



Upper Hunter Homeless Support acknowledges the lands of the Wanaruah people on which we work. We recognise the Wanaruah as the traditional custodians of the land and waterways and celebrate their unique cultural and spiritual relationship to Country.

We acknowledge that the land is, was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

We also acknowledge the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia and pay our respect to elders past, present and emerging

We support the “Uluru Statement from the Heart” and stand in solidarity with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve legal and structural reform.

We recognise the power of the three themes of the “Uluru Statement from the Heart”: voice, treaty, and truth – and pledge our support of self-determination, sovereignty, and reform for Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.





## Our Service

Housing plays a critical role in the health and wellbeing of Australians. One of the primary benefits of housing is shelter and the absence of affordable, secure and appropriate housing brings with it a range of negative outcomes, including poor health, higher levels of psychological distress and lower rates of employment and educational participation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise 3 per cent of the total Australian population but are over-represented at our service, with the numbers of clients identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander being around 30 to 35%. This over-representation of Aboriginal people accessing the service makes it essential we consider their well-being and cultural needs in all decision-making processes.

Upper Hunter Homeless Support is a not-for-profit organisation. We currently employ 15 staff, 7 Board members plus volunteers and work placement students. The UHHS main office with its community centre is in Muswellbrook and we service the Upper Hunter Region of NSW – covering the Singleton, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Local Government Areas.

UHHS Board and staff strive to provide culturally sensitive, flexible, accessible, responsive, and participatory services. The UHHS diversity statement is included at the end of this plan and displayed throughout the service.

## Developing our RAP

There are four different types of Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) that an organisation can develop: *Reflect, Innovate, Stretch & Elevate*. Each type of RAP is designed to suit an organisation at different stages of their reconciliation journey and organisations can repeat the same type of RAP if appropriate.

An Innovate RAP sets out the steps UHHS is taking to start the journey towards reconciliation. Committing to an Innovate RAP allows UHHS to begin the process of changing processes to better support Aboriginal staff and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. This process will help to move UHHS to an organisational with meaningful, mutually beneficial and sustainable relationships with Aboriginal cohorts and community groups.

UHHS recognise being at the innovate stage of the reconciliation journey with a view to moving towards the stretch stage as the next step. This stage of our Reconciliation Journey as documented in the RAP has been written after reaching out for input from local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities and UHHS staff.



## Reconciliation Action Plan

UHHS has worked alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues, associates and clients for many years. It is now time to take formal steps toward reconciliation.

UHHS is actively working to on reconciliation, striving towards greater inclusivity and cultural recognition. We use the Acknowledgement of Country on our social media presence and in person meetings; and display Aboriginal artwork and an Acknowledgement of Country in our Offices. Future activities include Cultural Awareness training for all staff, and formalising Aboriginal client supports into the staffing structure.

These are small steps of the long journey toward reconciliation. Following is an action plan tracing a pathway through which the service aims to construct a stronger and enduring relationship with Aboriginal communities in which we work and to better support Aboriginal staff members.

Goal	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility	Status
<b>Relationships</b>				
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	Create an Aboriginal advisory group made up of staff and community members	01/27	GM	Planning stage
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	10/26	PO	Underway



2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW), and events	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	Ongoing	GM	In place
	Encourage and support staff to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	12/26	GM / Team Leaders	Ongoing
3. Promote reconciliation through UHHS sphere of influence.	Demonstrate commitment to reconciliation through staff meetings and practices: 1. Welcome to Country at events and team meetings	Ongoing	GM & Team Leaders	Ongoing
	Identify and work with other like-minded organisations to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 2. UHCS, UH Lands Council, SNRC, SNC,	Ongoing	GM & Team Leaders	Ongoing
	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and antidiscrimination.	10/26	PO	Underway
4. Promote positive race relations through antidiscrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	8/26	PO	Discrimination policies updated in August 2024 & every 2 years.

UHHS Staff education and awareness				
1. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. Conduct Cultural awareness training to meet needs identified	10/26	Team Leaders / GM / PO	Planning
	Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country	Ongoing	GM	Underway
	Raise awareness and share information amongst staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	Ongoing	Team Leaders	Ongoing
2. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Encourage staff to take advantage of Cultural Leave entitlements.			
	Staff to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	Ongoing	GM / TL	Ongoing

3. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week and wider events	Staff to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	Ongoing	GM / TL	Ongoing
<b>Organisational Processes</b>				
1. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Give Aboriginal staff the opportunity for cultural supervision, with staff being able to choose to travel for on country supervision	07/26	GM and Team Leaders	Planning
2. Initiate cultural supervision for Aboriginal staff	Imbed into purchasing protocols an expectation that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses will be considered wherever possible.	01/27	FAO	Planning
3. Encourage commercial relationships with Aboriginal owned or led companies	Develop a business case for increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander employment	12/27	GM	Planning

Governance				
1. Embed the RAP practices and procedures in UHHS Governance.	RAP distributed to UHHS Board and staff. RAP published on UHHS website	05/26	GM	Underway
2. Establish and maintain an effective RAP	Establish and maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Board	Ongoing	GM	Ongoing
	Define resource needs for RAP implementation Present to UHHS Board for approval and adoption	06/26	GM	Underway
3. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Review and maintain appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	06/26	GM	Planning
	Engage all staff in the delivery of RAP commitments	Ongoing	GM & Team Leaders	Ongoing
	Investigate with a view to contacting Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire	12/26	PO	Planning



<p>4. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>6/26</p>	<p>PO</p>	<p>Planning</p>
	<p>Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our future RAP</p>	<p>01/28</p>	<p>PO</p>	<p>Planning</p>
<p>5. Continue the reconciliation journey by growing UHHS RAP to the stretch stage.</p>	<p>Work on 2028 RAP for 12 months in order to successfully evaluate current RAP and develop strategies for future RAP</p>	<p>2028</p>	<p>GM</p>	<p>Future</p>

