

MHCC Reconciliation Action Plan 2014-2016

working together for mental health



RAP endorsed by:



Our vision for reconciliation

MHCC develops a culture that is inclusive and welcoming of Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander Peoples and promotes cultural safety and diversity in all its activities *through building relationships, showing respect and creating sustainable opportunities for* Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander Peoples and consumers with lived experience alike.

Our business

The Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) is the peak body for non-government mental health community-managed organisations (CMOs) across New South Wales (NSW). MHCC has 120 voting member organisations which provide a diversity of psychosocial and clinical services. MHCC advocates recovery oriented and trauma informed practice and works closely with its members and other stakeholders to build capacity and improve mental health service delivery to people with lived experience of mental health conditions, their families and carers in NSW.

MHCC takes a leadership role in advocating the vital importance of the mental health community managed sector. We participate extensively in policy reform and work in partnership with State and Commonwealth Governments to build cross sectoral collaboration and understanding.

We initiate, manage and conduct research and sector development projects on behalf of and in partnership with the sector and build capacity through partnerships, collaboration, and workforce development. MHCC is also a founding member of Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA), a coalition of the eight state and territory peak bodies across Australia, representing over 800 organisations nationally.

MHCC is a Registered Training Organisation providing accredited mental health and leadership training and professional development to community sector workers and other stakeholders.

MHCC has been supporting community based organisations to deliver services to people with mental health issues, their families and carers since 1983. MHCC is currently accredited under Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS).

Our Vision

People with lived experience are the drivers of positive change in all mental health services and mental health reforms.

Our Purpose

To build the capacity and ability of community organisations to support people on their recovery journeys.

Underlying Principles

- Good mental health is about the whole person; their psychological, physical, emotional and spiritual needs
- Service user input is central to the promotion of mental health and the delivery and management of services
- Communities need to provide a range of mental health services designed to meet local needs
- An across government approach to mental health promotion and service delivery is required.

MHCC has undertaken a number of initiatives with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These initiatives have included:

- No NGO left behind, infrastructure grants focused on providing funding to organisations offering specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Establishment of an Aboriginal Reference Group to provide guidance on ensuring training materials are culturally appropriate
- Aboriginal Careers in Mental Health Traineeship program
- Customisation of the training for the Advanced Diploma in Management (Leadership in Action) specifically for Aboriginal Managers. The participants of the Aboriginal-specific Leadership in Action training in 2011 awarded MHCC with a “Just too deadly” award for this training.
- Customisation of the training for the Certificate IV in Mental Health specifically for Aboriginal students
- Relationship with Aboriginal Employment Services (AES)

Additionally MHCC offers a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific training courses and programs to educate the mental health sector on how best to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities:

- **“Trauma Informed Approaches to Aboriginal Wellbeing”**
- **“Working with Aboriginal people”**

MHCC is based in Lilyfield however we are a state wide organisation and currently have 21 FTE internal staff and a pool of 40 casual and contract trainers of which 4 identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders peoples.

Our RAP

Reconciliation is an important process, and one in which we can all play a part. MHCC is committed to playing an influential role in “Closing the Gap” between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, not just of life expectancy, but also in terms of Mental Health and access to mental health services. The ABS report Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2008), indicates that nearly one-third (31%) of Indigenous adults (aged 15 years and over) had high/very high levels of psychological distress. This is more than twice the rate for non-Indigenous Australians (2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey). An informal survey conducted by MHCC in 2010 of its membership estimated the percentage of Aboriginal service users at 11% and the Aboriginal workforce in the sector to be 4.88%. The workforce number is representative of a diverse range of roles including non-specific mental health roles. This clearly identifies a need for increased numbers of Aboriginal mental health workers, as well as increased capacity to support Aboriginal consumers.

MHCC staff members and member organisations vary greatly in their exposure to and understanding of Aboriginal peoples and cultures. This RAP primarily focuses internally on MHCC's culture, policies and procedures, and staff knowledge, and seeks to ensure that we are an organisation that is culturally safe & welcoming for Aboriginal peoples.

It also acknowledges that in our role as the peak body for mental health Community Managed Organisations (CMOs) in NSW, we can facilitate information sharing between MHCC and other CMOs around best practice in working with and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. Future MHCC RAPs will focus on our ability to influence our external stakeholders.

Having and implementing a RAP will also give MHCC a chance to formally record the activities we are currently undertaking and help explore future improvements, actions and plans we can take to further contribute to promoting and embracing reconciliation. These include *supporting Constitutional Recognition, and helping MHCC staff and sector workers to better understand why there is a divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.*

MHCC began formal development of our RAP on 26 June 2014 with a RAP Planning Day facilitated by Reconciliation Australia (RA). All MHCC Staff and Board members were encouraged to attend. The day was an opportunity to come together and collectively discuss and brainstorm the development of our inaugural RAP.

Prior to our formal RAP journey commencing, MHCC had already:

- Established an Aboriginal Reference Group to guide all of our course delivery.
- Provided an opportunity for Mental Health providers who had a focus on Aboriginal services to apply for Infrastructure Grant Funding. This funding was to enable them to develop their organisational infrastructure either through physical infrastructure or internal processes, with an aim to progress the organisation towards quality improvement and accreditation.
- Customised the and delivered in NSW the Certificate IV in Mental Health and the Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management (Leadership in Action) specifically for Aboriginal groups. Since 2012 we have graduated 32 Aboriginal workers through the customised Certificate IV, and 11 Aboriginal workers through the customised Advanced Diploma. We also travelled to the Northern Territory to deliver units from the Certificate IV training to Aboriginal workers.
- Managed the Aboriginal Careers in Mental Health Initiative, which was a workforce development project that saw 46 trainees employed across 10 mental health organisations in over 30 sites around NSW. The project supported the organisations in recruiting and retaining the trainees, including providing cultural awareness training for managers (provided by State Training Services Aboriginal Employment unit), mentoring and training in the Certificate IV in Mental health for the trainees. 32 of these trainees graduated in August 2014, a fantastic 70% retention rate for the project. The funding for this initiative has now ceased however we are investigating alternative sources of income to enable a further round of similar traineeships to be run.
- Held a forum through our Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network on *Understanding Best Practice Research when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people.*

- Throughout the establishment period of our RAP we have:
- Held an internal event for National Reconciliation Week where all staff were invited to view a documentary on the re-enactment of the Freedom Rides
- Had a member of the RAP WG attend the launch of “*Lost Conversations*”. *Lost conversations is the impressive result of what can be achieved when Indigenous & non-Indigenous Australians come together to work on change and find new ways to lead together.*
- had two members of the RAP WG attend the inaugural meeting of the national Health RING
- Conducted a baseline survey of staff attitudes towards a range of areas also assessed through the RA Barometer.
- Provided updates at every Staff and Board meeting throughout the RAP implementation period
- Provided updates to our members and broader stakeholders with an interest in mental health about our RAP through articles in our quarterly newsletter – View from the peak, as well as in our weekly newsletter – FYI. Articles have included topics such as our RAP Planning Day facilitated by RA.
- Additionally these newsletters, our website and events (such as our recent graduation ceremony for our Aboriginal trainees) have been utilised to provide information to our members and broader stakeholders with an interest in mental health on activities we have undertaken in this sphere.

The RAP has been developed by the RAP Working Group. The draft RAP was distributed to all staff and all members of the Aboriginal Reference Group to provide comment which was then incorporated. The Aboriginal Reference Group have also provided comment on the Terms of Reference for the working group and were extended an invitation to participate on the Advisory Committee.

The members of the RAP Working Group (WG) are all championing our RAP. In particular the WG chair, Corinne Henderson and Carrie Stone.

Current members of Mental Health Coordinating Council's RAP Working Group are:

- *Senior Policy Advisor: Corinne Henderson*
- *Operations & HR Manager: Erika Hewitt*
- *Community Engagement Officer: Carrie Stone*
- *LD Manager: Simone Montgomery*
- *Admin Officer, Aboriginal Projects: Liesl Homes*
- *Project Officer, Research Network: Deb Tipper*



Relationships

As the peak body for CMOs in NSW we aim to increase access of services for all consumers with lived experience of Mental Health conditions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience a high prevalence of mental health and co-existing conditions, however they are underrepresented within the mental health workforce and have poor access to culturally appropriate mental health services. Through mutual respect and improved relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples it is our hope that more services become culturally appropriate. This would increase service capacity as more services would be accessible.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
1.1 RAP Working Group to frequently monitor the development and implementation phase of Mental Health Coordinating Council's (MHCC) RAP	Chair of RWG/ Senior Policy Advisor	December 2014 March & September 2015/2016 March 2015/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The RAP Working Group (RWG) will oversee the development, endorsement and launch of the MHCC's RAP. RWG will meet at least twice per year to monitor and report on the implementation of MHCC's RAP. RWG to develop and annually review the RWG Terms of Reference
1.2 MHCC will establish an external Aboriginal Advisory Group to provide cultural and professional guidance	Chair of RWG/ Senior Policy Advisor LD Manager Community Engagement Officer	April & October 2015/16 April & October 2015/16 March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Advisory Group will meet at least twice per year to provide cultural guidance on MHCC's RAP. Provide updates on RAP progress at each Aboriginal Reference Group meeting EOI for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander members Undertake consultation to recruit members for the RAP Advisory Group Investigate opportunities for other member organisations to join the RAP Advisory Group
1.3 Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and other employees to build strong relationships	Community Engagement Officer and Chair of RWG Senior Policy Advisor	June, 2015,2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise at least one internal event each year to celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW) and provide information around NRW to our members Register MHCC's event on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website Download Reconciliation Australia's NRW toolkit and circulate to employees to raise awareness of this significant event

<p>1.4 MHCC to continue to build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, organisations and stakeholders.</p>	<p>CEO and Manager of LD, RWG Chair Senior Policy Advisor</p>	<p>February 2015 June 2015/2016 February 2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a list to identify potential and existing relationships including organisations such as NACCHO and developing on existing relationships • Inform MHCC members about MHCC RAP process • MHCC to participate in Not-For-Profit RING
<p>1.5 MHCC will Strengthen relationships with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member organisations and programs</p>	<p>Communications team/ Community Engagement Officer</p>	<p>September 2015/ 2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member organisations at least once per year • Actively encourage existing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander member organisations to identify activities that would be relevant for them, and invite them to participate in MHCC activities • Consult with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander member organisations regarding what activities will benefit Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff
<p>1.6 Promote MHCC's RAP</p>	<p>Community Engagement Officer Operations and HR Manager Chair/Senior Policy Advisor</p>	<p>January 2015 January 2015 February 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a webpage on MHCC's main website dedicated to Reconciliation and MHCC's RAP • Include MHCC's RAP within induction process • Include regular RAP updates at staff meetings and to MHCC Board

Respect

Respect and valuing lived experience is a core principal of MHCC in understanding and reducing stigma.

It is MHCC's hope that through promotion of understanding and respect for the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and histories we will be better able to ensure those principals inform and underpin all MHCC activities.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
2.1 Encourage MHCC employees and member organisations to participate in cultural awareness training to understand and appreciate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures	Compliance and Quality Officer	February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capture baseline data of employees current understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
	RWG Chair/ Senior Policy Advisor	April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct staff activity that includes cultural awareness annually Develop and pilot a cultural awareness strategy for MHCC. In particular, provide opportunities for RWG members, RAP Champions and other key leadership members to participate.
2.2 Continue to inform and engage MHCC employees in understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols to ensure there is shared meanings behind these ceremonies	Operations and HR Manager	May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document for MHCC
	RWG Chair /Senior Policy Advisor	July 2015/ 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country at MHCC's official RAP launch Implement best practice surrounding cultural norms wherever MHCC is conducting business
	Community Engagement Officer	September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage members organisations to adopt similar cultural protocols
			December 2015
2.3 Provide the opportunity for all MHCC employees to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements by attending local NAIDOC Week events	Operations and HR Manager	June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC (as well as ensuring that there are no – non NAIDOC - events scheduled during NAIDOC week)
	Community Engagement Officer	July 2015, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise at least one internal event to celebrate NAIDOC Week Connect with member organisations to celebrate and communicate NAIDOC Week
	RWG Chair/ Senior		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage all staff to participate in local NAIDOC Week events

	Policy Advisor		
2.4 MHCC will continue to create a welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	CEO LD Manager RWG Chair/ Senior Policy Advisor Community and Engagement Officer	February 2015 March 2015 June 2015 February 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to display and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork throughout MHCC • Provide culturally appropriate training materials to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students • Display an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners on MHCC's Website • Display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags onsite • Review and update MHCC's email signature to include an Acknowledgement of Country • Display a plaque upon entry to MHCC'S office to Acknowledge Traditional Owners • Hold a ceremony when the plaque is unveiled • Hold MHCC events and training at appropriate venues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
2.5 Establish links to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources	LD Manager RWG Chair/ Senior Policy Advisor	March 2015 February 2015/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Reference Group to provide assistance with learning and development resources available • Ensure staff and members are aware of the Australian Indigenous Health Info Net website and include the link on MHCC RAP webpage
2.6 MHCC to actively support Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	RWG Chair	January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Constitutional Recognition through MHCC policy • Support the Recognise Campaign by responding to calls for MHCC endorsement and encouraging members to do likewise

Opportunities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities are important to MHCC's core business. In order that we can effectively conduct our business we need to create opportunities for one of our core constituents to more effectively identify and participate in appropriate activities. MHCC's RAP actions are a starting point for closer understanding and collaboration.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverables
3.1 Investigate and provide employment opportunities across MHCC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	<p>Operations and HR Manager</p> <p>Operations and HR Manager</p> <p>Operations and HR Manager</p> <p>Operations and HR Manager</p>	June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review HR procedures and policies to ensure barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are able to be addressed. As opportunities arise to employ Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employee/s consult on employment strategies, including professional development. Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy for MHCC Advertise vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific media, or through AES.
3.2 Investigate the opportunity to increase supplier diversity within MHCC	<p>Operations and HR Manager</p> <p>Community Engagement Officer</p>	<p>February 2016</p> <p>September 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and reform procurement strategy, policy and processes so that supplier diversity principles can be incorporated into your procurement strategy. Develop a list of local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander suppliers that MHCC could procure from.
3.3 Continue to build the capacity of community mental health organisations to engage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	<p>LD Manager</p> <p>LD Manager</p>	March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review funding opportunities for MHCC programs and projects Utilise existing learnings and feedback from ACIMH project to promote and support member activities.
3.4 Provide professional development opportunities to mental health organisations who support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities impacted by trauma	<p>LD Manager</p> <p>LD Manager</p> <p>LD Manager</p>	February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to promote the availability of the "Trauma Informed Approaches to Aboriginal Wellbeing" Workshop Continue to provide and promote the "Working with Aboriginal Peoples" Certificate IV course Continue to consult with Aboriginal Reference Group on Training and Mentoring opportunities

3.5 Promote partnerships and continue to support member organisations to employ, train and mentor Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff	LD Manager	September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities to bring Trainee Alumni together annually to network Support partnerships and collaborations with organisations employing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff
	CEO	February 2016	

Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
4.1 Report achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia for inclusion in the RAP Impact Measurement Report.	Community Engagement Officer	August 2015/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually.
4.2 Report on MHCC RAP Progress	RWG Chair, Senior Policy Advisor	February 2015 February 2015 March 2015/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report MHCC RAP Progress in Board report at each Board meeting RAP Progress update to be included in all staff meeting agendas Include RAP Progress in MHCC's quarterly newsletter annually
4.3 Refresh and launch a new RAP for MHCC	CEO	December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, refresh and update a new RAP for MHCC based on learnings, achievements and challenges from previous RAP Send draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review, feedback and endorsement
4.4 Consider MHCC'S RAP in the development of MHCC'S next strategic plan	CEO	June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the MHCC RAP is considered during the development of the MHCC Strategic Plan 2015-2018

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