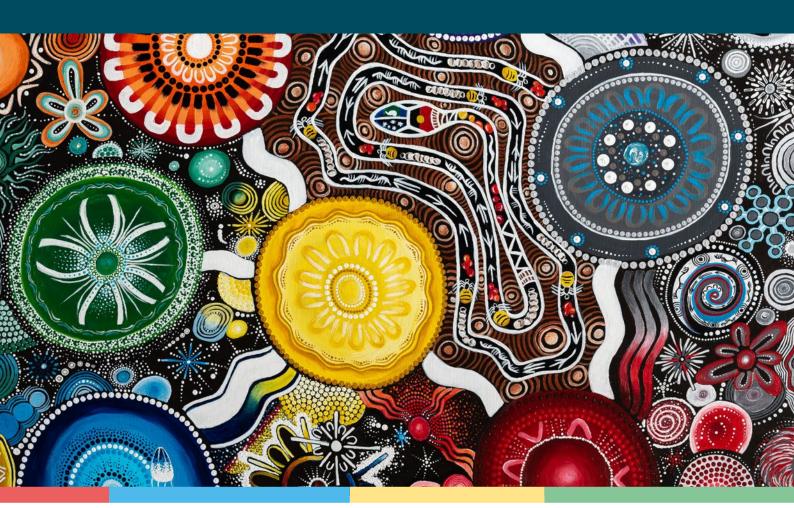


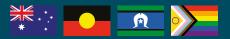
## Innovate RAP

January 2025 – January 2027



are-able

In the spirit of reconciliation, are able acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reading this publication.



are able welcomes people of any age, culture, religion, sex, gender, sexuality and ability.

#### Cover artwork: 'Travelling and Connecting Country' by Tarreena Atkinson

Tarreena Atkinson, a proud Yorta Yorta woman, represents our organisation and its commitment to reconciliation in our communities. Tarreena shares, "This painting represents past, present, and future of are able. It displays the importance of connecting to community, travelling on country, meeting, and gathering for a diverse range of people."

"The artwork I create contains traditional symbols and tells stories of life and dreamtime. The artwork represents country/states across Australia and identifies from where are able began in the salt waters near the ocean and to where are able would hope to be in the future right across Australia." Through her extraordinary talent, Tarreena captures the spirit of reconciliation and our commitment to it. May this artwork serve as a testament to the power of art, culture, and the journey towards unity. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Tarreena Atkinson for her remarkable contribution.

### **Our vision**

are-able's vision for reconciliation is to create a culturally safe and inclusive environment for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who utilise our services and represent our organisation.

We are committed to creating pathways for meaningful collaboration, cultural understanding, and economic empowerment. We envision a society where First Nations knowledge, perspectives, and voices are not only acknowledged but celebrated, enriching our organisation and the communities we serve.

Please note that with the guidance from Reconciliation Australia the overall aim is to achieve the deliverables during a two-year period from January 2025 - January 2027. The proposed timelines is a guide and we recognise that changes may occur over this period. Please refer to pages 17-27 to see our deliverables and timelines.

# Message from Reconciliation Australia

#### Reconciliation Australia commends are-able on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Australia.

Commencing an Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build strong foundations and relationships, ensuring sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for are-able to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff, and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, are-able will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process, as well.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. are-able is part of a strong network of more than 3,000 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals are-able's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations are-able on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



Credit: Reconciliation Australia



### **Our business**

For three decades, are-able (formerly WDEA Works) has been actively extending its support to local communities, enhancing the well-being of individuals through employment, education, and fostering connections.

are-able operates full-time sites across Victoria, South Australia and most recently in Brisbane, Queensland. We currently have 427 employees, 5 of our employees identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. As an organisation we aim to promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence by regular communication to our staff about our ongoing commitment to reconciliation and reach out to like-minded organisations that we could collaborate with on projects within our local communities.

are-able services include Workforce
Australia Employment Services, Enhanced
Services (ES, Transition to Work (TTW),
Career Transition Assistance (CTA), Disability
Employment Services– for employment of
people with disability in open employment,
Employer Recruitment Services, Social
Enterprises, NDIS Plan Management, NDIS

School Leaver Employment Supports, NDIS Activities, are-able Wellbeing Services and the are-able Foundation.

are-able full time sites are located in Ararat, Ballarat, Bendigo, Brisbane, Castlemaine, Colac, Corio, Geelong, Hamilton, Horsham, Maryborough, Mildura, Mount Gambier, Portland, Portland Training, Shepparton, Social Enterprises, Stawell, Swan Hill, Warrnambool and Wendouree.

Our Outreach sites are located in Apollo Bay, Camperdown, Casterton, Cobram, Daylesford, Echuca, Heywood, Kerang, Kyneton, Maryborough, Millicent, Naracoorte, Mount Gambier, Robinvale, Sebastopol, St Arnaud, Terang, Warracknabeal, Belmont, Drysdale, Newcomb, Torquay.

are-able Education & Training is a registered training organisation specialising in the delivery of nationally accredited training and industry tailored training. We offer Certificate III & Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, 'First Aid' and 'CPR' courses, Certificate III & IV Individual and Disability Support, Learn Local (Introductory Courses), Mental Health First Aid.

are-able Disability Employment Services (DES) helps people with disability, injury or health conditions find a job and keep it. are-able provides Workforce Australia's Enhanced Services in the South Coast of Victoria: Colac, Hamilton, Portland and Warrnambool. This employment service supports job seekers experiencing a range of barriers into employment by providing support.

Warrnambool provides employment, skill building opportunities for NDIS clients and other people with disability. There are seven are-able Social Enterprises including Big R's Shed, Big R's Coffee Shop, Clear Cut, Create and Collate, eWaste and Steam & Clean. Terang site also offers lawn moving and garden maintenance services through Clear Cut. Hamilton are-able Social Enterprises include The Big Green Shed and Nigretta of Hamilton for NDIS clients and other people with a disability.

As a registered NDIS provider, we offer a suite of specialised services. Each one is tailored to the individual needs of our participants, to better manage their transition to supported, meaningful employment.

are-able NDIS Plan Management staff operate from Warrnambool and Shepparton however with the are-able digital footprint, we can support NDIS clients based anywhere within Australia. This business has grown and we now support over 1457 NDIS clients who enjoy activities, employment, social and community participation.

are-able Wellbeing Service provides jobseekers with counselling support. We give jobseekers the tools they need to navigate personal barriers and ultimately help them to find and keep a job.

As a community-based not-for-profit organisation, are-able channels funding back into regional communities through the are-able Foundation and specialist support programs. Since it started in 2004, the are-able Foundation has distributed more than \$1.5 million to various businesses and community organisations throughout Victoria.

As an organisation we aim to promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence by regular communication to our staff about our ongoing commitment to reconciliation and reach out to like-minded organisations that we could collaborate with on projects within our local communities.



### **Our RAP**

are-able commenced discussions with Reconciliation Australia back in 2016 but due to resourcing shortages the project was put on pause. In 2019 Tom Scarborough, are-able's current CEO, joined the organisation and has been a strong advocate for this project. We officially began the development of our Reflect RAP in 2020.

The Innovate RAP acknowledges our responsibility to our ongoing commitment to reconciliation. We will continue to build on the strong foundations laid through our previous RAP and work towards offering culturally safe workplaces across our geographical footprint.

To turn our vision into reality we intend on consulting with our First Nations communities to be able to deliver on what we hope to achieve. As stated in our vision, we are committed to creating pathways for meaningful collaboration, cultural understanding, and economic empowerment.

Our RAP working group has played a pivotal part in the development of this RAP by sharing ideas, collaborating with other like-minded organisations and community groups and encouraging staff to get involved in areable's journey towards reconciliation.

We look forward to collaborating with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, clients and stakeholders to ensure we are providing opportunities and services in a safe environment.

### **Our commitment**

Through the Innovate RAP, we aim to further develop and strengthen relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, empower all are-able First Nations staff and suppliers, and engage our stakeholders in reconciliation.

are-able's Reconciliation journey is led by the Executive Team, with the support of the Board. Our RAP Working group is responsible for championing the RAP and implementing our plan over the next two years. We currently have Aboriginal representation on our working group and encourage all staff to become involved. The working group is made up of the following staff (see page 13), spread across our footprint.



Photo: Congratulations to Tenesha, January's Employee of the Month in Sunraysia Regional Consulting's Indigenous Employment Program! Your hard work and dedication inspire us all—well done!

Credit: are-able Mildura

Name	Title	Traditional Land Name*
Amanda Armato	Senior Employment Consultant	Dja Dja Wurung
Arron Graham-Exelby	Employment Preparation & Engagement Consultant	Eastern Marr
Ashlea Hazeldine	Executive Assistant	Gunditjmara
Charlotte Cossens	People and Culture Officer	Gunditjmara
Emily Neill	TtW Senior Employment Mentor & Aboriginal Liaison Officer	Gunditjmara
Emma Hogg	WFA Team Leader & Indigenous Liaison Officer	Gunditjmara
Kathryn Parsons	Site Manager	Gunditjmara
Lauren Traill	Program Development – NDIS Employment Services	Gunditjmara
Liz McCulloch	Finance Manager	Gunditjmara
Susie Hill	NDIS Programs Participant Service Manager	Gunditjmara
Tammie Hawke	Group Services Manager	Gunditjmara
Tom Scarborough	CEO	Yuggera
Vicki Clayton	General Manager People and Culture	Gunditjmara

<sup>\*</sup>We have sourced the Traditional Land Names from <u>achris.vic.gov.au</u>. During this RAP we undertake to develop relationships with local Traditional Owners to learn and confirm our understanding.

### **Our RAP journey**

We began our reconciliation journey with Reconciliation Australia in 2020 with our Reflect RAP formally endorsed in August 2021. The approach to our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan was to reflect as individuals on how we can contribute to reconciliation in a meaningful way.

The Reflect RAP laid the foundation for us to explore and understand the critical steps necessary to foster a culture of respect, recognition, and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our aim was to establish deeper connections with our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to provide staff opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding to ensure we work towards a culturally safe work place.

The key learnings from our Reflect RAP is that reconciliation is a long-term commitment.

Although we achieved all the deliverables we set for our organisation, we acknowledge we have a long way to go and recognise the importance in keeping our staff and all stakeholders engaged in this process.

With the leadership of our Executive Team, we will continue to further develop our relationships with local Aboriginal Cooperatives, Traditional Landowner groups and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations. We will continue to educate staff through online learning modules and invest in annual cultural awareness training. We understand the importance of participating in key events throughout the year such as National Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, to show our support for our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We look forward to progressing our knowledge, building strong relationships and continue to provide support and opportunities to our clients, staff and stakeholders.

#### 1. The importance of continuous learning

Reconciliation is a continuous journey that requires ongoing education and reflection. We have learned that it is essential to keep learning and adapting our strategies to stay aligned with the evolving needs and perspectives of First Nations communities.

#### 2. Leadership and accountability matter

Strong leadership and clear accountability are vital in driving reconciliation efforts. Our leadership team and working group have played a crucial role in championing reconciliation and ensuring that our commitments translate into meaningful actions.

#### 3. Building genuine partnerships

Forming authentic, respectful partnerships with First Nations communities has been foundational to our success. These partnerships have provided us with valuable insights and helped co-create initiatives that are impactful and sustainable.



### Relationships

Developing strong relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is important to our reconciliation journey and integral to our success in creating pathways and opportunities for our clients.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	September 2026	Group Services Manager
	Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	October 2026	Senior Employment Mentor & Aboriginal Liaison Officer
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2025 & 2026	Executive Assistant
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May- 3 June, 2025 & 2026	Executive Assistant
	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 & 2026	CEO
	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May-3 June, 2025 & 2026	Executive Assistant
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	May 2025 & 2026	Executive Assistant

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	August 2025	NDIS Programs Participant Service Manager
2 Burnette	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	June 2025	CEO
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	September 2025	Employment Preparation and Engagement Consultant
	Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	June 2026	Senior Employment Mentor & Aboriginal Liaison Officer
4. Promote positive race relations through antidiscrimination strategies	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing antidiscrimination provisions, and future needs.	June 2026	People and Culture Officer
	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	July 2026	People and Culture Officer
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	August 2026	Employment Preparation and Engagement Consultant
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	September 2026	General Manager of People & Culture



### Respect

At are-able one of our values is Respect. We respect all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, staff and our communities. It is important to our organisation to respect the cultures and histories of First Nations peoples, we are committed to ongoing learning for our staff so we can collaborate with our local communities confidently to ensure positive outcomes.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. 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.	August 2025	Program Development NDIS Employment Services
	Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy.	February 2026	Senior Employment Mentor & Aboriginal Liaison Officer
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff.	February 2026	Site Manager
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	November 2025	General Manager People and Culture
	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	April 2025	NDIS Programs Participant Service Manager
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols	Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	May 2025	People and Culture Officer
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	July 2025 & July 2026	Senior Employment Mentor & Aboriginal Liaison Officer
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	September 2025	Program Development NDIS Employment Services

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July, 2025 & 2026	Executive Assistant
	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	June 2025	People and Culture Officer
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	First week in July 2025 & 2026	Executive Assistant
8. Maintain a culturally safe and inclusive workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and clients	Conduct a review on current cultural safety conditions and provide recommendations to Management	March 2026	People and Culture Officer
	Research best practice for supporting culturally safe work environment	April 2026	People and Culture Officer
	Form a First Nations working Party to inform and guide staff on culturally safe service provision.	May 2026	People and Culture Officer



### **Opportunities**

are-able offer a range of services to enhance the well-being of individuals through employment and education. We are committed to providing employment opportunities for First Nations peoples both internally and externally.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	November 2025	People and Culture Officer
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	April 2026	People and Culture Officer
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	May 2026	General Manager of People and Culture
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	February 2026	People and Culture Officer
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	March 2026	People and Culture Officer

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	March 2026	Finance Manager
	Renew Supply Nation membership.	August 2025	Executive Assistant
10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	May 2026	Finance Manager
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	August 2025	Finance Manager
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	August 2026	Group Services Manager



### Governance

Good Governance is essential as it sets a clear structure and processes that we can use to implement and assess the progress of our RAP Commitments.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	October 2025	Site Manager
	Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	March 2025	NDIS Programs Participant Service Manager
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	February, May, August, November 2025 February, May, August, November 2026	Executive Assistant
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	May 2025	Senior Employment Mentor & Aboriginal Liaison Officer
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	April 2025	General Manager of People & Culture
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	May 2025	Site Manager
	Maintain an internal RAP Champions from senior and executive management.	April 2025	People & Culture Officer

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	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.	January 2025 January 2026	Executive Assistant
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	August 2025 August 2026	Executive Assistant
13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2025, September 2026	Executive Assistant
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	March, June, September, December 2025 March, June, September, December 2026	General Manager of People & Culture
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	July 2025 July 2026	General Manager of People & Culture
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	February 2026	NDIS Programs Participant Service Manager
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	December 2026	Executive Assistant
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2026	Executive Assistant

#### **Contact details**

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