



Benalla Health  
**Innovate  
Reconciliation  
Action Plan**

August 2024 – August 2026



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN

INNOVATE

BEST**CARE**  
*@ Benalla*  
HEALTH

## Our Vision

Healthy, thriving and resilient communities in and around Benalla.

## Our Purpose

To care for our community by providing safe, high-quality healthcare for everyone.

## Acknowledgement of Country

Benalla Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands from across our region. Our commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples is supported by our recognition and respect for their connection to their ancestral lands.

We value our community diversity. We are committed to being an inclusive health service and work environment where people of all cultures, beliefs, abilities, genders, sexualities, and ages feel safe, accepted, affirmed, and celebrated.

## Our Values



**Respect**



**Empathy**



**Excellence**



**Compassion**



**Accountability**

# Innovate RAP CEO statement – Benalla Health

Reconciliation Australia commends Benalla Health on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

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 Benalla Health 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, Benalla Health 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. Benalla Health 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 Benalla Health'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 Benalla Health on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

**Karen Mundine**

Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia



# Our Vision for Reconciliation & Our Business



## Our vision for Reconciliation

In our vision for reconciliation at Benalla Health, we aspire to achieve health equity for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We envision a workplace that is not only culturally safe but also culturally rich and proud. We commit to walking together without prejudice or judgment, advocating for the well-being of our community. We acknowledge the profound impact of colonisation and embrace the truths of Australia's history. With pride, we celebrate Benalla's Aboriginal history, fostering an environment of understanding, respect, and unity.

## Our Business

Benalla Health is located in Benalla 212 Kilometres from Melbourne. As a rural health service Benalla Health is an important part of the fabric of the community. Our Services span across the continuum ranging from Acute hospital services, Maternity, Health promotion, Health education,

Social support, to delivering direct preventative, curative and supportive services. Our focus is on promoting and maintaining strength, wellbeing, independence, individuality and dignity through offering services tailored to each person and their families.

Benalla Health has 360 staff, of whom 7 identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Benalla Health has an Aboriginal patient and family support officer.

Benalla Health has one site and services predominately cover the Benalla Local Government Area in northeast Victoria. The Benalla Health site sits on the lands of the Yorta Yorta people and services also include lands of the Taungurung people.

Benalla Health's sphere of influence includes: our staff, Board of Directors, executive staff, patients, residents, clients, consumers, community, business partners, contractors, students, community groups, students, state and federal governing bodies, local Aboriginal groups and organisations.

# Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Benalla Health is developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to align the organisational strategic goals to advance reconciliation within Australia, for the benefit of all Australians. Compared with other Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience more chronic disease and a lower life expectancy by approximately 10 years when compared to the rest of the Australia population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women also experience disproportionate rates of family violence. As a health service it is important that our services are culturally competent and accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Benalla Health will implement the RAP through identified actions and collaboration with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Benalla Health has developed a Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RWG) as part of the Partnering with Consumers committee cultural safety working group to oversee and co-ordinate the implementation of the RAP's actions.

Membership of the RWG include: Aboriginal Patient and Family Support Officer (APFSO), Consumer Engagement and Volunteer Coordinator, Operational Director of Healthy Communities, Urgent Care Centre Nurse Unit Manager, Quality Coordinator, Nursing and Allied Health staff.

Benalla Health's RAP champion is the Operational Director of Healthy Communities. The RAP champion will be responsible for driving internal

engagement and awareness of the RAP. Benalla Health's RWG has one member who identifies as a first nations person.

Benalla Health currently participates in the Benalla Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group in partnership with Benalla Rural City Council. The advisory group has provided feedback on Benalla Health's RAP and Benalla health staff attend both the Advisory group and RWG. Benalla Health staff attend the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service Bus weekly and has engaged the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) to provide staff education.

Benalla Health conduct an annual Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety & Environmental Scan. The Environmental Scan was conducted by a local Aboriginal Elder and Aboriginal Cultural Connections Advisor with VACCA. An action plan has been developed as a result of the scan and this is monitored through the Partnering with Consumers committee.

Benalla Health is the recipient of an Aboriginal cultural safety grant and plan of which progress reports are provided to the Victorian Department of Health.

Benalla Health has completed the first Reflect RAP and is proud of the Aboriginal Artwork project completed in 2023. Learnings and challenges Benalla Health have identified from the reflect RAP have been a gap in staff education regarding the APFSO role and referral process in addition to cultural education.



# Relationships

Strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and all Australians is central to Benalla Health's mission. It promotes inclusivity, cultural competence, and collaboration in our healthcare services, enhancing overall community well-being.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>1.</b> Establish & maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander stakeholders & organisations.	Meet with local Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander stakeholders & organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	Dec 2024	Operational Director of Healthy Communities (ODHC) & Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer (APFSO)
	Develop & implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander stakeholders & organisations.	Dec 2024	Consumer Engagement & Volunteer Coordinator (CE&VC)
	Attend the Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service Bus weekly.	Jun 2025	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	Attend the bimonthly external Benalla Aboriginal Reference Group	Jun 2025	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
<b>2.</b> Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources & reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2025 & 2026	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 Jun, 2025 – 25	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	Encourage & support staff & senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise & celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 Jun, 2024 – 26	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May – 3 Jun, 2024 – 25	Operational Director of Healthy Communities (ODHC)
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website	May 2025 & 2026	Operational Director of Healthy Communities (ODHC)
<b>3.</b> Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Develop & implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	Jul 2025	Diversity Equity & Inclusion Officer (DE&IO)
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.	Dec 2024	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	Aug 2024	Community Engagement & Volunteer Coordinator
	Collaborate with RAP organisations & other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	Aug 2024	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
<b>4.</b> Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of HR policies & procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, & future needs.	Sep 2024	Diversity Equity & Inclusion Officer (DE&IO)
	Develop, implement, & communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	Dec 2024	Diversity Equity & Inclusion Officer (DE&IO)
	Engage with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff &/or Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	Sep 2024	Diversity Equity & Inclusion Officer (DE&IO) / Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	Mar 2025 & 2026	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
<b>5.</b> Partner with local health services to improve access to healthcare	Attend the external Aboriginal Health Innovation Initiative Steering Group (AHII) meetings to improve discharge processes for local Aboriginal patients.	Nov 2024	Operational Director of Healthy Communities (ODHC)
	Attend AHII working group meetings to share learnings from local community members.	Oct 2024	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer



# Respect

Respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and rights is integral to Benalla Health's core activities. It fosters cultural pride, deepens understanding, and ensures acknowledgment and celebration, contributing to our success in delivering culturally sensitive healthcare services.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>6.</b> Increase understanding, value & recognition of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge & rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Nov 2024	Executive Director People & Culture
	Consult local Traditional Owners &/or Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy.	Oct 2024	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	Develop, implement, & communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff.	Mar 2025	Operational Director Performance Improvement
	Continue to implement the MARAM framework & provide Family violence recognition & response training to staff.	Feb 2025	Operational Director Performance Improvement
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers & other key leadership staff to participate in formal & structured cultural learning	Jun 2025	Operational Director Performance Improvement
<b>7.</b> Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose & significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country & Welcome to Country protocols.	May 2025	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	Develop, implement & communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country & Acknowledgement of Country.	Nov 2024	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year.	Nov 2024	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	Nov 2024	Operational Director Healthy Communities
<b>8.</b> Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	APFSO to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event e.g. Dharnya Day.	First week in July, 2025 & 2026	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	Participate in the annual NAIDOC week event in partnership with Benalla Rural City Council.	First week in July, 2025 & 2026	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer / Community Engagement & Volunteer Coordinator
	Review HR policies & procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	Dec 2024 & 2025	Diversity Equity & Inclusion Officer (DE&IO)
	Promote & encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	First week in July, 2025 & 2026	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



# Opportunities

The mutually beneficial nature of creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals lies in fostering diversity, economic empowerment, professional development, and improved access to healthcare. This approach aligns with principles of equity, inclusivity, and community-centered care, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being of both Benalla Health and the First Nations communities it serves.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>9.</b> Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, & professional development.	Build understanding of current Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment & professional development opportunities.	Jan 2025	Executive Director People & Culture
	Engage with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention & professional development strategy.	Feb 2025	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer
	Develop & implement an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention & professional development strategy.	Mar 2025	Executive Director People & Culture
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	Mar 2025	Executive Director People & Culture
	Review HR & recruitment procedures & policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	Dec 2024	Executive Director People & Culture
<b>10.</b> Increase Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic & social outcomes.	Develop and implement an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy.	Apr 2025	Executive Director Finance & Corporate Services
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	Jun 2025	Executive Director Finance & Corporate Services
	Develop & communicate opportunities for procurement of goods & services from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	Aug 2025	Executive Director Finance & Corporate Services
	Review & update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods & services from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Oct 2025	Executive Director Finance & Corporate Services
	Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal &/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	Dec 2024	Executive Director Finance & Corporate Services
<b>11.</b> Engage with local culturally appropriate meeting places.	Add Winton wetlands as a preferred meeting place for senior staff meetings & engage with Aboriginal education staff at Winton wetlands.	Nov 2024	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
	Establish a reference guide for culturally significant meeting sites in the Benalla area.	Jan 2025	Aboriginal Patient & Family Support Officer



# Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>12.</b> Establish & maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Feb, May, Aug, Dec 2025–26	Operational Director Healthy Communities
	Establish (OR Review, update) & apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	Dec 2024	Operational Director Healthy Communities
	Meet at least four times per year to drive & monitor RAP implementation.	Feb, May, Aug, Dec 2024, 25–26	Operational Director Healthy Communities
<b>13.</b> Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Aug 2024	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
	Appoint & maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	Aug 2024	Operational Director Healthy Communities
	Engage our senior leaders & other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Aug 2024	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
	Define & maintain appropriate systems to track, measure & report on RAP commitments.	Feb 2025	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
<b>14.</b> Build accountability & transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges & learnings both internally & externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary & secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence.	Jun Annually	Operational Director Healthy Communities
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 Aug Annually	Operational Director Healthy Communities
	Complete & submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 Sept Annually	Operational Director Healthy Communities
	Report RAP progress to all staff & senior leaders quarterly.	Nov 2025 – 2026	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges & learnings, annually.	Nov 2025 – 2026	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	May 2026	Operational Director Healthy Communities
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	Aug 2026	Operational Director Healthy Communities
<b>15.</b> Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP	Mar 2026	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

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**APFSO:** Aboriginal Patient and Family Support Officer  
**CEO:** Chief Executive Officer  
**ODHC:** Operational Director of Healthy Communities  
**RWG:** Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group  
**EDF&CS:** Executive Director Corporate and Finance Services

**EDP&C:** Executive Director of People and Culture  
**DE&IO:** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer  
**CE&VC:** Consumer Engagement and Volunteer Coordinator  
**MARAM:** Multi Agency Risk Assessment Management Framework



# Artist Madison Connors Biography

My name is Madison Connors (nee' Saunders), and I am excited to share my journey as a proud and strong Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, and Gamilaroi woman. The essence of my identity is a driving force within me, originating from my heart and shaping who I am. My profound connection to the environment is like a lifeline, tracing back to the bloodline that runs through this country and my community.

I was fortunate to be born and raised in Kannygoopna, known as Shepparton, where the bountiful waters yield the catch of big fish. Growing up, I lived on my grandmother's Country, immersing myself in the rich traditions and wisdom passed down through generations. Those experiences have shaped my perspective and molded my aspirations.

Today, I reside on Wurundjeri Country, nestled in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. It is here, alongside my young family, that I continue to explore my roots and build upon the legacy of my ancestors. Every day, I am inspired

by the strong line of women who came before me, and I strive to walk in their footsteps with grace and purpose.

Through my work, I aim to embody the full essence of my heritage and make my mob proud. Whether it's through artistic expressions or meaningful achievements, I am dedicated to leaving a lasting impact and contributing to the empowerment of my community.

Join me on this remarkable journey as I embrace my cultural identity, deepen my connection to the land, and endeavor to make a difference. Together, let us celebrate the beauty and resilience of First Nations heritage.

## My artistic vision

Art has always been an integral part of my life, providing solace and creative expression since my earliest memories. Drawing, painting, and creating have been my companions, offering a profound sense of healing. As I embarked on my adult years, my

artistic endeavors became a natural remedy for emotional wellness, allowing me to let go and immerse myself in the transformative process of creation.

As an Aboriginal woman, my experiences have shaped my ambitions and perspectives, infusing my artistic representations with a unique lens. From a young age, I recognized the power of art to create positive change. This belief resonates deeply within me, and I am committed to sharing, teaching, and creating artwork that sparks meaningful conversations.

Each piece I create carries a distinct vision, encapsulating diverse emotions and experiences. While the specifics vary, my ultimate goal is to captivate the minds of my audience. I strive to evoke a profound sense of connection, inviting viewers to delve into the depths of my work and experience a range of emotions.

**Madison Connors (nee' Saunders)**  
Aboriginal Artist



[yarlicreative.com.au](http://yarlicreative.com.au)



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