



**Legal  
Aid** For  
Tasmanians

**Reflect.**

# Reconciliation Action Plan

**May 2021 - November 2022**



## Acknowledgement of Country

Tasmania Legal Aid acknowledges and pays respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of the land and waters of this island, lutruwita (Tasmania), where we live and work.



## About the Artist

Caleb Nichols-Mansell is a visual artist, graphic designer and photographer as well as the Founder and Creative Director of Blackspace Creative Arts and Cultural Hub.

He is a proud palawa man with deep connections to Country, Community and Spirit. Caleb's lineage traces back to his Ancestral Grandfather, Chief Mannalargenna through his daughters and their descendants.

Caleb currently lives in Burnie in the north-west of the state with his partner. Through his visual art forms and photography, Caleb tells his stories and those of his Old People while sharing the cultural knowledges and pride of palawa people. Caleb's art reflects his deep connections and intimate knowledge of Country and the palawa community.

The artwork chosen for this Reconciliation Action Plan depicts kunikong/Pig Face. Kunikong is a succulent found on coastlines throughout the state. The plant is edible and provides hydration when water is not available. This plant has been used by his people for thousands of years as food and medicine.

The artwork is a response to the theme of this Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan. When life gets busy and things become too much, Caleb takes time to reflect and refocus sitting on the sandy shores of the north-west coast often cushioned by the softness of kunikong.

[www.calebnicholsmansell.com.au](http://www.calebnicholsmansell.com.au)



## About Tasmania Legal Aid

Tasmania Legal Aid provides legal information, advice, referrals and representation to Tasmanians. Tasmania Legal Aid is an independent statutory body established by the Legal Aid Commission Act 1990 (Tasmania).

We have four offices across the State, located at Burnie, Devonport, Hobart and Launceston. We employ approximately 110 staff.

Tasmania Legal Aid's vision is for all Tasmanians to be safe, respected and to have their voices heard. Our purpose is:

- To provide legal services to help Tasmanians understand their rights, navigate the system to resolve their legal issues, and get the assistance they need.
- To support and advocate for vulnerable and marginalised Tasmanians.
- To work with our clients, staff, legal partners and community to improve the legal system.

We help people with a range of legal problems. In 2019 - 20, Tasmania Legal Aid provided around 70,000 legal services to Tasmanians, assisting them with family law, child safety, family violence, civil law, youth justice and criminal matters.

We provide services for older Tasmanians through our Senior Assist program and people living with disability thorough our Mental Health and NDIS programs.

We are a major provider of legal services for First Nations Peoples who make up approximately eight per cent of our clients receiving a grant of legal aid.

[www.legalaid.tas.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.tas.gov.au)

## Our Commitment - First Nations People and the Justice System

The Tasmanian Aboriginal people are the Traditional Owners and continuing Custodians of the lands and waters of lutruwita/Tasmania where we live and work. As a result of colonisation, the Tasmanian Aboriginal people have experienced a history of dispossession, discrimination and disadvantage. The continuing impact of this experience is evident in the disparities between the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and other Tasmanians across the range of social indicators, including their experiences of the justice system.

While First Nations Peoples comprise 4.6 per cent of the Tasmanian population<sup>i</sup> they are disproportionately represented in the Tasmanian criminal justice, youth justice and child safety systems. They are significantly more likely to experience detention, with First Nations Peoples comprising 19% of the Tasmanian adult prisoner population in 2018.<sup>ii</sup> Around one quarter of all children in Out of Home Care were First Nations in 2017-18, despite only approximately 10 per cent of all Tasmanian children and young people identifying as First Nations.<sup>iii</sup> Similarly, First Nations children are being locked up at Ashley Youth Detention Centre at four times the rate of other Tasmanian young people.<sup>iv</sup> Tasmania, Northern Territory and Queensland were the only jurisdictions where the rate of First Nations young people on community orders rose between 2014-18. First Nations women and girls also experience a disproportionately high rate of family violence, trapping families and communities in cycles of crisis.<sup>vi</sup>

TLA recognises the resilience, capacity and determination of First Nations Peoples to overcome these structural inequalities. We are committed to working with local communities to ensure our legal services are culturally welcoming and safe for First Nations Peoples; and by advocating for justice system reforms. We recognise that self-determination is central to achieving this.

Approximately eight per cent of our clients identify as a First Nations person. As a major provider of legal services to First Nations Peoples, TLA must build our relationships with our local First Nations communities to strengthen our capacity to deliver culturally responsive and accessible legal services. The RAP will support this objective by strengthening our relationships with First Nations organisations and communities, creating genuine and sustainable partnerships to increase the cultural awareness, skills and practices of our staff and developing an organisational culture that is respectful and safe for our First Nations clients and staff. The RAP will inform the Memorandum of Understanding with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service (TALS).

TLA has an important role to play in advocating for justice system reforms to improve outcomes for First Nations Peoples, including young people and children in the child safety system. As the largest legal assistance organisation in Tasmania, this RAP provides the platform for TLA to be a leader in promoting reconciliation and structural change in the Tasmanian legal profession and across the justice system.

## Development of the Reconciliation Action Plan

We have adopted a consultative and collaborative approach to developing this RAP. The specific actions have been identified in consultation with our staff. We have sought to engage First Nations organisations and communities in the process. A survey highlighted strong staff support for the RAP. Staff identified the need for cultural training and skills development for staff and the importance of engaging with local First Nations communities and advocacy in the justice system as priority areas for our RAP. Workshops delivered by Reconciliation Tasmania, and facilitated by members of the Aboriginal communities, were attended by over sixty per cent of our staff around the State. The workshops addressed the historical context of First Nations Peoples in Tasmania, helping to build staff awareness and provide the foundation for our RAP activities.

The primary focus for our Reflect RAP will be to establish the foundations for future RAPs by supporting our staff to build relationships with local First Nations communities and organisations at a personal and organisational level. We will also develop opportunities to increase the employment of First Nations people at TLA by creating employment pathways for First Nations students and graduates.

Our RAP is overseen by the RAP Working Group. It is chaired by the TLA Director, and has staff from TLA offices in each region and a Board member.

The Associate Director of the Civil Law Program is TLA's RAP Champion.

The membership of the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group will change over time, but it will always have members representing each of the regions where Tasmania Legal Aid offices are based.

## Our Partnerships and Current Activities

Tasmania Legal Aid works closely with First Nations organisations in Tasmania to ensure that First Nations Peoples can access legal services when they need them. We will strengthen our relationship with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service (TALS) through a Memorandum of Understanding, and collaborate with other organisations to improve our services.

More broadly, TLA encourages staff to participate in national events such as NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week and we are included in the Department of Justice's diversity and inclusion initiatives, including the Aboriginal Cultural Respect training and the production of Acknowledgement of First Nations people and Country plaques.

Aboriginal staff members can join the Aboriginal Employment Network promoted through the Department of Justice.

## Endnotes

[i] ABS, 2016 Census Quick Stats: Tasmania

[ii] ABS, Prisoners in Australia, 2018 Cat No: 4517.0

[iii] Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania, 2019 Monitoring Report No. 1 The Tasmanian Out-of-Home Care System and “Being Healthy” Out-of-Home Care Monitoring Program 2018-19

[iv] ibid

[v] “Tasmania has the longest youth justice supervision orders, report finds” The Examiner 14 May 2020

[vi] ABS, 2019 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Experiences of Family and Domestic Violence, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014-15 Cat No: 4714.0





## Relationships

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible
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.	Sept. 2021	Assoc. Director, Civil Law
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Sept. 2021	Director
2 Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	27 May - 3 June 2021/22	Director
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external National Reconciliation Week event.	27 May - 3 June 2021/22	Assoc. Director, Civil Law
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June 2021/22	Director
3 Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	May 2021, Sept. 2022	Director
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	Sept. 2022	Director
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	Sept. 2022	Director
4 Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	Aug. 2021	Staff & Dev. Coordinator
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	Aug. 2021	Staff & Dev. Coordinator



## Relationships

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible
5 Develop new partnerships with local Aboriginal organisations and communities.	Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service.	June 2021	Director
	Establish relationships between TLA offices and local communities and organisations.	Dec. 2021	Associate Director, Family Practice (NW office) Manager, Criminal Practice (Launceston) Associate Director, Criminal Practice (Hobart office), Associate Director, Civil Law, (Hobart office)
	Collaborate with local Aboriginal organisations and communities to develop strategies to increase the awareness of and access to TLA services by Aboriginal people in the local regions.	Sept. 2022	Associate Director, Family Practice (NW office) Manager, Criminal Practice (Launceston) Associate Director, Criminal Practice (Hobart office), Associate Director, Civil Law, (Hobart office)



## Respect

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible
6 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.	July 2021	Staff & Dev. Coordinator
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Dec. 2021	Staff & Dev. Coordinator
7 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.	Dec. 2021	Policy Officer
	Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	Dec. 2021	Assoc. Director, Civil Law
	Include Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners in all staff email signatures.	July 2021	Director
8 Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2021/22	Assoc. Director, Civil Law
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2021/22	Assoc. Director, Civil Law
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2021/22	Assoc. Director, Civil Law



## Respect

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible
9 Create culturally safe and welcoming spaces in all TLA offices	Display Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and Australian flags at reception in all offices.	June 2021	Policy Officer
	Consult with local communities about how to make TLA offices culturally safe and welcoming.	Dec. 2021	Policy Officer
	Promote and display appropriate art and signage in all offices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Display cultural materials in all offices</li><li>• Purchase artworks of local Aboriginal artists for each office</li><li>• Koori Mail subscriptions for all office.</li></ul>	July 2021	Associate Director, Family Practice (NW office) Manager, Criminal Practice (Launceston) Associate Director, Criminal Practice (Hobart office) Associate Director, Civil Practice, (Hobart office)
10 Build culturally respectful services	Establish a First Nations Clients Advisory Group.	Dec. 2021	Policy Officer
	Arrange cultural training and skills development for all Tasmania Legal Aid staff.	Dec. 2021	Staff & Dev. Coordinator
	Promote staff adoption of culturally appropriate language where possible eg local language usage.	July 2021	Director



# Opportunities

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible
11 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.	June 2022	Staff & Dev. Coordinator
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	July 2021	Staff & Dev. Coordinator
12 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	March 2022	Assoc. Director Business Services
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	May 2021	Assoc. Director Business Services
13 Increase advocacy to improve justice system outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Develop advocacy case to increase the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years.	July 2021	Director
	Build collaborative partnerships with external stakeholders and organisations to advocate for changes to justice system outcomes.	Sept. 2022	Director
14 Create employment pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	Investigate opportunities for a work experience program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in non-legal areas.	May 2022	Staff & Dev. Coordinator
	Collaborate with the Riawunna Centre for Aboriginal Education and the Faculty of Law (UTAS) to explore internships and scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and graduates.	Dec. 2021	Director

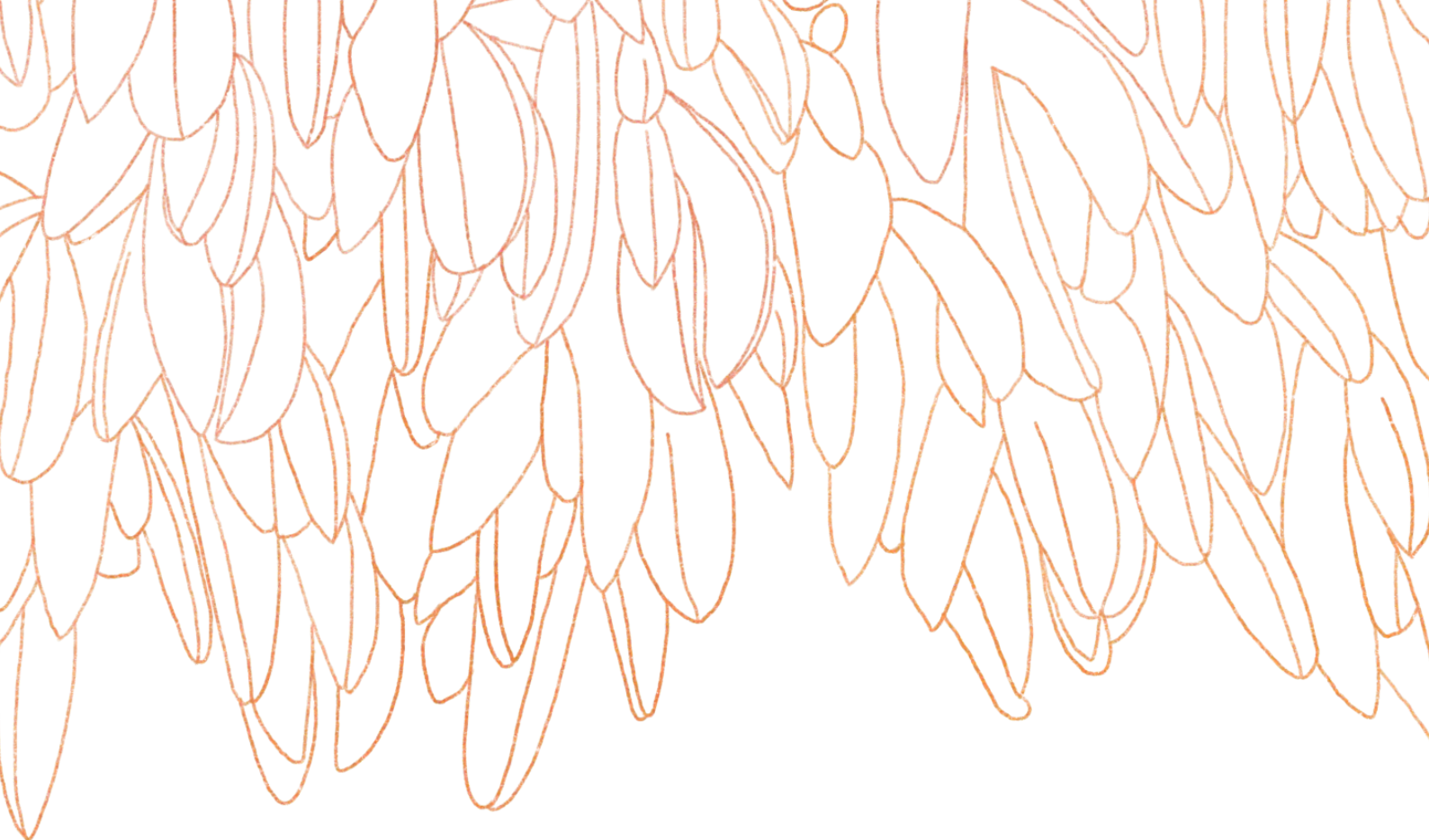




## Governance

Actions	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible
15 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	May 2022	Director
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	May 2021	Policy Officer
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	June 2021	Policy Officer
16 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	May 2021	Director
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	June 2021	Director
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	May 2021	Director
17 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 Sept. 2021/22	Policy Officer
18 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2022	Director





## **Contact:**

**Prue Cameron**  
*Policy Officer*

03 6236 3825

[Prue.Cameron@legalaid.tas.gov.au](mailto:Prue.Cameron@legalaid.tas.gov.au)

[www.legalaid.tas.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.tas.gov.au)