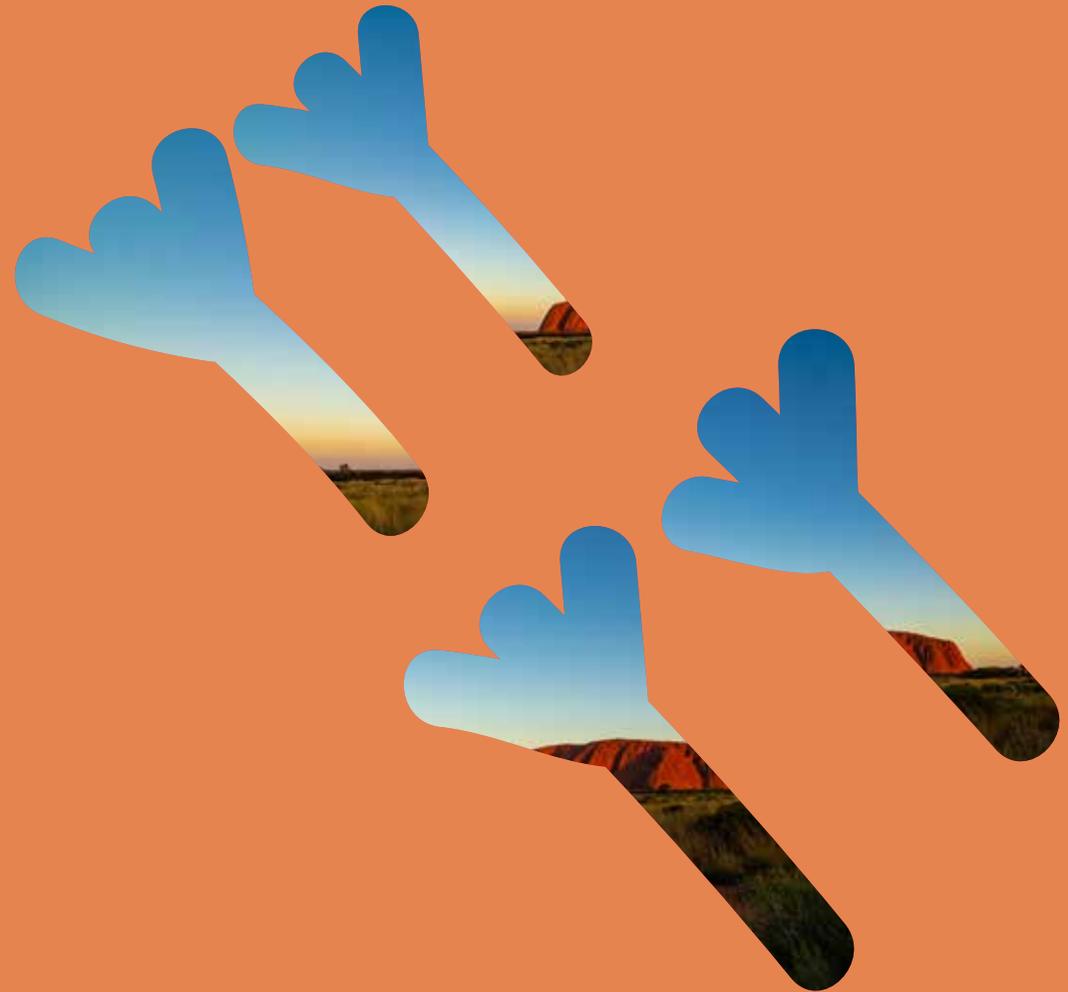


# Our Partners



Our Place is an initiative of the Colman Education Foundation. Through the Foundation's ten-year partnership with the Victorian State Government, specifically the Department of Education and Training. The Our Place approach is being implemented in ten school sites across Victoria, with further support of philanthropic partners.

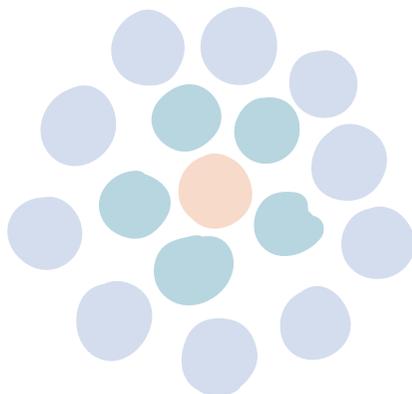
Furthermore, a range of other philanthropic entities have partnered with the Colman Education Foundation to help leverage this opportunity for meaningful and lasting impact. These partners, along with the government are supportive of our reconciliation journey. Like the local Aboriginal led organisations in our networks, they act as our critical friends.



# Relationships

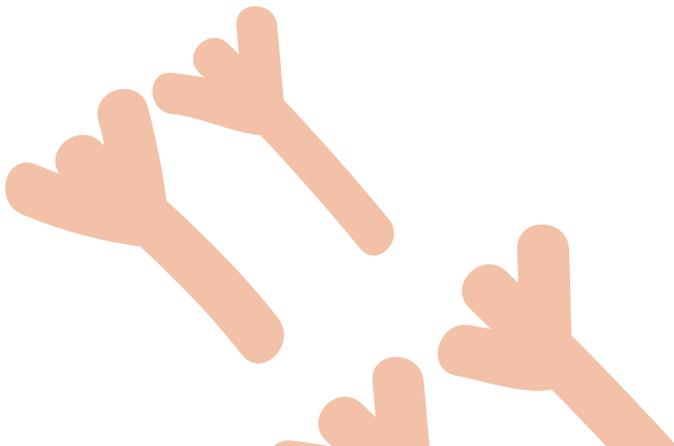


ACTION	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</p>	<p>Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local areas (10 sites) and disseminate to all site teams to enable connection.</p>	<p>September 2022</p>	<p>Director Services, Development</p>
	<p>Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</p>	<p>September 2022</p>	<p>Community Facilitator, Seymour</p>
<p>2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).</p>	<p>Circulate Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.</p>	<p>May 2022</p>	<p>Director Capability</p>
	<p>RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.</p>	<p>27 May - 3 June 2022</p>	<p>Director Capability</p>
	<p>Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</p>	<p>27 May - 3 June 2022</p>	<p>CEO</p>





ACTION	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff at the staff retreat.	May 2022	CEO
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	June 2022	Partnership Manager, Mooroopna
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	July 2021	Community Facilitator, Northern Bay
4. Promote positive relationships through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of intercultural relationships and anti-discrimination policies.	November 2022	Director Capability
	Conduct a review of Human Resources policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	January 2023	Director Capability





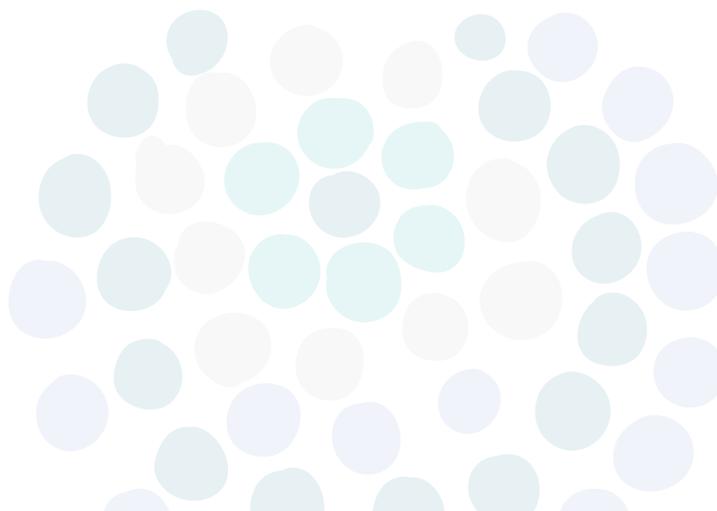
ACTION	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning</p>	<p>Review and update a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisations.</p>	<p>July 2022</p>	<p>CEO &amp; Director Capability</p>
	<p>Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisations.</p>	<p>July 2022</p>	<p>Community Facilitator, Seymour</p>
<p>2. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.</p>	<p>Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational areas (10 sites).</p>	<p>December 2022</p>	<p>Community Facilitator, Northern Bay</p>
	<p>Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance of cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.</p>	<p>August 2022</p>	<p>Director Capability + Director Services, Development</p>
<p>3. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.</p>	<p>Raise awareness and share information among our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.</p>	<p>June 2022</p>	<p>Director Capability</p>
	<p>Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.</p>	<p>First week of July 2022</p>	<p>Director Capability</p>
	<p>RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.</p>	<p>First week of July 2022</p>	<p>Director Capability</p>



# Opportunities



ACTION	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.</p>	<p>Review and update business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation, including signing up to Career Trackers.</p>	<p>November 2022</p>	<p>Director Capability + Partnership Manager Seymour + Partnership Manager Mooroopna</p>
	<p>Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.</p>	<p>November 2022</p>	<p>Director Capability</p>
<p>2. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.</p>	<p>Review and update business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.</p>	<p>July 2022</p>	<p>Senior Commercial Officer</p>
	<p>Investigate Supply Nation membership.</p>	<p>August 2022</p>	<p>Senior Commercial Officer</p>

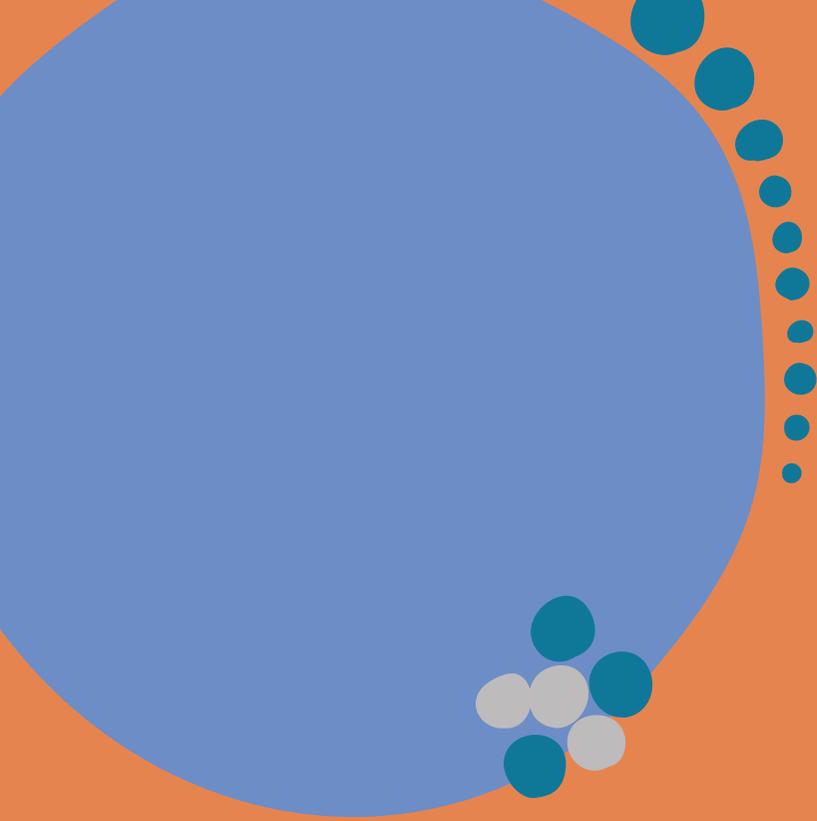


# Governance



ACTION	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Review and update RWG to govern RAP implementation.	April 2022	Director Capability
	Review and update Terms of Reference for the RWG.	May 2022	Director Capability
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	December 2022	Partnership Manager, Robinvale + Community Facilitator Seymour
2. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Review and update resource needs for RAP implementation.	May 2022	CEO & Director Capability
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2022	CEO
	Review and update systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments (e.g. traffic light system).	August 2022	Director Capability

ACTION	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
3. 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	Director Capability
4. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2022	Director Capability



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**REFLECT —  
RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN CONTACT**

Kalliope Rougos, *Director Capability*

