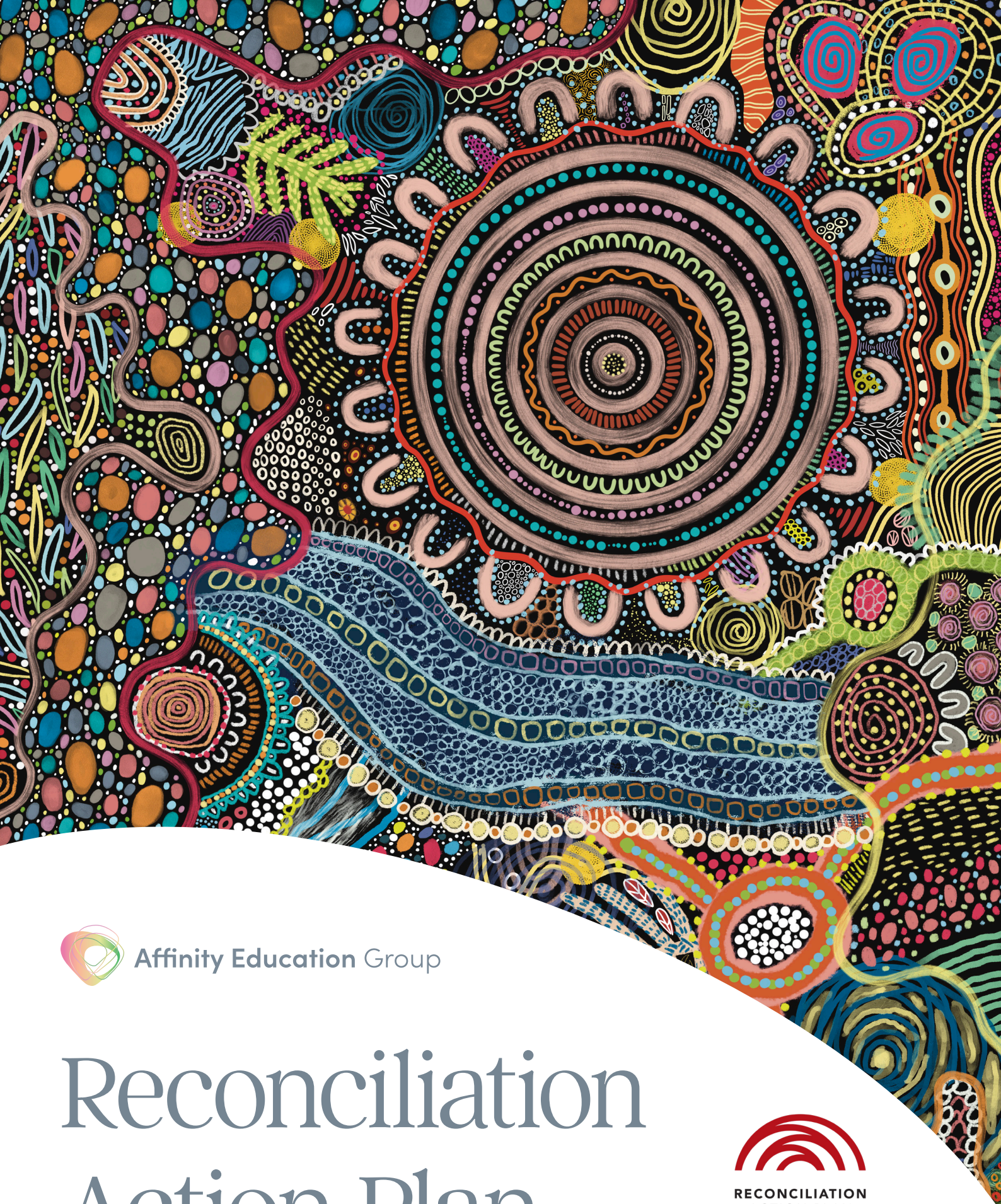




Affinity Education Group

Reconciliation Action Plan



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

NOVEMBER 2024 - JUNE 2026

Statement from
Reconciliation
Australia CEO
Karen Mundine

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

Affinity Education joins a network of more than 2,500 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 Affinity Education 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 Affinity Education, 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



“ 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. ”

Message from
our CEO

Tim Hickey

It is an exciting time for Affinity Education Group, which now operates more than 250 early education and childcare centres respectfully on the traditional lands of First Peoples across Australia. In creating this Reconciliation Action Plan, Affinity's Reconciliation Working Group has brought together people within our community who are passionate about the potential we have to support and strengthen cultural identity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, educators and teachers. Our promise to our people and to the children we educate and care for is Potential, Realised.

With this in mind, our Working Group has reflected on the important role of our educators and teachers in fostering connection to Country and First Nations culture. Their words are a powerful summary of the intentions which drive our RAP: "Reconciliation, to us, means reflection on actions, thoughts, behaviors, and practices. It involves acknowledging past actions, and working in solidarity towards healing. We recognise the need for a collaborative effort in accepting, reflecting, and moving forward together as a community."

Affinity's reconciliation journey will guide our growth and provide a pathway for positive change. Through our RAP, our people will be encouraged to highlight the important traditions, rites of passage and sense of kinship that are vital to children's sense of belonging and identity. We will invest in meaningful strategies to achieve our purpose, including cultural responsiveness training, stakeholder consultation and collaboration, promoting employment opportunities and incorporating First Nations perspectives.

Already, Affinity has taken the step of creating a formal partnership with Wandana Aboriginal Education. Their national calendar of events, resources and guides for early childhood educators and teachers are now being implemented across more than 230 centres owned and operated by Affinity as part of our Lifelong Learning Curriculum.

Through our Lifelong Learning Curriculum, and the release of our RAP, Affinity calls on our community to participate fully. To reflect on your ability to inspire and inform the next generation of Australian children. To create early education

communities and workplaces which foster inclusive, respectful practices.

Critical to the success of our RAP will be the willingness of our employees to add their voice and implement our shared vision. This is just the beginning – together, we will achieve Affinity's commitment and opportunities to build stronger relationships with and support for First Nations culture across Australia.

Tim Hickey

CEO

Affinity Education Group



“ Reconciliation, to us, means reflection on actions, thoughts, behaviours, and practices. It involves acknowledging past actions, and working in solidarity towards healing. We recognise the need for a collaborative effort in accepting, reflecting, and moving forward together as a community. ”



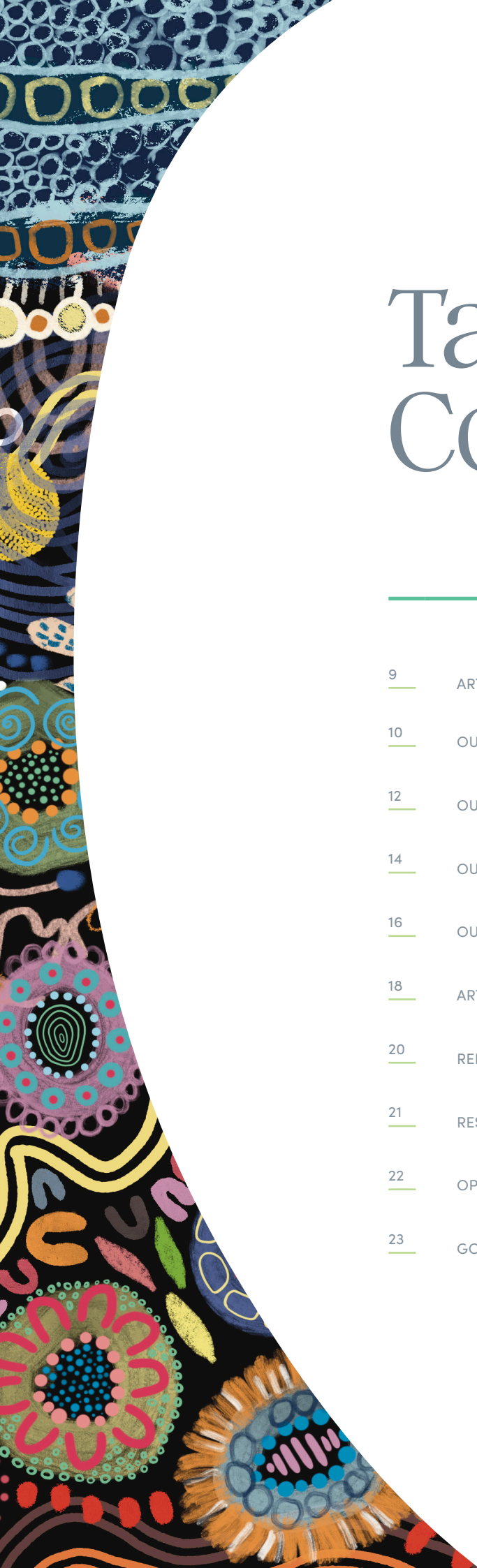


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Affinity Education Group

Artist Work Statement

Yama

In this artwork, I wanted to show a story of the journey of self-discovery. It has a tiny sprout growing and the colourful flowers represent a nurtured child blossoming in early education. The artwork symbolises the change and impacts you are making in the lives you touch every day. The Affinity Education Group has a strong connection to their children, parents and all stakeholders to ensure they feel empowered. I also wanted the artwork to be bright and fun-spirited representing how everyday work aligns with the values within Affinity. The artwork demonstrates the connection to community and coming together to benefit the lives of young Australian children.

Sincerely,

Wayde Clarke



Our Business

Affinity Education Group is a values-led provider of early childhood education and care, currently operating in 238 locations across Victoria, Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory.

At Affinity our mission is to realise potential in everyone. Our core values are Living the Team Spirit, Going Above and Beyond, Creating Shining Stars, Delivering Outstanding Professionalism, Being Completely Connected, and Having Serious Fun. Together as a community of more than 5702 Centre Managers, Early Childhood Teachers, Educators, and Centre Support Office employees,

we make a difference in the lives of more than 20,000 children and 8,000 families around Australia. We currently employ 169 staff who have identified to us as being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person within our organisation and actively encourage employment applications or promotional movement.

The award-winning Affinity Learning Academy, established in 2017, delivers fully paid on the job training and qualifications in early education and care, or Business studies to more than 500 of our employees every year, and our Bachelor Scholarship Pathway is supporting future early childhood teachers to achieve their dreams. Affinity's culture is described by our

people as supportive and values driven. Our Centre Support Office in Meanjin/Brisbane fulfills our value of being Completely Connected daily with our Milestones Early Learning, Kids Academy, Papilio Early Learning and Aussie Kindies centres around Australia.

At Affinity, our Safety Commitment is key to our daily operations, and we go above and beyond in this area for our people and for our children. Our dedicated Quality, Education, People & Culture, Family Enrollments, Compliance, Marketing and Facilities teams work together to ensure the 'Affinity Way' is delivered consistently.





Our Reconciliation *Action Plan*

Affinity Education Group is developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) because we believe in the importance of education, beginning in infancy, for fostering unity and harmony across the nation. Our commitment to this journey is based in the understanding that reconciliation is not a check box but an ongoing, dynamic process that requires true understanding, compassion, and empathy.

Reconciliation, to us, means reflection on actions, thoughts, behaviors, and practices. It involves acknowledging past actions, and working in solidarity towards a shared future.

Equality, respect, and understanding are fundamental aspects of reconciliation for us. It means actively speaking up against injustices and racism, asking the hard questions, and seeking to understand how we can build stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Reconciliation, to us, is a commitment to learning and collaboration, an ongoing journey of forming new discourses in society.



Our RAP aims to promote visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders cultures in our environments, integrate it into children's learning daily, and foster a shared understanding of past and present issues faced by First Nations communities.

In our workplace, we aspire to create a culturally safe space for discussions, and lifelong learning. Our goal is to provide a responsive environment where curiosity is welcomed, and individuals can actively engage in the journey of reconciliation. Through these actions, we hope to contribute to the creation of a better future for children and communities, marked by unity, understanding, and collaboration. The implementation of our Reconciliation Action Plan is a collaborative process aimed at fostering genuine reconciliation. Our approach involves the following key strategies:

- 1. Cultural Responsiveness Training:**
We will invest in cultural responsiveness training for all staff to ensure a deep understanding of First Nations cultures, histories, and perspectives. This training will be an essential foundation for creating an inclusive and respectful workplace.
- 2. Consultation and Collaboration:**
This involves engaging in meaningful dialogue, seeking input, and continuing to build and strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.
- 3. Incorporating First Nations Perspectives**
We are committed to incorporating First Nations perspectives across all aspects of our organization, from policies and decision-making to the visual representation of First Nations cultures in our physical and digital environments. This includes acknowledging Traditional Custodianship and featuring First Nations artworks in consultation with Traditional Custodians.
- 4. Promoting Employment Opportunities**
We will be actively working towards increasing the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within our workforce. This involves implementing inclusive hiring practices and providing support for career development.
- 5. Supporting First Nations Businesses**
We will prioritise procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses, fostering economic empowerment within these communities. This support extends to creating partnerships and opportunities for collaboration with First Nations entrepreneurs.
- 6. Monitoring and Evaluation**
Regular monitoring and evaluation processes will be in place to assess the effectiveness of our RAP. This includes tracking progress, gathering feedback from stakeholders, and making adjustments as needed to ensure ongoing improvement.

By adopting these strategies, we aim to make tangible progress in implementing our Reconciliation Action Plan, fostering a workplace culture that is not only respectful and inclusive but actively contributes to the broader goals of reconciliation in our society.

Our Reconciliation Journey

YEAR	MILESTONE
<u>February 2019</u>	Quality Assessment Process commenced to assess our services against the National Quality Standards and Affinity policies and procedures using a Quality Assessment Tool. Additional criteria was added within the Quality Assessment Tool to specifically assess practice relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples inclusion.
<u>April 2020</u>	Children's Acknowledgement of Country was created by Tina Albert, a proud Girramay woman and Educator from Milestones Early Learning Keperra. This was shared with families so they can do the same at home.
<u>2020</u>	A smoking ceremony was held at Milestones Early Learning Tingalpa.
<u>2021</u>	The board of Affinity Education Group began reviewing individual centre RAP data.
<u>August 2021</u>	NSW Reconciliation Working Group Established.
<u>October 2021</u>	SAP Jam Reconciliation Working Group created.
<u>October 2021</u>	Reconciliation Working Group consulted with Charles Lynch, the Northern Regional Councillor For the Aboriginal Lands Council, to support the development of our Reconciliation Program as well as reflecting on the importance of celebrating Reconciliation.
<u>November 2021</u>	3 x Reconciliation Working Group Members attended 2021 Australian Reconciliation Convention.

<u>January 2022</u>	A smoking ceremony was held to open the new outdoor learning environments for Tamworth CBD service
<u>2022</u>	Wayde Clarke art commissioned, starting with Papilio Orange. Branded artworks completed.
<u>2022</u>	Cards commissioned via artist Wayde Clarke for educational purposes showing various traditional First Nations storytelling symbols – These were then included in Enrolment Packs for families
<u>March 2022</u>	Service leaders participated in cultural immersion experiences led by Tim Selwyn from Girra Girra in NSW
<u>July 2022</u>	Affinity Centre Manager Conference was held and opened with a Welcome to Country.
<u>June 2023</u>	The ECA Reconciliation Symposium was attended by 3 Quality team members. This led to formalising a RAP Working Group for Affinity Education with the 3 Quality members as co-chairs.
<u>June 2023</u>	Dharug artists Tina Barahanos, Alexandra Byrne, Leanne Watson art commissioned and installed at Schofields.
<u>July 2023</u>	An Affinity Senior Leader attended a Smoking Ceremony at COS NAIDOC week event in Sydney.
<u>September 2023</u>	The RAP Working Group commenced monthly meetings to develop our RAP.
<u>November 2023</u>	Affinity reconnects with Wayde Clarke and formalizes agreement to continue to use artworks for future purposes including the potential of staff uniform designs.
<u>March 2024</u>	Affinity hosts Wayde Clark at Centre Manager Completely Connected Call to present back to current Centre Managers his story and statements about his art. National consultation survey commences to gauge employee feedback on new uniform designs incorporating Wayde Clark's artwork.
<u>March 2024</u>	Wandana Aboriginal Education program launched to services, including access to Wandana's online professional development portal and a resource pack mailed to each service.
<u>August 2024</u>	Wandana Aboriginal Education attends biannual Affinity Education Group Centre Manager conference. They opened the conference with an Acknowledgement of Country and blessing ceremony. On the second day, they let a Dadirri session for all attendees.
<u>August 2024</u>	Uniform range of polo shirts featuring artwork by Wayde Clarke are launched at the conference.
<u>September 2024</u>	Appointed a senior leader to champion our RAP internally

The inaugural national Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group was formed in February 2023 and currently includes the following members:

Co-chairs:

Amanda Andrew
Senior Quality Advisor – WA/NT

Melanie Nour
NSW/ACT Compliance & Quality Manager

Current members:

Jessica Mitchell
Education Project Advisor

Raechal Dare
Grants Coordinator

Allison Cooley
Quality Advisor – NSW Central

Christy Sinclair
Quality Advisor NSW/ACT Team leader

Natalie Higgs
Senior Quality Advisor – Victoria

Tameka Meehan
Area Manager – NT

Holly Taylor
Area Manager – QLD

Reconciliation Action Plan Executive Champion:

Chief Compliance and Quality Officer – Dr Lesley Jones



Our Partnerships



Affinity Education Group and Wandana Aboriginal Education have a collaborative partnership to support Educators and Teachers in building a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and culture and integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into our Lifelong Learning Curriculum across our Early Learning programs.

Statement from Wandana - "The entire Wandana Aboriginal Education team are thrilled to respectfully and mindfully support Affinity Education Group through their Lifelong Learning Programs across Australia. We greatly appreciate the guidance and support of our Aboriginal Elders and community leaders over many years and the opportunity to share some of their wisdom and insights to

create a better future for everyone. We value each and every member of the Affinity Education community and look forward to getting to know them and serve them into the future."

We work with artist Wayde Clarke, a Wirajuri/Birpai man, to commission art works that reflect our company and brands.

Artist Work Statement

The Journey - Gabby Collins



The Affinity Education Group painting titled 'The Journey' is a modern, contemporary Aboriginal painting. It pays homage to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Queensland and its local islands. This painting was created by Ms Gabby Collins, a proud Biripi Aboriginal lady from Wandana Aboriginal Education.

The concentric white circles represent meeting places across the land. The U shapes represent the local Aboriginal people of each area, coming together to share food, stories, culture and trade items. The colour is white to represent the traditional white ochre used in Ceremony for paint ups as well as for camouflage when hunting to mask body odour which may be detected by animals.

Each of the places are connected to represent the travel between each of the tribal peoples. The blue lines above and below are the many waterways across Queensland.

The small dotted waves in yellow and white which flow from right to left represent the many Affinity Education Group Centres and their communities across Queensland. They're flowing from right to left as several Aboriginal tribes believe that as young people we are fish. And as we mature and evolve we travel west and turn into kangaroos.

The large blue and white dotted circles top and bottom of the painting represent the Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander ancestors of the past, their connection to country, spirituality and contribution to society over thousands of years.



Wandana Aboriginal Education

“

The large blue and white dotted circles top and bottom of the painting represent the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of the past, their connection to country, spirituality and contribution to society over thousands of years.

”





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 2025	Chief Operations Officer
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	March 2025	Chief People Officer
	Scope opportunities, where appropriate, for families and community members who are part of Affinity learning communities to co-design policies used within early learning services to drive effective reconciliation in practice.	December 2025	RAP Working Group Chair and Wandana
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2025	RAP Working Group Chair and General Manager
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 June 2025	RAP Working Group 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 2025	Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	February 2025	Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	April 2025	RAP Working Group Chair
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	June 2025	RAP Working Group Chair
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	January 2026	Chief People Officer and Chief Safety Compliance and Quality Officer
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	April 2026	Chief People Officer and Chief Safety Compliance and Quality Officer



Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. 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.	June 2025	Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
	Conduct a national review of cultural learning needs within our organisation	March 2025	Chief People Officer
	In consultation with Wandana, develop and implement Cultural Responsiveness Training as part of the Affinity Education Group induction for all employees.	February 2025	Chief People Officer
2. 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.	March 2025	Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	December 2025	Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
3. 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 2025	RAP Working Group Chair and General Manager
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2025	General Manager and Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2025	RAP Working Group Chair



Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. 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.	November 2025	Chief People Officer
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	May 2025	Chief People Officer
2. 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.	May 2025	Chief Financial Officer
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	May 2025	Chief Financial Officer
3. Promote and facilitate opportunities for all staff across Affinity Education Group to engage with Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education program	Support early learning services to register with the Narragunnawali platform and begin the process of creating and maintaining a RAP via Narragunnawali, with a goal of 100% of services having a current RAP.	June 2025	Chief Operations Officer and Chief Compliance and Quality Officer



Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP	Build on the RWG to govern RAP implementation across all company departments.	February 2025	Chief People Officer
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	March 2025	Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG	May 2025	Chief People Officer
2. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	January 2025	Chief Financial Officer Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	January 2025	Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2025	Chief Compliance and Quality Officer
3. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	June 2025	RAP Working Group Chair
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey	1 August 2025	RAP Working Group Chair
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2025	RAP Working Group Chair
4. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	February 2026	RAP Working Group Chair



Affinity Education Group

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