

Artwork by Simone Thomson



EARLY LEARNING ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA
REFLECT RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN
JULY 2024 - JUNE 2025



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

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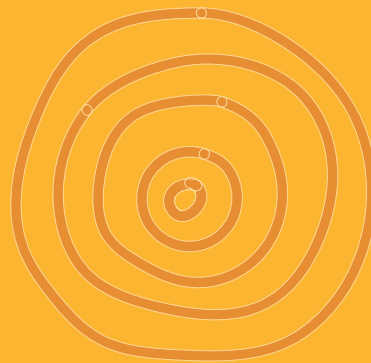
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ABOUT THE ARTWORK



Ballerri Ngawan – Strength of the Sun

The traditional language of the Wurundjeri People is Woi-Wurrung. In the Woi-Wurrung language, the name Wurundjeri is in two parts. 'Wurun' meaning the manna gum tree, and 'djeri', the white grub that lives in the tree – the witchetty grub. Manna gum leaves float across the sky symbolising deep respects to the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways in which Early Learning Association Australia is based – Wurundjeri Country.

It also acknowledges the Bunurong/Boonwurrung People whom parts of Country are shared and signifies the profound and deep-rooted connection all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have with their traditional land and waterways.

Birrarung, the majestic river of mist and shadows weaves gently across Country from its birthplace at the foothills of the Great Dividing Range, to the saltwater Bay of Naarm, the place known as Melbourne. This significant and sacred waterway was a vital food source and means of travel, and the meeting place for inter-clan trade and ceremonies for thousands of years. It symbolises ELAA's nationwide reach of members meeting and trading information in their commitment to reconciliation while working alongside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

The flowing water represents Early Learning Association Australia's collective journey of listening to and learning from First Nations people and their ongoing commitment to ensuring access to quality education and programs that reflect their cultures. Campsites are depicted along the river; arced shaped mounds represent the homes and communities of families throughout the country whom ELAA supports and advocates for, regardless of barriers and cultural backgrounds.

Mountainous ranges frame either side of Birrarung – significant gathering places to the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung People. Wide sweeping hills symbolise Corhanwarbul, the Dandenong Ranges – the richly dense rainforests and fern gullies in which the river stems – and Geboor, Mt. Macedon. Within these rolling hills is Wil-im-ee Mooring, Mt William – the sacred and spiritual gathering place in which clans from along the east coast of the country would gather for ceremony.

In the Aboriginal way, a person is represented by the 'U' and 'n' symbol. From the bird's eye view, this is the shape a person makes whilst sitting on the ground, knees crossed. People are shown sitting around these interconnecting circles that link from across the river symbolising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. They are connected by pathways symbolising ELAA's vision to continue to learn from these communities and their commitment to empower their own members along the path of reconciliation.

Emu, wombat, possum and kangaroo footprints walk along the red earth of Country. They represent the timeless ways Indigenous people have raised, nurtured and educated their children since time immemorial and are the journey tracks of ELAA's pathway to reconciliation.

The central Gathering Circle is the meeting place of Early Learning Association Australia and symbolises the Sun, the Giver of Life. 'U' symbols gather around the circle representing the staff of ELAA and their vision of reconciliation where a future of First Nations culture is embedded and recognised in every facet of Australian society.

The vitality and energy of the Sun signifies growth and enduring strength representing ELAA's commitment to early childhood education and care across Australia valuing, celebrating and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their cultures. It represents the growth of a young child into early adulthood and the significance equitable, respectful and nourishing nurturing can make to all.

It symbolises the strength of the sun. It symbolises ballerit ngawan.

Simone Thomson
Wurundjeri / Yorta-Yorta

About the Artist



"My artistic practice stems from my deep spiritual connection to Culture and Country, and a creative urge to produce evocative works which connect people of all walks of life and cultural backgrounds to Aboriginal storytelling."

— Simone Thomson

I am a Naarm based multidisciplinary Artist and a Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung and Yorta-Yorta Traditional Owner through my mother. I draw inspiration for my art and dreaming stories from abundant textures and colours of Country along with the ancestral bonds I have to the Birrarung (Yarra River) and Dhungala (the Murray River). My people are river people, so I find that waterways often interweave into my art along with dreaming and creation stories of the sky.

I pay my respects to my mother, my maternal grandmother Kooka Geraldine, and her mother, my great-grandmother – Kooka Yarmuk. It is through them in particular that I carry the language, stories and ancestral oral history and knowledge passed down to me from my mother.

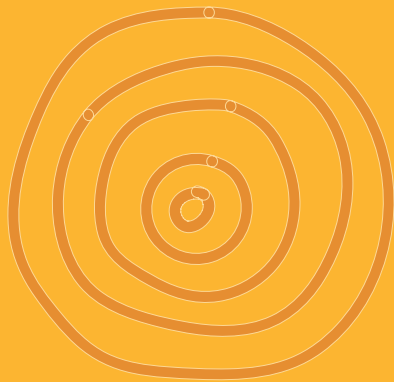
I have been blessed with a strong cultural education that includes traditional song and dance as a young child. These cultural practices continued into my teenage years where I became the first graduating student of Victoria's first Aboriginal school, Worawa Aboriginal College. It's here that I picked up my first paint brush at fifteen and created my first dreaming story. Little did I know that I would continue this sacred art of storytelling well into my adult years and that I would still receive the same spiritual healing and strength I did back then from connecting to my culture.

Simone Thomson

Acknowledgment of Country

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and the nation. We pay our respects to Elders, and their communities of past, current and future generations.

We recognise the significance of connections with place to the memories, traditions, cultures and the spiritual wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We honour their wisdom, strength and resilience, and enduring traditional knowledge and educational practices passed from generation to generation.



Statement from CEO of Reconciliation

Inaugural Reflect RAP

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Early Learning Association Australia to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Early Learning Association Australia joins a network of more than 2,700 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 Early Learning Association Australia 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 Early Learning Association Australia, 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



Our organisation

Our vision for reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation paints a future where the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is not only recognised but embedded and championed in every facet of Australian society. Our vision for early childhood education and care (ECEC) organisation across Australia, is to value, celebrate and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and cultures.

In our vision for reconciliation, we aspire to empower, learn from and guide our members along the path of reconciliation, emphasising the transformative power of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in the outcomes for all children. Recognising the profound histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, we celebrate their enduring strength and capabilities rooted in their connection to the land and their timeless ways of raising, nurturing, and educating children. We deeply value and respect the richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, fostering equity and empowerment in cultural expression.

Embarking on a collective journey of listening, learning, and engagement, we are committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have access to quality education and care programs that reflect, apply, and engage with their unique cultures. As a peak body in early childhood education and care, we call upon our members to commit to reconciliation, working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations to collaboratively develop solutions together.

Our business

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) is a not-for-profit membership association supporting over 1300 early childhood education and care services to deliver our vision of excellence and equity in early childhood education and care.

We advocate, lead and influence all levels of Government for policy, funding and regulatory arrangements that deliver quality and sustainable outcomes for our members and the early childhood education and care sector. We provide quality solutions through advice, resources, training and project delivery to support our members and the sector.

ELAA is comprised of a passionate and diverse team of over twenty people. Our team work on Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung Lands to support our members who live and work across Australia on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lands. There are currently no staff that identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at ELAA.

Our membership comprises early childhood education and care service providers from community, early years management (EYM) organisations, schools, councils, privately operated providers. Our membership includes Aboriginal-led organisations that deliver early childhood services.

Message from CEO and Board Chair of ELAA

Inaugural Reflect RAP

We are delighted to present ELAA's Inaugural Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), signifying our commitment to and concerted effort towards reconciliation.

As a peak body in early childhood education and care (ECEC), we have witnessed, collaborated with, and celebrated the strength and value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and cultures. Our Reflect RAP takes a significant step to embed this further through structures and actions that will enable our team, stakeholders and broader sector to be empowered, learn and transform along the journey of reconciliation.

This is an important time for organisations to reflect and embark on a reconciliation journey. Across each of the five dimensions: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance, we recognise the unique contribution ELAA can make as a peak body in early childhood education and care.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples and cultures have a profound history and transformative power, particularly in their connection to lands and enduring ways of raising, nurturing and educating children.

Through our RAP, we look forward to continuing to build genuine and respectful relationships, to foster equity and empowerment in cultural expression and education, to encourage others to commit to reconciliation, and to acknowledge the wrongs of our past and the need for truth telling.

We thank and acknowledge the work of ELAA's RAP Working Group who have driven and championed our reconciliation journey. There is still much more listening, learning and actions in the months and years ahead to achieve our vision of a future where the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is embedded and championed in every facet of Australian society.

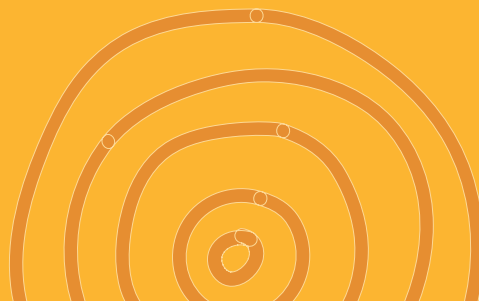
We encourage our members to join us in making this commitment to reconciliation through the Narragunnawali RAP program and are looking forward to achieving the outcomes set in our Reflect RAP.



Tim Watts
Interim CEO



Sue West
Board Chair



Our RAP

We are developing our RAP to celebrate, listen, learn and cultivate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. We want to strengthen our relationship and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations. We want to identify and address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We want to commit to these outcomes through a structured approach that ensures we increase our cultural awareness and responsiveness, can champion reconciliation across our sector, and build internal capacity to listen and learn deeply, to ultimately achieve our vision for reconciliation.

Our team are committed to listening and learning. We believe there is strength in developing a RAP as a recognised and tested step in reconciliation. Post the 2023 Referendum outcome, there has never been a more important time to reflect and embark on this reconciliation journey. Further, Victoria is the first Australian jurisdiction to commit and action all elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart – Voice, Treaty and Truth. The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is the first independent and democratically elected body to represent Traditional Owners and First Peoples on the journey to Treaty in Victoria and we look forward to being able to learn throughout this process as well.

We will implement our RAP collaboratively, drawing on the skills of our team and our network. We will actively listen and respectfully learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations. We will embed and adopt all actions identified in our RAP collectively. We will identify the strengths of our team members and encourage their active participation in the RAP implementation process. We will embed these principles for all new staff and team members through their induction and throughout their employment at ELAA. We will reflect on our implementation ongoing and adjust accordingly to ensure our actions lead to the outcomes we're seeking. We will draw on our position as a leader and influencer in the ECEC sector to improve the reconciliation journey, increase awareness and encourage more of the sector to embark on this process.

ELAA has long been a champion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and children within the early childhood education and care sector. This Reflect RAP is our first documented commitment to reconciliation.



Our partnerships and current activities in our reconciliation journey

ELAA is making a greater commitment to reconciliation and will increase our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations as outlined through the actions in this RAP. To date, much of our activities and partnerships have been at our operations level with steps taken including:

- Collaboration with Aboriginal-led organisations across Victoria through the training and capacity building program of our Starting Out Safely Road Safety Education Project, to strengthen the outcomes of road safety for children.
- Commencing meetings with an Acknowledgement of Country, with staff members encouraged to consider and enact ways to make their acknowledgement genuine and reflective of what they have learned and can share about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
- During the 2023 Referendum, ELAA supported the enshrining of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament to further reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Following the outcome of the referendum, our teams resolve remains to develop a RAP and commit to its vision for reconciliation.

- Conducting a Reconciliation Survey of our membership to learn about how our members engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, staff and children. The findings and outcomes of this survey have been considered as part of this Reflect RAP.

- Various team members participate in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week events, webinars and training, and attended the Early Childhood Australia Reconciliation Symposium.

- Share and promote National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week information and campaigns

- Our Reflect RAP Working Group was formed to support the development of our first RAP. It is comprised of half of our team who were invited to nominate to be on the Working Group and to share why it was important to them.

ELAA's Chief Executive Officer is our RAP Champion.

ELAA's Reflect RAP co-chairs:

- Erin Taylor, Advisor – Member Solutions
- Georgie Delbridge, Advisor – Member Solutions

ELAA's Reflect RAP Working Group members:

- Georgia Arrowsmith, Administration Specialist – Project Support
- Loredana Dowdle, Specialist – Member Resources Project
- Stacey Fox, Board Member
- Leanne Rodriguez, Best Start Best Life Reform and Engagement Advisor – Member Solutions
- Zora Marko, Manager – Road Safety Education
- Johanna Morcom, Business Analyst
- Yao Cheng – Communications Coordinator

Working Group members on the importance of reconciliation

“...reconciliation signifies more than just addressing past injustices; it symbolises a collective commitment to creating a future where individuals from all backgrounds can thrive together.”

“Joining ELAA's RAP working group would provide me with an opportunity to make a small contribution to the Reconciliation process in Australia through my experience and skills...”

“Reconciliation means we can create a future that we can be proud of where we respect our people and our land, and everyone can participate and be recognised equally.”

“[Reconciliation] entails recognising the rich cultural heritage, traditions, and contributions of First Nation peoples and ensuring they are rightfully respected and celebrated.”

Deliverables and Actions

Relationships			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Early Childhood Education and Care sector Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence and create a stakeholder list. 	August 2024	Best Start Best Life Reform and Engagement Advisor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Education and Care sector stakeholders and organisations. 	August 2024	Specialist – Member Resources Project
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Reconciliation Australia’s NRW resources and reconciliation materials to ELAA members and staff. 	May 2025	Best Start Best Life Reform and Engagement Advisor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event and communicate participation and outcomes to members and staff. 	May 2025	RAP Co-Chairs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	RAP Co-Chairs
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all members and staff. 	July 2024	CEO

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify external stakeholders from or allied to the ECEC sector, including in partnership with the Narragunnawali team, that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. 	July 2024	RAP Co-Chairs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 	August 2024	Best Start Best Life Reform and Engagement Advisor Administration Specialist – Project Support Specialist – Member Resources Project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ELAA resources and communications content that can be used to promote reconciliation to members and identify any gaps in resources. 	August 2024	Business Analyst Communications Coordinator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop communications plan for engaging stakeholders and members in reconciliation. 	September 2024	Communications Coordinator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin implementation of communications plan. 	October 2024	Communications Coordinator
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination with a focus on the ECEC sector. 	October 2024	Business Analyst Best Start Best Life Reform and Engagement Advisor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of ELAA HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	October 2024	CEO

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	• Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	September 2024	RAP Co-Chairs
	• Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	September 2024	RAP Co-Chairs
	• Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day.	August 2024	Communications Coordinator
	• Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about Indigenous Literacy Day.	September 2024	Communications Coordinator
	• Establish internal recognition systems to identify and celebrate reconciliation award winners.	September 2024	Communications Coordinator
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	• Continue to develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	July 2024	RAP Co-Chairs
	• Continue to increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	July 2024	RAP Co-Chairs
	• Organise and display an Acknowledgment of Country plaque at Office.	July 2024	Specialist - Operations

<p>7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. 	<p>July 2024 and June 2025</p>	<p>CEO</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. 	<p>July 2024 and June 2025</p>	<p>Communications Coordinator</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	<p>July 2024</p>	<p>RAP Co-Chairs</p>

Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	• Develop business processes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	July 2024	CEO
	• Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	November 2024	CEO
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	• Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	September 2024	Administration Specialist – Project Support
	• Investigate Supply Nation membership or alike membership.	July 2024	Administration Specialist – Project Support
10. Work in partnership with Reconciliation Australia’s Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education team	• Promote the Narragunnawali program across communications and member service delivery channels to encourage early childhood services to develop and maintain a RAP through the Narragunnawali platform.	September 2024	Communications Coordinator
	• Add a link to the Narragunnawali platform on the ELAA website’s Reconciliation Action Plan area.	July 2024	Communications Coordinator

Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	• Continue the RWG to govern RAP implementation.	July 2024	RWG Co-Chairs
	• Review the established Terms of Reference for the RWG.	July 2024	RWG Co-Chairs
	• Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	July 2024	RWG Co-Chairs
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2024	RWG Co-Chairs, CEO
	• Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2024	RWG Co-Chairs
	• Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally and promote reconciliation throughout the organisation.	July 2024	CEO
	• Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	June 2024	CEO
13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	• 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.	July 2024	RWG Co-Chairs
	• Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	July 2024	RWG Co-Chairs
	• Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2024	RWG Co-Chairs
	• Report our RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings to our members via our annual report and on our website.	November 2024	Communications Co-ordinator
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	• Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	March 2025	RWG Co-Chairs



For public enquiries about our RAP please contact: RAP working group RAP@ela.org.au

Early Learning Association Australia would like to acknowledge the contributions of previous group members to the development of the Reflect RAP