



**Artist**  
Yvonne O'Neill

*This artwork represents the way cultural conversations interact between Autism Queensland and the wider Australian community.*

# Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

**Autism Queensland Limited**  
December 2022 - December 2023





# A Message from Reconciliation Australia

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

Autism Queensland joins a network of more than 2,200 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 Autism Queensland 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 Autism Queensland, 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**



# Acknowledgement of Country

Autism Queensland acknowledges the importance and value of the reconciliation journey with Traditional Custodians and Owners of all the lands and waters on which we live and work.

We acknowledge the wisdom of Elders past and extend our respect for the valuable contributions of Elders present and those emerging leaders who willingly share cultural knowledge.

Our teams recognise the significance of connections between country and culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as we walk together toward participation, opportunity, and choice.

## About Autism Queensland

Autism Queensland is one of Australia's oldest and most experienced not-for-profit providers of autism-specific education and therapy services. We are passionate about achieving our vision of a life of participation, opportunity, and choice for autistic people and their families.

The organisation was first known as the *Autistic Children's Association of Queensland (Inc)* and registered as a charity with the Queensland Government on 1 October 1967. Its first funded program employed a part-time occupational therapist who worked with two children. After several slight name changes, including *Autism Association Queensland Inc* (1999), *Autism Queensland Inc* (2002), the organisation became a company limited by guarantee, *Autism Queensland Limited*, in 2013.

The modern-day Autism Queensland is recognised by the Queensland Government as the State's peak body for the provision of targeted services to autistic people. Demand for services continues to increase. We rely on community, government, and businesses to support our valuable programs and extensive facilities. Autism Queensland is also involved in a variety of research programs in collaboration with universities and the Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism (Autism CRC) to better understand autism and develop improved supports for the autism community into the future.

We are governed by a Board of Directors and employ over 400 staff, six of whom have informed us they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Autism Queensland has robust governance and auditing processes, is compliant under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguarding Framework and is a registered Provider under the NDIS. The Autism Queensland teams have expert knowledge and experience establishing and delivering services for autistic people.



Autism Queensland acknowledges that individuals and their families determine the language used when speaking about themselves or a loved one.

Due to a growing preference for identity-first language (e.g. autistic person/child/student) Autism Queensland is adopting this language in new documents, promotional materials and other external communications or where preference is unclear.

Autism Queensland upholds a strengths-based approach in language used in organisational materials and promotes understanding and acceptance of autism. The same courtesies of identity-first language preferences are applied across the organisation when referring to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Autism Queensland has a strategic commitment to respond to the diverse needs of autistic Australians regardless of location, age, or cultural background.

Autism Queensland is committed to evidence-informed practice and has a dedicated Research and Development team to support expertise across all services and programs. We provide specialised services and supports for autistic children and adults, their families and communities throughout Queensland. Our service locations include Sunnybank Hills, Brighton, Gold Coast, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay, and Cairns. Services include an independent school, allied health and diagnostic services, inclusion services, behaviour support services, community support services, independent supported living options, early childhood services, group and individual therapy, professional learning and parent education, school advisory services, support coordination, and vacation care.

For 10 years Autism Queensland hosted the Early Intervention Indigenous Liaison (EI ILO) Program. This was a national project funded by the Department of Social Services to raise awareness and understanding of autism and disability throughout Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The purpose of the program was to increase awareness of childhood disability, facilitate access to diagnosis, education, and funding, and provide links to culturally relevant services. It was established in 2012 in response to the disproportionately low number of families seeking support for autistic children and concluded in 2021 due to the establishment of the NDIS.





## Our Vision

A life of participation, opportunity, and choice.

## Our Mission

We partner with autistic people, their families and communities to remove barriers and realise potential.

## Our Values

Our core values represent who we are and what is important to us. They embody what we do every day.

**Integrity & Authenticity:** We are genuine, honest and accountable in all that we do.

**Diversity & Inclusion:** We respect and celebrate all people and their right to participate and belong.

**Strengths Focus:** We strive to support the development of every person's potential, recognising that a strengths focus enables growth and empowers decision-making and self-advocacy.

**Safety & Wellbeing:** We provide and promote safe, respectful, caring and engaging people and environments that support positive development and relationships.

**Evidence-Informed Practice:** We use professional reasoning to bring together current high quality research evidence and the values, strengths and preferences of individuals and families to optimise outcomes.



# Autism Queensland's Reconciliation Action Plan

The Autism Queensland Executive Leadership team and Board of Directors recognise the importance and value of developing and implementing a RAP to support an increased understanding of sincere reconciliation across the organisation. The development of a Reflect RAP has enabled staff across the organisation to participate in conversations that initially looked backwards in order to formulate the most culturally appropriate pathways for continued reconciliation into the future. One of the drivers in the development of a Reflect RAP is to design a consultative framework to ensure that consideration of cultural needs across all services delivery is informed and guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Autism Queensland recognises the importance of applying cultural knowledge in every-day practice promotes cultural safety. The Autism Queensland RAP implementation plan will provide the roadmap for the ongoing journey toward cultural maturity.

Autism Queensland adheres to Human Rights Conventions and operates its business with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Rights of Children, and the Rights of Indigenous Australians as the cornerstone for supporting inclusive service delivery. It makes sense for Autism Queensland to articulate the commitment to the advancement of First Nations peoples in the shape of a formalised and endorsed Reflect RAP. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with the support of the Board and Senior Leadership Team, and in conjunction with the RAP Working Group (RWG), have already taken steps toward the implementation of a Reflect RAP. For instance, the RWG was established in June 2021 and conducts regular meetings to address the key actions and deliverables detailed in this Reflect Implementation Plan. Members of the RWG hold roles that currently include the Chief Operations Officer; Manager - Business Development; Autism Support Coordinator; Teacher – Education and Therapy Services; Occupational Therapist; and Research Officer. The process of reflection on our Reflect RAP has shaped, defined, and provided a clear plan for organisation-wide implementation.

The pathway to genuine and sustainable reconciliation for Autism Queensland is highly reliant on embedding findings from cultural consultations that will influence the development of the roadmap. The National Indigenous team developed an engagement model that aligns with reconciliation practices to guide the implementation of the Reflect RAP. The engagement model supports consultation with communities and mainstream service providers via autism specific education that intends to raise awareness, build relationships, and drive collaboration to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with autism, their families and carers achieve their goals. The model provides cultural perspective to Autism Queensland, disability organisations and wider service providers to improve engagement of autistic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. Successful and sustainable outcomes are highly reliant on engaging sensitively with cultural imperatives and designated deliverables outlined in the implementation plan.

The key objectives that support reconciliation at Autism Queensland include:

- Working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to raise awareness of autism.
- Building relationships with Australia's First Peoples and strengthening connections to facilitate soft referrals to relevant mainstream support services.
- Working in collaboration with disability and carer organisations, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), and other service providers, to engage with First Australians in culturally appropriate ways.
- Providing and leading discussions with mainstream service providers about cultural perspectives to improve their understanding of meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

Autism Queensland recognises community consultative models place value in working together using frameworks that facilitate sustainable local solutions and include opportunities for autistic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in community activities. Processes of creating local solutions might include working with people with lived experience and key community members through a focus or advisory group, making informed decisions from an evidence-base, and guiding collaborative goal setting. Consultation is a necessary part of Autism Queensland's reconciliation plan to facilitate sustained and positive community engagement and is a critical contributor to the reconciliation process.

Autism Queensland's CEO will act as Ambassador for reconciliation initiatives and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Supports Lead will assume the role of RAP Champion to plan and implement the activities detailed in this Reflect RAP. Establishing the RAP working group has been an essential first step to inform the pathway of the reconciliation journey. The aim of the working group is to identify knowledge gaps and unmet cultural needs across service provision at Autism Queensland. Invitations to autistic First Australians, their parents/carers, and community Elders will be extended by the RAP working group to drive the framework for development of, and participation in, a user-led advisory group. The overarching function of the advisory group will be to provide a collaborative framework that draws together the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Queensland. The aim would be to establish a mechanism whereby focus group members could contribute to deepening an understanding of local cultural and historical contexts and how those perspectives might influence service delivery and support Autism Queensland on a journey to cultural maturity. Most importantly, the outcomes should contribute to service decisions that are guided by consumer choice and control, are cost-efficient, and have ordinary life outcomes, with potential for long-term sustainability and acceptance of autism across all Australian communities.

## Our Partnerships & Current Activities

Autism Queensland has been delivering specialised services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia through targeted programs since 2012. A two-year funding stream enabled the team of Indigenous Liaison Officers (ILOs) to grow from two team members to 11 in 2020. They provided ongoing support and guidance to staff at Autism Queensland to better equip them in ensuring cultural safety is embedded in professional practice and services to persons on the spectrum, their families, and communities.

In 2019, Autism Queensland offered Cultural Responsiveness training for all staff and continues to provide this as part of the suite of mandatory training for front-line staff. Utilising the skills and knowledge of a cultural advisor, this training was delivered by AQ's ILOs who also provided links to Reconciliation Australia's on-line learning tools as part of the pre-reading preparation for each workshop. The cultural responsiveness training raised respectful discussions about how acknowledgements are an integral part of the process toward reconciliation and aimed to recognise historical truths. During 2021, Autism Queensland adopted the practice of opening meetings, workshops, and service delivery forums with an Acknowledgement of Country, ensuring First Nations peoples are recognised as a natural part of business practice.

Through the National Indigenous Team, Autism Queensland initiated and maintained trusted relationships with many key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. Working alongside Community-Controlled Organisations across Australia to provide education, raise awareness and build understanding of autism has supported models of two-way learning and sharing knowledge. Increasing the inclusion conversation through joint activities such as community festivals,



research projects, and yarning circles enabled community members, Aboriginal Councils, Aboriginal Medical Services, Early Learning Centres, and Peak Bodies to willingly take stewardship for progressing the autism conversation. In turn, stakeholders drove the agenda because they shared with us knowledge about community need and proper ways of working. Together we celebrated successful outcomes, and informed program design and implementation suited to the places where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples live and work.

Internal activities that have contributed to the reconciliation journey so far include:

- Acknowledgement of Country displayed at each Autism Queensland site.
- Cultural Responsiveness training for all forward-facing Autism Queensland staff.
- Supported policy to initiate Acknowledgment of Country as a natural part of service delivery in workshops, meetings, and therapy.
- Availability of cultural consultation and guidance for all Autism Queensland staff supported by ILOs.
- Display of cultural art (featured throughout this document) created by Yvonne O'Neill, a previous Autism Queensland ILO, that represents the way cultural conversations interact between Autism Queensland and the wider Australian community.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program specific shirts that were worn by the National Team that include segments of the cultural art and the words Let's Talk Autism.
- Culturally guided marketing materials to promote proper ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- A willingness by Autism Queensland staff to engage in cultural awareness activities.
- Ongoing commitment of Autism Queensland staff to cultural connectedness conversations to enhance knowledge of the cultural histories of First Australians.
- Development of the Yarning Autism website with up-to-date relevant information specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Development and distribution of resources to assist explaining the roles of Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists, and Psychologists.
- Ongoing creation of resources as gaps in knowledge are identified or needs arise.
- Establishment of a Teams Channel to support ongoing transparent conversation about supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons on the autism spectrum, their families, and communities.
- Review of current external training resources to ensure increased accessibility.
- Ongoing mapping of community-controlled organisations to support initiation and maintenance of strong network relationships.
- Continued research into modifying the Adolescent and Adult Goal Setting Tool to suit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote communities.

It is intended additional planned internal activities that contribute to reconciliation will be articulated through the Reflect RAP, as detailed in the following table of timelines presented as the Implementation Plan.





# Section I

## Relationships



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.</li> </ul>	July 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research best practice and principles that support internal and external partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</li> </ul>	April 2023	Chief Operations Officer
<b>Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.</li> </ul>	April 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RWG members to participate in an external NRW event.</li> </ul>	27 May - 3 June 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</li> </ul>	27 May - 3 June 2023	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.</li> </ul>	April 2023 (review) October 2023 (review)	Chief Executive Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.</li> </ul>	July 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify organisations with a RAP and/or other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.</li> </ul>	July 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage Autism Queensland school campuses to develop their own RAP through the Narragunnawali program.</li> </ul>	June 2023	Principal, Autism Queensland School
<b>Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review best practice, including external and internal policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.</li> </ul>	July 2023	Chief Corporate Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures through a human rights lens to identify any existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.</li> </ul>	November 2023	Chief Corporate Officer

# Section 2

## Respect



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights through cultural learning.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore ways for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights within our organisation. For example, establishing a Teams channel for ongoing questions, answers and discussions, development of allied health therapy resources, and incorporating mechanisms for cultural review of programs.</li> </ul>	June 2023 (review) November 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.</li> </ul>	March 2023	Development & Learning Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide Cultural Connectedness workshops for staff at Autism Queensland.</li> </ul>	August 2023	Chief Corporate Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include Cultural Connectedness training for new staff during CEO mandatory induction days.</li> </ul>	August 2023	Chief Corporate Officer
<b>Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.</li> </ul>	July 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.</li> </ul>	April 2023 (review) September 2023 (review)	Chief Executive Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an organisation-wide understanding of how to define Autism Queensland operational areas so they might align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations to better support targeted acknowledgements and community engagement that is respectful of cultural histories.</li> </ul>	October 2023	Chief Operations Officer
<b>Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.</li> </ul>	2-8 July 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Celebrate NAIDOC week through organisation-wide activities.</li> </ul>	2-8 July 2023	Chief Executive Officer



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite relevant community members to participate in NAIDOC events.</li> </ul>	June 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. Will need to occur remotely if COVID-19 continues to impact gatherings.</li> </ul>	June, July 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RWG to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. Will need to occur remotely if COVID-19 continues to impact gatherings.</li> </ul>	July 2023	Chief Operations Officer
<b>Embed significant cultural dates to the Autism Queensland Corporate Calendar.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important dates will be included in the Autism Queensland Corporate Calendar.</li> </ul>	December 2022 ongoing	Chief Executive Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO weekly update provides information about significant cultural dates as they arise.</li> </ul>	December 2022 ongoing	Chief Executive Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and links are shared internally about each Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander date of significance.</li> </ul>	December 2022 ongoing	Chief Operations Officer

# Section 3

## Opportunities



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the Autism Queensland workforce.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Explore ways to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation through embedding culturally safe practices in the recruitment process. This might include considering recruitment adjustments, establishing identified positions, reviewing professional development, and building confidence for the wider organisation.</li></ul>	October 2023	Chief Corporate Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Repeat the Staff Survey and implement an audit to provide another opportunity for current staff to advise Autism Queensland that they identify as understand the number of current Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and use this knowledge to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.</li></ul>	October 2023	Chief Corporate Officer
<b>Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Progress exploration of procurement strategies from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.</li></ul>	June 2023	Chief Corporate Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Investigate use of Supply Nation database for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers and Supply Nation membership.</li></ul>	June 2023	Head of Property



# Section 4

## Governance



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RWG to meet regularly to govern RAP implementation.</li> </ul>	February 2023 ongoing	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Terms of Reference for the RWG.</li> </ul>	February 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.</li> </ul>	April 2023	Chief Operations Officer
<b>Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define resource needs for RAP implementation.</li> </ul>	June 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments, dissemination of key information, and processes for reporting outcomes through embedding a standing item on the agenda for monthly Senior Manager meetings.</li> </ul>	March 2023	Chief Executive Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.</li> </ul>	January 2023	Chief Operations Officer
<b>Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>	June 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.</li> </ul>	August 2023	Chief Operations Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.</li> </ul>	30 September 2023 (deadline to submit)	Chief Operations Officer
<b>Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP</li> </ul>	September 2023	Chief Executive Officer and RWG

For enquiries regarding Autism Queensland's RAP contact:  
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