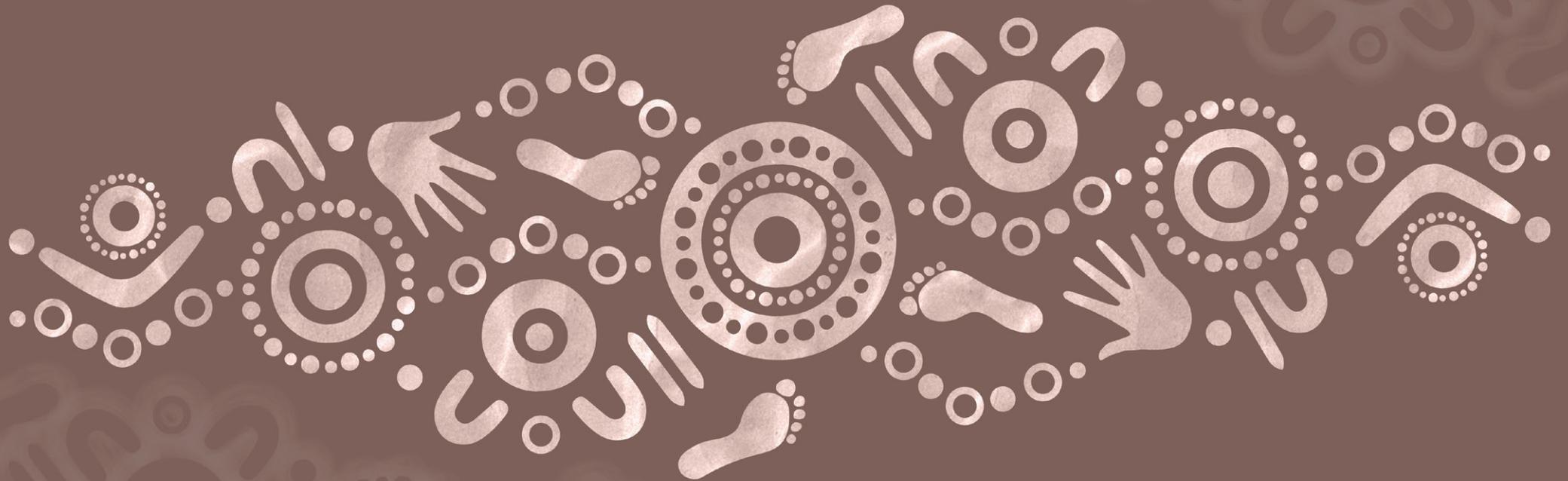


# WHITELION YOUTH AGENCY



## REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

January 2020 – June 2021



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

**REFLECT**

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

This artwork represents connection and community.

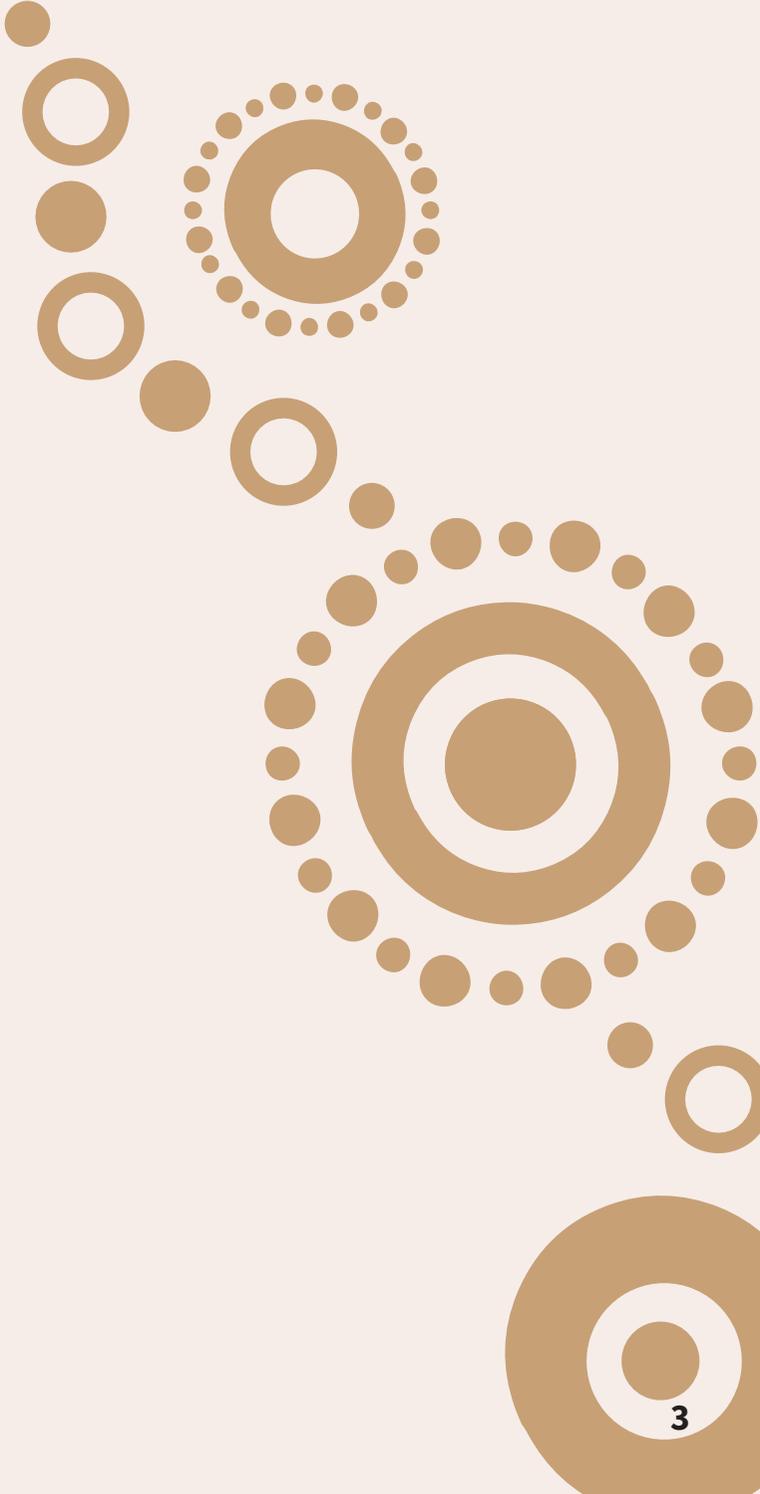
The larger circle in the centre represents Whitelion and its commitment to helping young people. The feet represent everyone's individual journey and their diverse cultures and experiences. The hands depict helping and guiding those that are at risk. The outer circles represent people coming from different communities, but the dots that flow; shows our connection to each other. The boomerangs represent returning to culture and principles to guide this reconciliation journey. The U-shape symbols represent youth participating in programs and social activities that help build resilience, character and life skills.

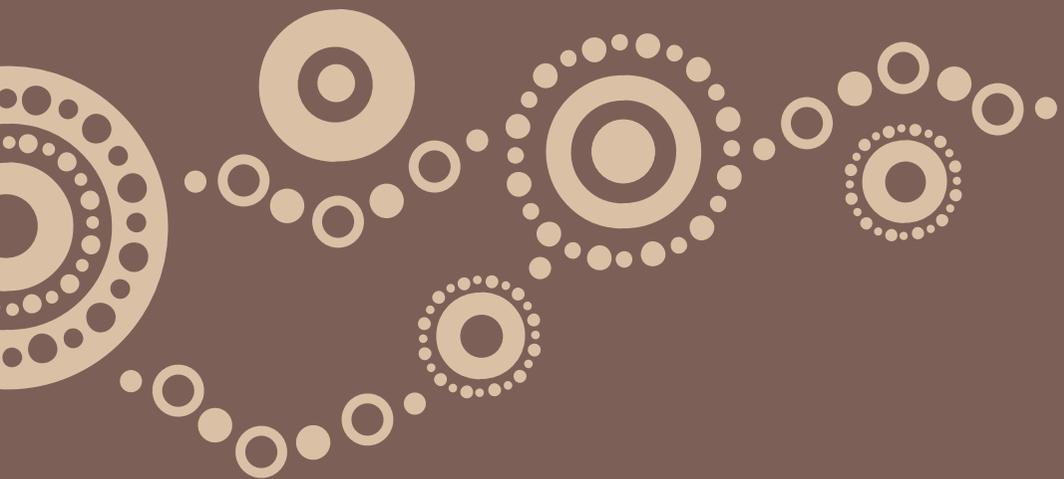


Graphic Design and Art by Dixon Patten  
Yorta Yorta, Gunnai and Gunditjmara  
Bayila Creative  
[www.bayila.com.au](http://www.bayila.com.au)

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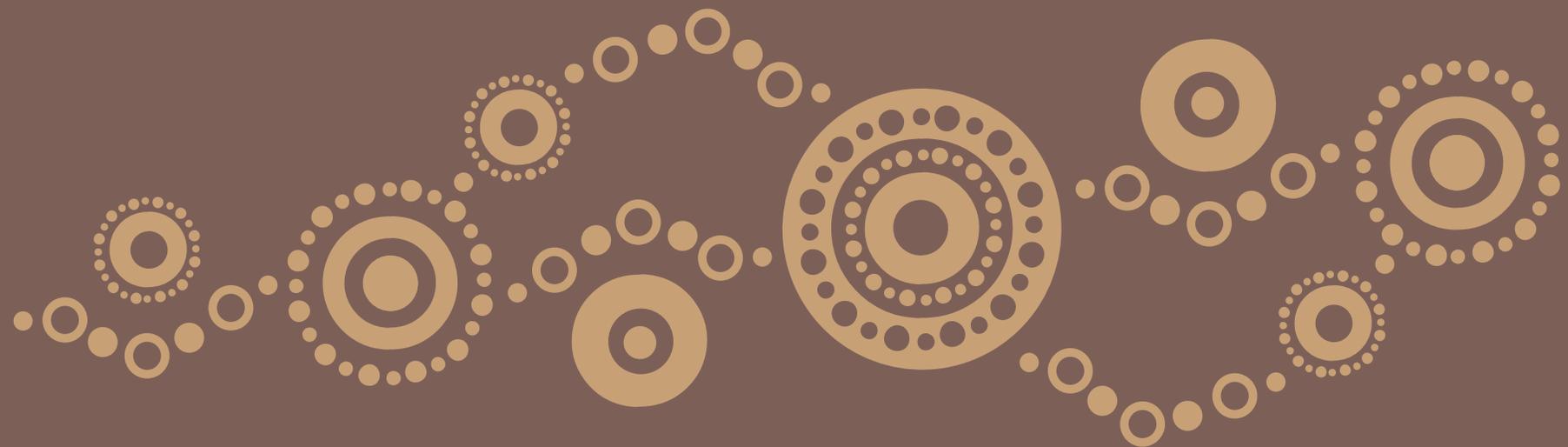
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Whitelion acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which it is situated, and we pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across the nation. We acknowledge the sorrow of the Stolen Generations and the ongoing impacts of colonisation and dispossession on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We recognise the strengths and resilience of Australia's First Peoples and champion a reconciled, just and equitable Australia. We believe in the sovereignty and right of Australia's First Peoples to determine their own future.



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

We are proud to launch Whitelion's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which seeks to formalise our organisation's commitment to a reconciled Australia. We will play our part in 'closing the gap' between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australians by ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young Peoples have equal and equitable opportunities for health, education, and employment. We will do this by strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and organisations; improving our workforce knowledge and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; and creating better opportunities for social connection and employment outcomes for at risk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young Peoples across the jurisdictions that we operate.

Reflecting on our 20 year anniversary, we are grateful for the deep connections that have been built with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner organisations across Victoria, NSW, SA, WA and Tasmania. We will continue to partner with, learn from and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young Peoples in everything we do.

The board together with senior management will take responsibility for honouring the commitments outlined in the RAP.

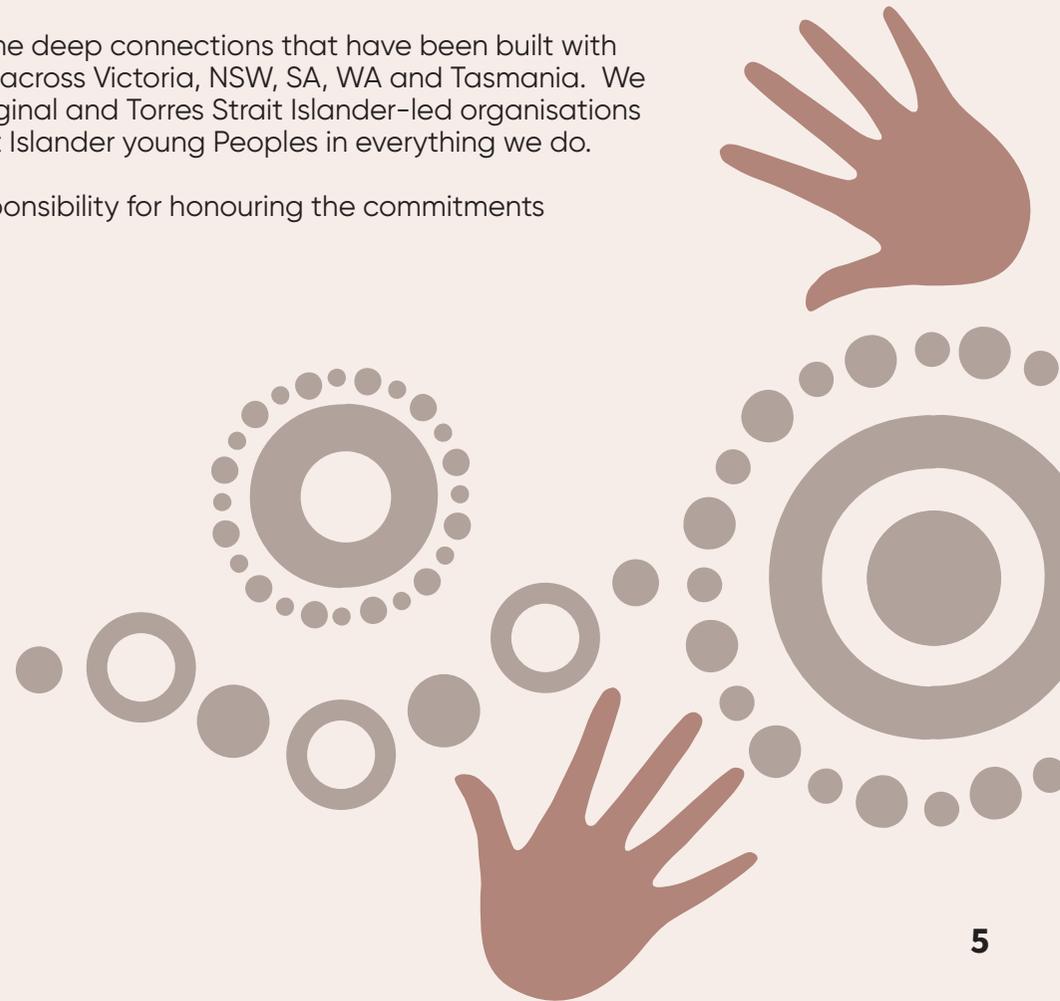
We look forward to sharing our journey with you.



Pauline Spencer  
Chair



Hang Vo  
Chief Executive



# OUR BUSINESS

## Our history

Whitelion began in 1999 with the vision to ‘stop the revolving door’ for young people leaving the justice system. In their work with young offenders, co-founders Mark Watt and Glenn Manton believed that by linking a young person with a mentor and a job upon release, their ability to re-integrate into the community would be improved. For the next 10 years, Whitelion’s focus on youth justice became a core strength recognised by governments, the youth sector, corporates and the general community as making a real difference to young people’s lives. Over the following years, Whitelion expanded its scope to respond to the multiple and complex needs of young people through mergers with like-minded organisations including Open Family Australia (2011), Stride (2014), Balga Detached Youth Work Project (2015), and Youth Connect (2016).

In 2018, the board and co-founder Mark Watt embarked on a journey of renewal and transformation by appointing Hang Vo as the CEO replacing Mark after 19 years at the helm. Throughout 2019, we undertook a review and analysis of our operations as well as considered the external environment and the future for young people. We determined that for Whitelion to be effective and sustainable in the years ahead, we had to refocus for greater impact. We analysed where we could have the most impact, what it is that we do best, and how can we become financially sustainable. Our focus is to go back to what we are good at. We are reaffirming our commitment to at risk young Peoples, and the importance of reducing social isolation and increasing access to work.

In the latter half of 2019, we undertook a major organisational change program ‘focus for impact’. We acted decisively to position for the future. We reduced the organisation by 20% to ensure we are more focussed on what we do. We have recommitted to at risk highly vulnerable young Peoples to achieve positive social connection and improved access to.

## Our future – Strategy 2023

Whitelion's vision is a world where no young person is left behind. Where all young people have the right to equitable opportunities to reach their potential. Whitelion exists to serve young people considered highly vulnerable and high risk due to being impacted by the justice system, out of home care, homelessness, and complex and chronic disadvantage.

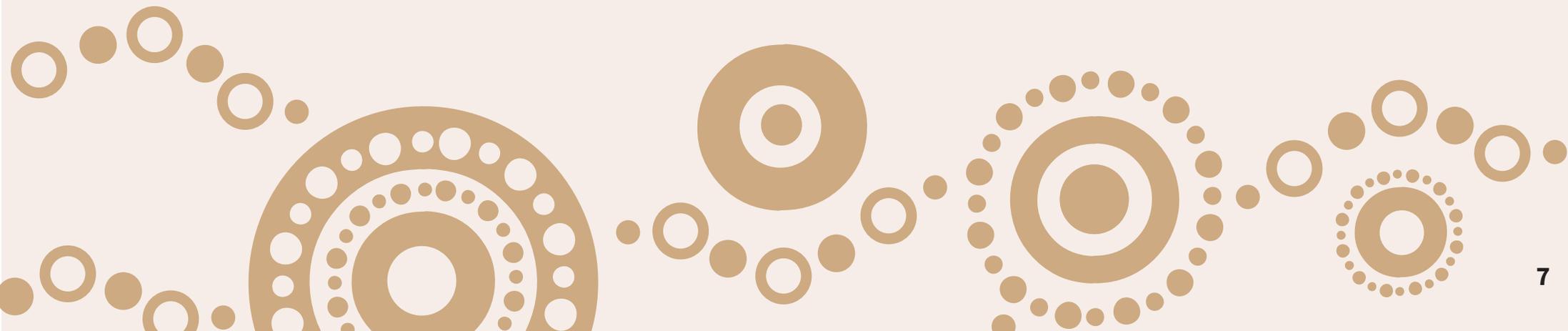
Whitelion has a team of 120 staff and more than 300 volunteers who provide support in aid of youth at-risk in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. Our services include street-based outreach programs, intensive case management, alternative education and training, mentoring, housing and employment support. In addition to direct service provision, Whitelion also contribute to systemic change by working in partnership with peak bodies, making submissions to inquiries and raising awareness about the structural inequities that lead to disengagement and unemployment in the first place.

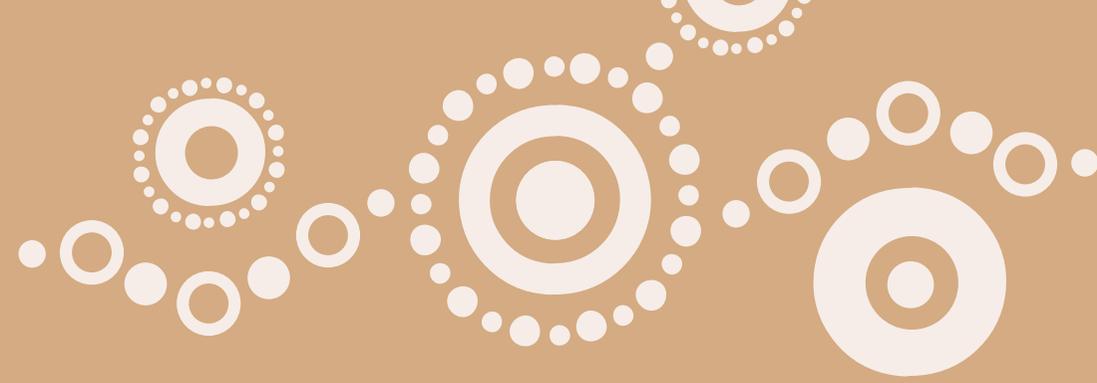


During financial year 2018-2019, we supported 2,394 young people of which 23% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

We are also committed to providing a safe environment for all peoples, regardless of their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity.

\*Whitelion acknowledges that at present time, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity of staff and volunteers is not routinely recorded. As part of our RAP journey, uniform recruitment processes will be developed and adopted to ensure this is addressed.





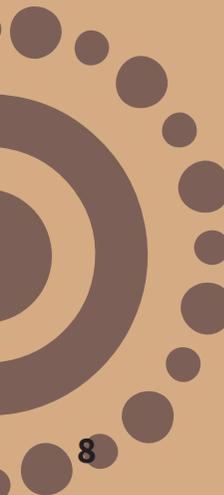
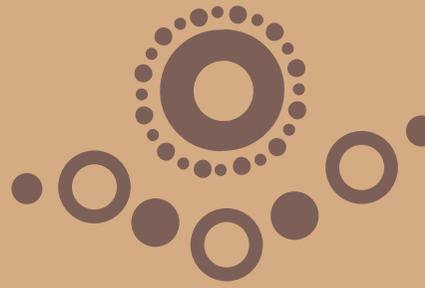
## OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Our RAP vision is for an Australia where everyone understands and acknowledges the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the first voices of this country, first spoken over 65,000 years ago. In recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, we believe the true histories pre and post colonisation must be told, heard and acknowledged.

Our Reflect RAP is underpinned by two key objectives: first, to formalise our reconciliation commitment of acknowledgement, validation and equity for Australia's First Peoples by building our workforce capabilities to understand and respect the histories, cultures and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In doing so, our second objective is to plan and deliver services for at risk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples that are culturally safe, responsive and inclusive. By building our organisation's capabilities we believe that we are better able to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to ultimately improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young Peoples.

Chaired by the CEO, the RAP Working Group was established in March 2019 to develop the organisation's first ever RAP. Its members include the CEO; WA State Manager; Youth Worker; Health and Community Link Coordinator and Evaluation and Database Lead - a mix of managers and staff from direct service delivery as well as corporate services including one member of the Working Group being of Aboriginal background. Importantly the Working Group plays a key role in harnessing support and buy-in from across the organisation. From the outset, we believe that actions would only be completed and outcomes would only be achieved when we are all part of the same journey together. To this end, the Working Group's first tasks was to understand the extent to which our staff feel confident in their knowledge, skills and experience engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities.

We conducted an all staff survey to elicit views from staff on the following key areas:

- The meaning of reconciliation
  - Confidence to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and organisations
  - Necessary skills and practices related to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and organisations
  - Knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and practices
  - Organisational commitment and delivery of a Reconciliation Action Plan i.e. confidence in actual delivery
- 
- 

Moving Forward  
 Action Recognition  
 Listening Opportunities  
 Injustices Support Rectifying Relationships  
 Championing Mending Openness  
 Strengthening Progress Advocacy  
 Optimism Voice Working Together Truth  
 Awareness Ethnicity  
 Acknowledgement Harmony Diversity  
 Honesty History Unity  
 Improving Celebrating Connection  
 Discussion Learning Community  
 Equality Thriving Fairness Commitment  
 Respect Equity Acceptance  
 Treaty Pride Culture Value  
 Plans Coming Together  
 Partnership Compassion  
 Human rights Closing the Gap  
 Restoring Self-determination  
 Inclusivity Healing Impact Future  
 Building Change  
 Understanding

The survey results inform all actions across the three pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities. The findings provide an excellent benchmark on which we will continue to build on as we progress through our journey. The areas we focused on include:

- Stocktake of current staff experiences, skill sets and capability to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- Understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and the ongoing effects of colonisation
- Understanding of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cultural practices
- Developing our first Reconciliation Action Plan

We were delighted with the high-level findings where we found:

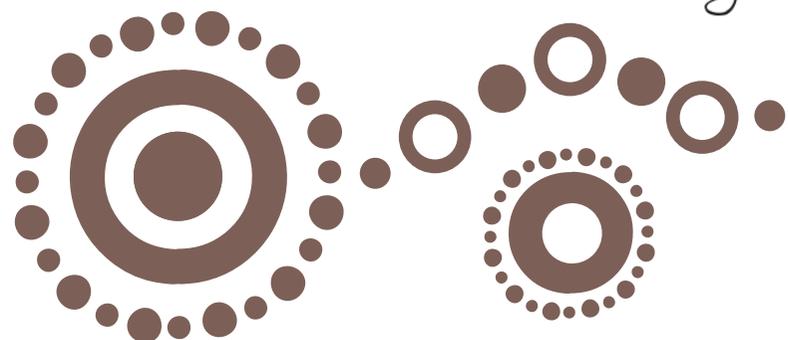
- overwhelming commitment and support from staff for the Reflect RAP
- universal agreement upon the recognition of the importance of reconciliation
- a strong request for skills and knowledge building.

We were humbled by the honesty of many staff who expressed concern that we may not deliver on our commitments among many competing priorities across the organisation, especially at a time of significant change.

The Sentiments Barometer found that there is an overall sense of interest and willingness to embrace more learning and understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, both as part of our work / practice but also as other Australians. The challenge seems to lie with knowing about specific actions that individuals can take to contribute to reconciliation – so ensuring clear action plans and implementation will be critical in our success.

The ‘Governance and Tracking’ section explains that we will implement whole of organisation accountability for monitoring our progress. The Working Group will appoint local champions across all states that we operate while the Whitelion board and CEO will be ultimately accountable for the delivery of the RAP and making our progress publicly available.

Finally, our RAP is core to Whitelion’s commitment to creating a safe and inclusive culture where diversity is embraced and valued in all its form. We believe that everyone should be supported to be who they are – to belong not just fit in.





## RELATIONSHIPS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>1. Build mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</b>	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local sphere of influence at both State jurisdiction and regional area levels.	June 2020	Director of Operations
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	June 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
<b>2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week.</b>	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation material to staff.	April yearly	RAP Working Group Chair
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	May/June yearly	RAP Working Group Chair
	Develop a clear schedule of activities for internal and external engagement during NRW.	May yearly	RAP Working Group Chair
	Encourage staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May yearly	CEO

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.</b>	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff through an annual communication plan.	May/June yearly	Director of Strategy, Marketing & Communications
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	March 2020	Director of Operations
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	March 2020	Director of Operations
	Develop RAP Communication Plan including various medium for communicating.	April 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
<b>4. Promote positive relations through anti-discrimination strategies.</b>	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	June 2020	Head of HR
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions and future needs.	June 2020	Head of HR



# RESPECT

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>1. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.</b>	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 2020	CEO
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	July 2020	Evaluation & Data Lead
	Rollout face to face trauma informed training to be completed by 80% of direct service delivery staff to build capabilities in providing more culturally responsive services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young Peoples.	Dec 2020	Director of Operations
	Rollout face to face cultural awareness training to all Whitelion employees to increase knowledge on family and kinship connection, cultural practices and acknowledgement of past injustices across each State.	Dec 2020	Director of Operations
	Develop and implement an audit process to assess the extent to which all Whitelion offices are aesthetically welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and make recommendation for implementation in new financial year.	May 2020	Director of Corporate Services

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
2. <b>Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by observing cultural protocols.</b>	Develop resources to build staff understanding of the local Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	January 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
	Develop resources to help increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	January 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
3. <b>Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.</b>	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	May yearly	RAP Working Group Chair
	RAP Working Group and local champions to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July yearly	RAP Working Group Chair



# OPPORTUNITIES

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>1. Explore increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander recruitment, retention and professional development.</b>	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	December 2020	CEO
	Establish processes to identify and record Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity of all Whitelion staff and volunteers.	May 2020	Head of HR
<b>2. Explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.</b>	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	August yearly	RAP Working Group Chair
	Develop a policy for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	December 2020	Director of Corporate Services
	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	September 2020	Director of Corporate Services
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	November 2020	Director of Corporate Services



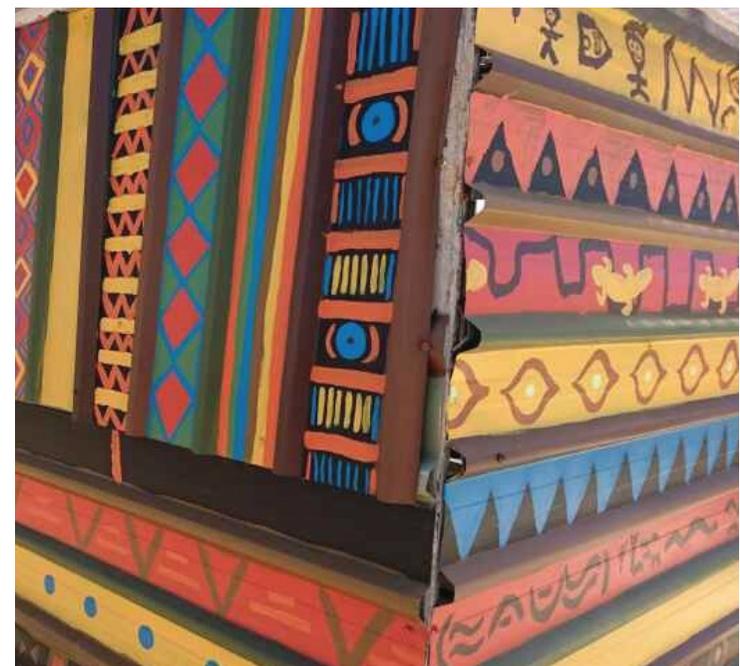
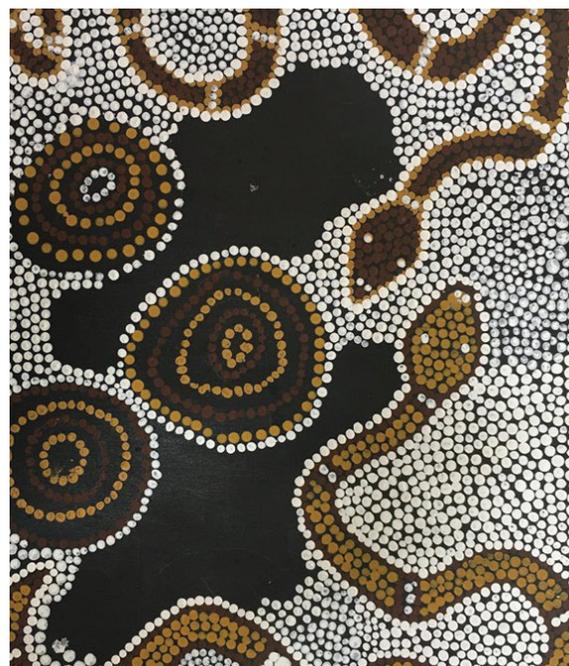


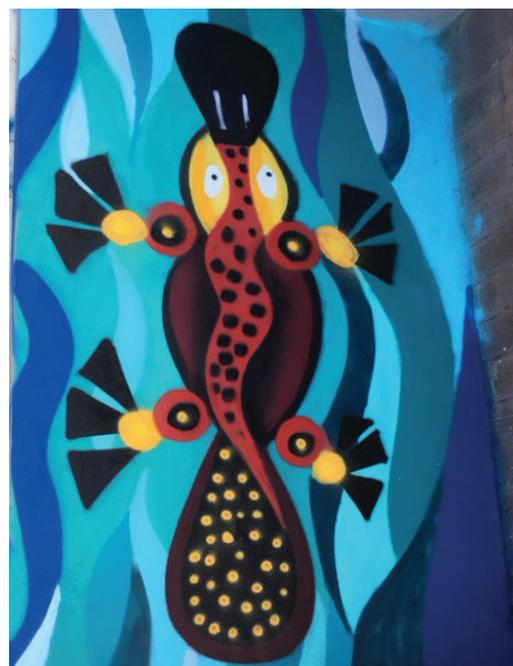
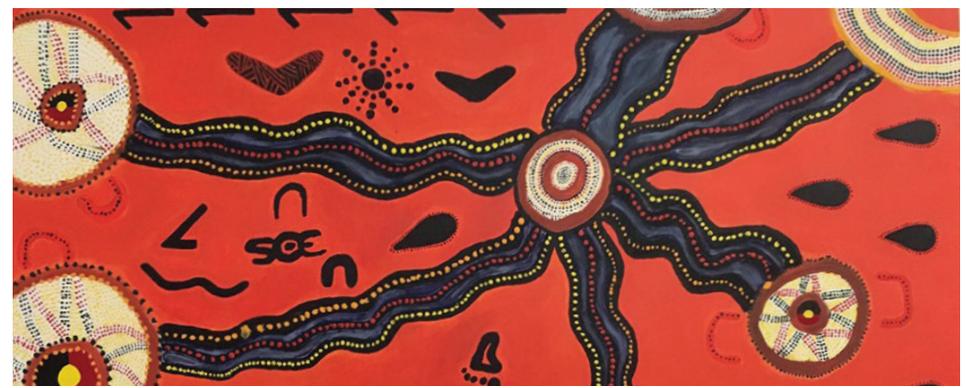
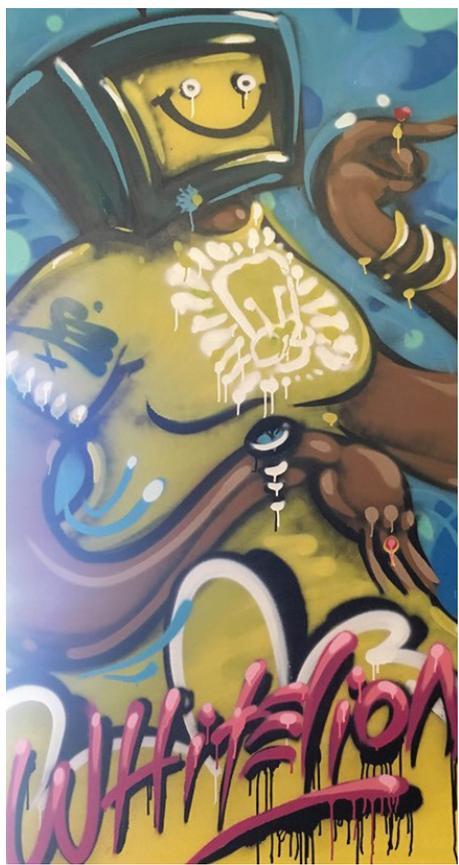
## GOVERNANCE AND TRACKING PROGRESS



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>1. Establish a RAP Working Group.</b>	Maintain an organisation-wide RAP working group that includes staff from all levels as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.	Minimum quarterly meetings - Ongoing	CEO
	Review and update Terms of Reference for the Working Group including roles and duties of its members.	Minimum annual review – March 2020 and ongoing	CEO
	Recruit and appoint RAP Local Champions within each State to support the implementation/achievement of actions/deliverables at the State level.	February 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
<b>2. Provide appropriate support for implementation of RAP.</b>	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments via embedding of RAP accountabilities into state and functional annual plans.	February 2020	Director of Operations
	Embed RAP performance indicators into all leadership group annual performance plans.	March 2020	Head of HR
	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	February 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
	Design appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	June 2020	RAP Working Group Chair

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>3. Build accountability through reporting RAP progress both internally and externally</b>	Complete and submit annual RAP Impact Measurement questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
	Undertake annual Whitelion RAP staff survey and compare against benchmark data of August 2019.	August 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
	Communicate RAP progress in published annual reports.	October 2020	Director Strategy, Marketing and Communications
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	May 2020	RAP Working Group Chair
<b>4. Review, reflect and develop next RAP</b>	Register with Reconciliation Australia to develop our next RAP.	January 2021	RAP Working Group Chair





These images were produced by various staff and young people involved in Whitelion group programs across Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They have been reproduced with the permission of those involved, under anonymity for confidentiality reasons, and with understanding that no financial gain be received by Whitelion for their reproduction.

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