



**Innovate  
Reconciliation  
Action Plan**

*March 2020 - March 2022*



## Acknowledgment of Country

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of the many lands on which we work and live. We pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging.

## Artwork

**Title:** 'Connections'

My painting tells a story of the diversity and uniqueness of autism spectrum and of the numerous people and services that support and work alongside people on the autism spectrum. This is depicted in the many colours, shapes and textures in the artwork.

**Large circle represents:** the early journey of Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect), where in 1966 a group of passionate parents with a shared vision of supporting their children with similar diverse learning and behavioural needs formed the organisation.

Each ring expanding outwards depicts the growth and direction of Aspect, while working in partnership with autistic people, its Advisory Council, and the operations teams at head office.

**The wavy lines represent:** information and new research that goes out into community, and the lived experience and community knowledge that flows in.

**All outer circles represent:** Aspect schools, programs and other organisations that work and collaborate with Aspect.

**Small white strokes represent:** the shared commitment of all people connected to Aspect.

When painting this story, I was fondly reminded of my own culture and the river systems, as Wiradjuri people are river people. I highlight the importance of the main river sustaining the smaller waterholes, creeks and billabongs, as the river system cannot survive without these connections.

## Language:

Wiradjuri

Maria is an Aspect employee (Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs, Positive Partnerships).

## Disclaimer:

We will use the language of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and First Nations Peoples to communicate our vision and actions throughout this Reconciliation Action Plan.

## Cultural note:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this document may contain images of deceased persons.

## Recognition:

Booklet design by Raina Movigliatti, Senior Graphic Designer, Aspect Communications Team



*'Connections'. Painted by Maria Watson-Trudgett in her art studio.*

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**"As a proud First Nations Person on the Autism Spectrum, I was invited to consult Aspect on creating their Reconciliation Action Plan. I am passionate about making environments inclusive and accessible for my people. Through this respectful process, I was refreshed by Aspect's openness to make amendments. Thank you Aspect for ensuring your RAP is written with the voices and insight of lived-experience at the forefront."**

*Elise Muller, consultant*



# Message from the CEO

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) to introduce our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

*Aspect's purpose: a different brilliant - understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests & aspirations of people on the autism spectrum, and vision to provide the best opportunities for people on the autism spectrum will be strengthened through this Plan to create and maintain an organisational culture that is welcoming and culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

Our vision for reconciliation is a unified country built on respect, and acknowledgment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and strengths.

Aspect's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan details the actions that will drive our organisation's contribution to reconciliation, both internally and with our external stakeholders. We know that working together with our employees, participants, students and communities will create better outcomes for all.

I congratulate Aspect's Reconciliation Working Group for their dedication and achievement in creating our Plan, thank our consultants for their time and commitment and look forward to leading Aspect in developing respectful relationships and creating meaningful opportunities walking and working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through our Reconciliation Action Plan.



*Jacqui Borland*

Jacqui Borland  
Aspect Chief Executive Officer





# 1. Our vision for reconciliation

The vision for Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is that we are passionate about people, about being positive and about what is possible.

Our vision for reconciliation is a country built on respect, acknowledgment and unity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures. We recognise the impacts of our shared history on First Nations peoples. We acknowledge their continual strength, resilience and commitment to equality. We are committed to working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities, walking together to deliver the best outcomes.

We aim to work in partnership to:

- Engage in shared learning alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to understand the truth of our nation's history
- Continue to recognise the struggle for equal rights and opportunity as we build positive, safe and meaningful relationships with communities based upon trust and respect
- Celebrate the rich histories and cultures of First Nations peoples by creating an environment of physical, spiritual and emotional sensitivity and safety
- Actively listen and collaborate with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and stakeholders in our planning, research, service delivery, community development and all communications
- Understand and celebrate the strengths and aspirations of people on the autism spectrum and provide culturally responsive services, being safe and accessible.

# 2. Our business

Aspect's purpose: *a different brilliant*<sup>®</sup> - *understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests & aspirations of people on the spectrum.*

Aspect' values: *We are passionate about people, about being positive and about what is possible.*

Aspect's vision: *The best opportunities for people on the autism spectrum.*

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is Australia's largest autism-specific service provider, with one of the biggest autism-specific school programs in the world. A not-for-profit organisation, we work in partnership with people of all ages on the autism spectrum, and their families to deliver evidence-informed solutions that are person-centred, family-focused and customer driven.

Aspect operates across NSW, VIC, ACT and SA. We have two main offices, nine schools and four Individual and Community Services (ICS) office bases. Aspect Practice and Aspect Therapy also have the reach to run projects and workshops across other states and territories. Aspect has lead the Asia Pacific Autism Conference (APAC) since 2009 with the most recent 2019 conference hosted in Singapore.

We have 22 office locations across Australia. This map identifies the locations of our main offices, schools and services.

Aspect currently holds the tender for Phase 3 of the Department of Education Positive Partnerships project (2016 - 2020). Positive Partnerships operates across the country delivering workshops in schools and communities supporting the partnership between home and school for students on the autism spectrum. As part of their Stretch RAP, Positive Partnerships is committed to providing culturally responsive workshops in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.





### **National Office**

Frenchs Forest, NSW

Baulkham Hills, NSW



### **Aspect Education**

Forestville, NSW

Thornton, NSW

Terrigal, NSW

Peakhurst, NSW

Marrickville, NSW

Loftus, NSW

Ashford, SA

Coffs Harbour, NSW

Albury and South Albury, NSW

Barack Heights, NSW

Corrimal, NSW

Cobbitty, NSW

Wetherill Park, NSW



### **Aspect Individual and Community Services (ICS)**

Alstonville, NSW

Scullin, ACT

Flemington, VIC

Baulkham Hills, NSW

**We acknowledge the identified and unidentified languages of the lands upon which we work, and for the continued retrieval of knowledge to understand First Peoples connection to land.**

## 2.1 Autism and culture

'Disability' is not a concept that readily translates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures (Avery, 2018). This aligns to the worldviews of other indigenous cultures around the world whereby culture is inclusive. Disability is viewed as a part of the individual and it is the community's role to support and include their family with a disability (Bailey, B., & Arciuli, J. 2020).

In recent years the Maori people updated their language used for autism to be 'takiwatanga', meaning '...own time and space'. (Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nu, 2017)

Disability and co-occurring disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is twice as prevalent, compared to other Australians (Avery, 2018). European policies of disposition and displacement of cultural connections to family and the land, can mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the autism spectrum, are some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities (Bailey, B., & Arciuli, J. 2020).

A large part of Aspect's RAP will explore how we can develop relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders that gives respect to a worldview of culture is inclusion. We must ensure our work encourages flexible, coordinated programs both culturally and disability inclusive (Avery, 2018). The recommendations from the first study into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences of autism emphasise the importance of culture, community and Country in delivery of services and supports (Liley, R., Sedwick, M. & Pellicano, E. (2019). Aspect will build these actions into our RAP, as we work together with First Peoples to strengthen access to culturally responsive resources, networks of supports and training.



## 2.2 Our sphere of influence

Aspect employs 1235 people (August 2019) in a range of roles across departments supported by our head office in Frenchs Forest, Sydney.

The June 2019 bi-annual anonymous employee engagement survey reported 22 employees who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Aspect keeps records of all participants and students through Salesforce and Carelink. Aspect service recipients and students who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is 5.2% overall across all programs (October 2019).

**Aspect service recipients and students who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander is 5.2% overall across all programs**

With a reach across many states, Aspect's sphere of influence encompasses a range of diverse stakeholders. People on the autism spectrum represent the strongest influence in our work within both our teams and the individuals, families and communities of our schools, services and partnerships.

As an organisation, our leadership, Board and teams work collaboratively towards a shared commitment to diversity and inclusion which encompasses not only our commitment to reconciliation but also engagement and action plans safely reaching people with disability, multicultural communities and the LGBTQIA+ community.

At a wider reach, Aspect engages with advocates, donors, mainstream schools, governments, NDIS, autism and other disability organisations and communicates this through our social media platforms.

## 3. Our RAP

Our RAP has been developed with reference to Reconciliation Australia's five dimensions of reconciliation:

- race relations
- equality and equity

- institutional integrity
- unity
- historical acceptance

Through this RAP, Aspect acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this land as we demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation. Our goal is to make our organisation a culturally safe workplace, school and service provider for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise diversity as strength and through this RAP we hope to attract and welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to our teams and services.

Our RAP will hold us accountable for our actions, strengthen our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities and support the learning and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples on the autism spectrum.

## 3.1 Consultation and development

The Aspect Board, Management Network and employees across all Aspect services, developed the Aspect RAP in consultation and through consideration, and following advice from a number of internal and external stakeholders. The following diagram details the consultation and partnership processes that have taken place since 2017 in the development of this RAP.

Following our consultation processes a number of themes were identified as key focus areas for our Innovate RAP:

- Meaningful cultural competency training
- Guidance of appropriate cultural protocols
- Development of formal and informal partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations
- Culturally responsive recruitment and retainment processes
- Importance of leaderships in development of relationships
- Increase our visual, case stories and messaging both internally and externally
- Opportunities to develop RAPs in our schools

- Opportunities to develop projects alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants
- Celebration and recognition of significant dates and events



## 3.2 RAP Working Group

As part of the Aspect Strategic Plan, we employed an Inclusion Officer to lead and champion a range of projects. Our RAP is lead and championed across our organisation by our Aspect Inclusion Officer - Renee Christie.

We have a formalised RAP Working Group representing business units across Aspect:

- » Maria Watson-Trudgett: Positive Partnerships Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs
- » Corinne Cribb: Practice Lead - Speech Pathology (Aspect Therapy)
- » Susan Bruck: Senior Research Officer Aspect Research Center for Autism Practice (ARCAP)
- » Stephanie Soans: Regional Manager - Aspect Choose & Connect (Aspect C&C)
- » Renee Christie: Aspect Inclusion Officer (Inclusion)
- » Hayley Crawford: Teacher Aspect Macarthur (Education)
- » Jessee Brown: School Coordinator Aspect Vern Barnett (Education)
- » Tamara Binnewitt: Teacher Aspect Vern Barnett (Education)
- » Meghan Williams: ACA Manager (Education and Aspect Practice)
- » Yelena Romanchenko: Quality System Business Partner (Quality)
- » Hayley Robbins: Senior Communications Officer (Communications)
- » Gabriella Marengo: Recruitment Coordinator (Human Resources)
- » Leissa Dawson: National Director, People
- » Jacqui Borland: CEO

Our Aspect RAP Working Group includes three Aboriginal team members: Maria Watson-Trudgett (Wiradjuri), Hayley Crawford (Gumbaynggirr) and Jessee Brown (Gundungurra)



*Aspect RAP working Group members attending the launch of the "We look after our own mob": Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences of autism. Sydney (February 2020).*

## 3.3 RAP Supporter Network

Individual schools, sites and programs are encouraged and supported by the RAP Working Group and Inclusion Officer, to form Supporter Networks in their regions to drive the implementation of the Aspect RAP at a local level.

Our Supporter Networks work with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and communicate ideas and outcomes back to our Working Group.

## 3.4 RAP Advisory Groups

Our RAP drives a process of continual improvement, of constantly seeking opportunities to engage, learn and strengthen our services. Throughout Aspect and the many and varied work we have engaged in alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, we have developed an informal network of external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contacts. It will be through strong actions within our Innovate RAP that we will seek to explore opportunities to develop a formal Advisory Group while extending that reach to new and diverse contacts.

Supporter Networks are encouraged to develop relationships and consultation pathways with internal and external local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, community members and organisations.

Our RAP drives a process of continual improvement across our organisation as we continue to seek opportunities to engage, learn and strengthen our services.



*Working group, consultation and networks*

## 4. Our Reconciliation Journey

Across Aspect, many programs, schools and services have been working on a range of projects and resources in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations for a number of years.

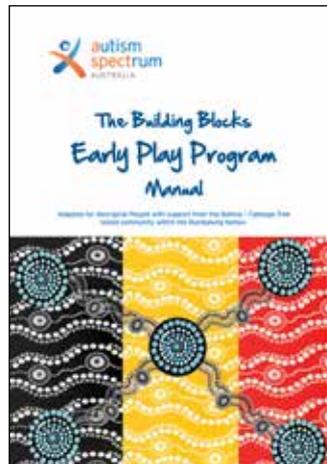
Some of the highlights, projects and partnerships that have taken place include:

- Aspect has had an overarching policy written by a previous Aboriginal employee in place since 2015 and reviewed in 2018 - A Statement of Acknowledgment and Commitment (including an accessible version)
- The Aspect RAP Committee has been working together since 2017, planning and delivering on actions developed through employee feedback and planning

- Aspect Therapy ran the Building Connections program in remote Western NSW during 2016/17 using online technology through webinars targeted specifically to Aboriginal communities
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia ran Cultural Responsiveness training for Positive Partnerships and the Aspect Therapy team in 2018
- Throughout 2018 additional policy and procedure documents were developed by the Committee:
  - » Acknowledgment of Country and Welcome to Country procedure
  - » Organising a smoking ceremony procedure

Here we have captured a number of projects in more details to highlight outcomes and learnings that will drive communication and implementation of our Innovate RAP actions across the wider organisation.

## 4.1 Aspect Therapy - Bundjalung Early Play Manual



In 2018, the Aspect Therapy Northern NSW Team, worked with the Ballina Aboriginal Child and Family Centre to develop an adapted version of the Aspect Early Play Program. We worked with the local Bundjalung community, consulting with Aboriginal Childcare workers, local community representatives and

family support services (Aboriginal Early Linkers) to seek feedback regarding how we could better adapt the Early Play manual to support local Aboriginal families.

After taking on board feedback from the community, we in partnership with them developed 'The Early Play Program - Bundjalung edition'. We were also fortunate as part of this process to engage with a local artist Daniel Roberts who supported the design and produced an artwork to be used in our Bundjalung manual.



## 4.2 Aspect Therapy - Mark Schlosser Fellowship

In 2018, Aspect Therapy was successful in receiving the Mark Schlosser fellowship funding to support the development of guidelines for therapists, to in turn to support the development of Individualised Service Plans (ISP) when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and families. Aspect Therapy wanted to ensure that our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families was culturally appropriate and our engagement driven from an understanding of each family's cultural connections.

As part of this project, we established a working party with employees who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This group drove the direction of this project and informed the development of the guidelines. The group participated in training to attend the Indigenous Allied Health Australia National Conference in Darwin, in September 2019.

Once the guidelines are completed, we will be using our working party and broader RAP Supporter Network in Aspect Therapy to trial these guidelines with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' we are working with. Feedback will be collected and the guidelines modified as needed.



*Aspect Therapy Aboriginal working party while visiting Darwin for the Indigenous Allied Health Australia National Conference in Darwin, in September 2019.*

## 4.3 Central Coast School - Sean Lonergan Project

The 2019 Sean Lonergan Project was an opportunity for Central Coast students to learn from and experience working with an Aboriginal Artist, Cheryl McCoy to create a collaborative artwork for exhibition in the Gosford Regional Gallery 25 May to 7 July. Cheryl worked with three Aspect classes at our St Mary's Catholic Primary site to produce some magnificent artwork.

One artwork, titled The Flying Emu, a collagraph print and the second artwork, titled the Emu in the Sky was acrylic on canvas. These artworks were inspired by traditional Aboriginal stories. This opportunity enabled the students to connect to the past, learn about the rich Aboriginal cultures, build positive relationships and begin the journey of walking together with courage as part of the national movement towards a unified future. This opening of the art exhibit coincided with National Reconciliation Week 27 May - 3 June (2019).

The story shared in many Aboriginal groups with their children talks about how the Emu became a ground bird. The story goes that the Emu was the largest of all the birds and had huge wings that enabled him to fly for hundreds of kilometers. His feathers were brightly coloured and very beautiful. He often would show-off and skite to the other birds and referred to himself as the king of the birds.



*The Flying Emu*

One day the birds got so tired of hearing about how wonderful he was that they decided to challenge him to a race and see if he was as good as he said he was. The race would be to the sun. The Emu said that he would be able to do that easily. Race day came and they all took off, many of the birds pulled out of the race knowing they would not be able to keep up. Emu however decided that he could reach the sun and show everyone what he could do.

Unfortunately, Emu flew too close to the sun and his beautiful wings were burnt to stumps and his feathers were so badly singed they turned grey. Emu could no longer fly and that is why the Emu is a ground bird and looks like it does today.

Moral of the story is there are consequences for those who think only of themselves and not the community.



*The Emu in the Sky*

Observing the night sky through Aboriginal eyes, particularly when out bush on a dark night, the Milky Way will reveal an Emu. The Emu is stretched out with legs trailing back - you need to look for the dark patches between the stars. There is a rock carving that reflects the image in the sky at Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park. In April-May, the Emu in the Sky and the carving align. This is also the time when the Emu is laying her eggs.

Aboriginal people have rich cultures and astronomy is an integral way of understanding the world in which we live. The stars guided journeys across country as well as identifying when food sources were available. The night sky in Australia has been seen through European eyes up until very recently.



## 4.4 Vern Barnett School – Association Independent Schools training

Throughout 2019, the Vern Barnett School team have been working with the Association Independent Schools (AIS) focusing on the Teacher Standard: 2.4 Provide opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages. AIS Aboriginal Consultant, Rosalyn Thomas ran a whole school professional development session in term 1, followed by a number of teacher sessions throughout term 2.

Sessions included the purpose of and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum, a review of resources, identifying who is in our community and how can they support our teaching and learning and evaluating growth of students' understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.



*Uncle Laurie performing the Smoking Ceremony with Vern Barnett teachers, Forestville NSW*

## 4.5 Autism Advisor Program - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander committee

The Autism Advisor Program established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee within their program in 2010, to identify how they as a team could build their cultural responsiveness and engage First Peoples in accessing their early intervention funding. Over the years, the team have been regular attendees of the Department of Education's Early Intervention Aboriginal Committee; have attended community events ranging from the Kites for Kids Day in Mt. Druitt to various NAIDOC events and taken part in a number of internal team cultural training opportunities.

With the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and changes to program funding, the Committee identified a more focused approach to take moving forward as they plan on engaging with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services. This approach will allow them to maintain more regular in person contact and asking those services 'what do you need' and 'what do you think will be helpful for families/communities?'



*The Autism Advisor team took part in a team building morning with Karen Smith from the Manly Aboriginal Heritage Office in 2015 to learn more about the Traditional lands where we work and live.*

## 4.6 Early Days Program - engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The Early Days Program (workshops for parents of 0-6 year olds) attended the Orange Aboriginal Land Council Indigenous Ability Linkers' conference in 2016. Through this connection, we prioritised working in regional and remote regions of NSW. The Indigenous Ability Linkers identified areas prioritised by need and together ran gatherings across Wiradjuri Country in Murrin Bridge, Lake Cargelligo, Condobolin, Parkes, Gulargambone, Coonamble, Gilgandra, Coonabarabran, Bathurst, Orange, Lithgow, Broken Hill, and Lightning Ridge.

These gatherings aimed to give families and service providers' information in an informal setting about what autism may look like and evidence based strategies and resources that can assist children. As well as brief information about contacting NDIS and what support services may be available in their areas.

## 4.7 National Reconciliation Week 2019

During National Reconciliation Week 2019, Positive Partnerships organised two events held over the course of the week, encouraging all Aspect teams to get involved. We held a morning tea event at our National Office, inviting a local Aboriginal Elder to give a talk focused on the theme of 'Grounded in Truth, Walk Together with Courage'. There was also an opportunity for people to join an interactive walk through of resources and information and screening of important film clips that also linked to the UN year of Indigenous languages.



Jacqui Borland (Aspect CEO) and Uncle Neil Evers during the Aspect NRW morning tea 2019.



Positive Partnerships delivering workshops with Wurrumiyanga School and community in the Tiwi Islands, NT (November 2018)



Positive Partnerships team members at the Get Together workshop in Nowra NSW (April 2019)

## 4.8 Positive Partnerships - Stretch RAP and workshops for community

As part of the Positive Partnerships Stretch RAP, programs were developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the country guided by their National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group.

The programs involved community and school engagement in the lead up to the workshop ensuring local people including Elders were involved in the planning. This means that the workshop days were about providing important yarning time for families and school teams and brought about successful outcomes for young people on the autism spectrum.





**"I am inspired by the continuous support I have been given through working with Positive Partnerships and the opportunities it has given me to learn, grow and connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I get to share and educate my family and friends with all the amazing knowledge of histories, cultures and languages that I have been and continue to be privileged to have access to."**

*Ondine Valencia - RAP Supporter Network*

## 5. Our Reconciliation Action Plan

Aspect is committed to walk and work together alongside First Nations peoples, communities and organisations. We will do this through the following Reconciliation Action Plan, which will take us in the direction towards an inclusive and united organisational culture to ensure our services, schools and workplace is accessible, beneficial and safe.

(see page 18)

## 6. References

Avery, S. (2018). Culture Is Inclusion, A narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. First Peoples Disability Network (Australia). Sydney, Australia.

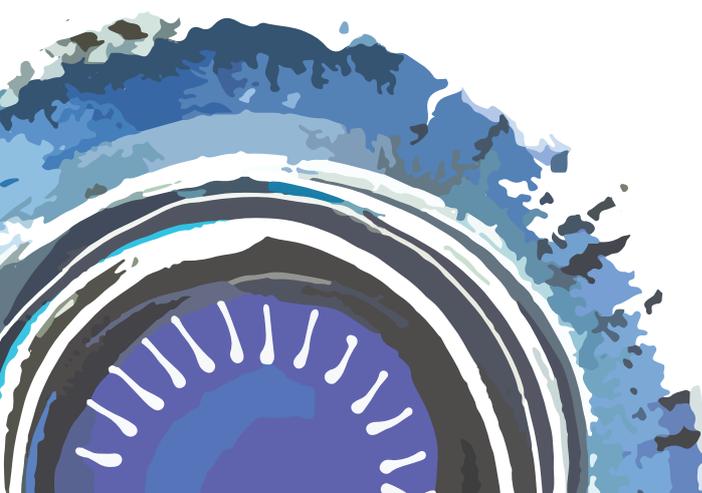
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Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nu (2017). Te Reo Hāpai - The Language of Enrichment. Updating and creating Māori language used in the mental health, addiction and disability sectors.

**"Cultural safety and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is critical in the delivery of programs that Autism Spectrum Australia provide. The development of Aspect's RAP ensures the organisation is empowered to provide their programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples that is culturally safe and putting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples on the autism spectrum and their families first."**

*Donna Maree Toney,  
Consultant*



## Relationships

Aspect is passionate about people and working towards an inclusive organisation that all people can feel safe accessing and sharing experiences. Reconciliation is about how people come together with mutual respect and find ways to work together. Aspect recognises the importance of building strong relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations.

Aspect engages and collaborates with people on the autism spectrum in our governance, research, service planning and service delivery. This will mean that our most valuable partnerships will be with the people who represent the voice of autistic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure relationships are built upon genuine, respectful practice and a true National reach.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	1.1 Ensure Aspect teams work together, coordinate and meet with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement	June 2020	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
	1.2 Develop and implement an Aspect-wide engagement strategy to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	August 2020	Inclusion Officer
	1.3 Engage with and build on our relationships with a minimum of 10 (5% Aspect wide) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, participants and their families to consult about what Aspect is doing well and/or could do better	October 2020	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
	1.4 Identify tenders and government funding opportunities for growing our work in communities and developing potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships	November 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer, Senior Communications Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology
	1.5 Undertake at least one visit to a community that is of mutual benefit to both parties e.g. share skills, workshops, training	July 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology and School Coordinator VB
2. Acknowledge, engage with and recognise the cultures and worldviews of Aspect's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees	2.1 Engage with and build on our relationships with a minimum of 5 (25% Aspect wide) Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander colleagues to consult about what Aspect is doing well and/or could do better	June 2020	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect

	2.2 Explore opportunities to form an internal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peer network that meets twice per year to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide peer to peer support and</li> <li>- to inform and support Aspect's RAP actions</li> </ul>	September 2020	Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community programs, School Coordinator VB and Teacher Macarthur	
3	Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	3.1 RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event and record and share their experience with their teams and the RAP WG	27 May-3 June, 2020, 2021	Senior Communications Officer
	3.2 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials throughout our teams	27 May-3 June, 2020, 2021	Senior Communications Officer	
	3.3 Encourage and support all Aspect teams and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW	27 May-3 June, 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer and Senior Communications Officer	
	3.4 Organise at least one formal internal NRW event at head office each year	27 May-3 June, 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer, Senior Communications Officer and Quality System Business Partner, Senior Research Officer and Recruitment Coordinator	
	3.5 Organise at least one formal internal NRW event specifically for employees in each school, service or program each year	27 May-3 June, 2020, 2021	Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect	
	3.6 Organise at least one NRW event for students and participants to participate in each year	27 May-3 June, 2020, 2021	ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect	
	3.7 Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website	27 May-3 June, 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer	
4	Promote reconciliation and our RAP through our sphere of influence	4.1 Implement strategies to engage and support Aspect teams in reconciliation through RAP Working Group, RAP Supporter Networks, intranet, Yammer etc	October 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
	4.2 Communicate The Aspect Vision for Reconciliation publicly via social media and our website to coincide with the launch of the RAP	March 2020	Senior Communications Officer	



	4.2 Ensure Aspect teams work together to explore opportunities to positively influence their local external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes	October 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
	4.3 Provide opportunities for all teams to collaborate with RAP and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation	October 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
	4.4 Meet with one other Innovate RAP organisation and one Stretch RAP organisation to share learnings and encourage other organisations in the NFP sector to develop a RAP	August 2021	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
	4.5 Review information provided in the induction and on the intranet and website about our RAP commitments and how employees can get involved	September 2020	Inclusion Officer, Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community programs and Senior Communications Officer
5. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies	5.1 Conduct a review of Aspect policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs	May 2020	Quality System Business Partner, Recruitment Coordinator
	5.2 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and/or external advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy	July 2020	Quality System Business Partner
	5.3 Develop, implement and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	November 2020	Quality System Business Partner
	5.4 Educate senior leaders through Management Network Meetings, on the effects of racism	March 2021	Inclusion Officer and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community programs
	5.5 Host a screening of the Final Quarter for staff and facilitate a discussion following the film using the associated resources.	March 2021	Inclusion Officer and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community programs

6 Investigate opportunities to formalise a National Advisory Group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in disability, education and health to provide guidance and mentoring to our RAP Working Group	6.1 Meet with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to seek potential interest and involvement.	June 2020	Inclusion Officer, School Coordinator VB, Teacher Macarthur and Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs
	6.2 Investigate the opportunity to bring a small group of official Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander partners together as part of an Advisory Council for a day of feedback and review of our RAP, resources and approaches	September 2020	Inclusion Officer
7. Work with each of the nine Aspect schools to explore the opportunities to develop RAPs via the Narragunnawali program	7.1 Support schools to explore the development and implementation of RAPs through the Narragunnawali program	November 2021	ACA Manager, Teacher VB, School Coordinator VB and Teacher Macarthur
	7.2 Provide the opportunity for other Aspect teams to support the implementation of school RAPs e.g. administration, research, school visits, attending events.	November 2021	ACA Manager

## Respect

All of our work at Aspect is underpinned by our purpose *'a different brilliant - understanding, engaging & celebrating the strengths, interests & aspirations of people on the autism spectrum'*. Through this purpose, we will engage in understanding and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories.

As we continue to implement the RAP, it will support our organisation to deliver culturally safe services and build relationships in a culturally responsive manner with a view to increasing opportunities to engage and provide services that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can safely access.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Increase understanding, value and recognition across all Aspect teams about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and achievements through cultural learning	8.1 Conduct a review of cultural learning training needs across all of Aspect to identify what has worked and what gaps exist	September 2020	Inclusion Officer
	8.2 From an Aspect wide approach, consult with Traditional Custodians and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors from across our regions on the development and implementation of a cultural learning strategy.	June 2020	Inclusion Officer



8.3 Develop, implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our staff which includes online and face to face opportunities	December 2020	Inclusion Officer, Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs and Senior Communications Officer
8.4 Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership team members to participate in formal and structured cultural learning	December 2020	Inclusion Officer and Recruitment Coordinator
8.5 Explore how the Association Independent Schools (AIS) Aboriginal Consultants can support Aspect schools with training that supports teachers to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the curriculum	December 2020, 2021	ACA Manager, School Coordinator VB and Teacher Macarthur
8.6 Share online modules (AcadeMe and Share Our Pride) with managers to implement throughout their teams	June 2020	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
8.7 Investigate opportunities for Aspect employees to take part in meaningful cultural responsiveness training within their teams	September 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
8.8 Develop a shared learning location on the intranet where links, readings, film clips, podcasts etc. can be accessed by all Aspect teams	September 2020	Inclusion Officer and Senior Communications Officer
8.9 Explore opportunities to take part in additional national/local events/celebrations and share information about the meaning with all Aspect teams (e.g. Sorry Day, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, local festivals etc.)	December 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect

9. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols	9.1 Review and update the Statement of Acknowledgment and Commitment and Aspect Acknowledgement to Country procedure. Implement these changes and share across teams to increase employee understanding and practice of cultural protocols	April 2020	Quality System Business Partner, Practice Lead Speech Pathology and Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Family and Community Programs
	9.2 Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander input and feedback into policy review through formal and informal networks	December 2020, 2021	Quality System Business Partner
	9.3 Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of all important meetings	March 2020	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
	9.4 Invite a local Traditional Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at two significant events each year	November 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
	9.5 Review and update the Map of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander countries and other RAP information on the intranet	April 2020	Team Leader - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs and Senior Communications Officer
10. Increase consistency of inclusive environments and communications through the communications strategy	10.1 Develop guidelines for displaying artwork, Acknowledgement of Country and flag in every office foyer and implement this across Aspect offices	April 2020	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology and Team Leader - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs
	10.2 Develop protocols around the use of images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communicate throughout Aspect	September 2020	Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs and Senior Communications Officer



	10.3	Build up a bank of pictures and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families that can be accessed and used across programs and services	December 2020	Senior Communications Officer
	10.4	Share 10 internal posts (Yammer) and 5 external posts on social media each year about our reconciliation journey	December 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
	10.5	Add the Vision for Reconciliation to collateral (e.g. brochures, intranet, prospectus and website).	June 2020	Senior Communications Officer
	10.6	Review written style guidelines to include culturally respectful language that will be used and implemented across Aspect teams	June 2020, June 2021	Senior Communications Officer
11. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week	11.1	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event and feedback to the Working Group and their teams	First week of July 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
	11.2	In consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, organise 2 internal NAIDOC Week events (Aspect wide) and invite local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to speak	First Week of July 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer, Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
	11.3	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers for employees participating in NAIDOC Week	December 2020	Recruitment Coordinator
	11.4	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all Aspect teams	First week in July, 2020, 2021	Senior Communications Officer

## Opportunities

Aspect is passionate about what is possible and this includes providing the best opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the autism spectrum, their families and communities. With such a diverse representation of Aspect employees and stakeholders across Australia, we have the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to an inclusive organisation.

Aspect is committed to innovation and delivering high quality autism-specific person-centred services. We recognise the importance of increasing the engagement and retention of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and collaborating with new and different organisations as we work to engage First Nation's peoples, families and organisations in our high quality service and care.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12. Investigate opportunities to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in our schools and programs	12.1 Implement accurate business unit specific data collection	December 2020	Inclusion Officer
	12.2 Increase Aspect students and participants who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples to 6% (overall)	December 2021	Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
	12.3 Each business unit to include growth measures as part of the planning cycle into the Aspect Business Plan	September 2020, 2021	CEO
	12.4 Identify business unit specific goals in local plans that support RAP implementation	March 2021, 2022	Practice Lead Speech Pathology, ACA Manager and Regional Manager Choose & Connect
	12.5 Identify the barriers for people to identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and implement strategies to remove these	June 2020	Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs, School Coordinator VB and Teacher Macarthur
13. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development	13.1 Engage with our current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to build an understanding of their future employment and professional development opportunities	June 2021	Recruitment Coordinator and Inclusion Officer
	13.2 Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders	March 2021	Recruitment Coordinator
	13.3 Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy	September 2021	Recruitment Coordinator
	13.4 Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	November, 2021	Recruitment Coordinator
	13.5 Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy that is inclusive of people on the autism spectrum	June 2021	Recruitment Coordinator and Inclusion Officer



	13.6 Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the autism spectrum employed in the Aspect workforce	June 2021	Recruitment Coordinator, ACA Manager, Regional Manager Choose & Connect and Practice Lead Speech Pathology
14. Create opportunities for turning research into action in supporting an understanding of what autism means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	14.1 Create a shared location of the existing research and resources available in understanding autism and disability from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and identify the gaps	September 2020	Inclusion Officer
	14.2 Explore opportunities to develop research and resources that address the gaps for culturally safe resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in understanding autism and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	December 2021	Inclusion Officer
	14.3 Submit an application to Aspect ARCAP to conduct a research project and/or literature review into understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and autism	December 2020	Inclusion Officer
15. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes	15.1 Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy	August 2021	Inclusion Officer
	15.2 Investigate membership of Supply Nation and explore a deeper understanding about what this means	December 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
	15.3 Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to Aspect employees	September 2020	Inclusion Officer
	15.4 Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses	August 2021	Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs
	15.5 Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses	December 2021	Inclusion Officer

16. Develop and implement a variety of projects in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across all business units and schools	16.1 Using the learnings from the Elizabeth Hoyles Fellowship project, continue to explore opportunities to co-produce alongside Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people on the autism spectrum	November 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
	16.2 Following the learnings from the Mark Schlosser Fellowship program, implement trial guidelines throughout Therapy regions	November 2020	Practice Lead Speech Pathology
	16.3 Explore the possibility of recruiting an Aboriginal identified Allied Health Assistant role as part of the NDIS Job and Market Fund to provide culturally competent therapy services to participants in their local community in thin market areas	November 2020	Practice Lead Speech Pathology and Recruitment Coordinator
	16.4 Work in partnership with the Positive Partnerships RAP working group and their Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan to seek opportunities to collaborate on projects	December 2020	Team Leader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Programs
	16.5 Collaborate to deliver information sessions to Boori Preschool in Nowra and the Ability Linkers in Orange through the Autism Advisor program	June 2020	AAP Program Coordinator
	16.6 Consult and collaborate with the Aboriginal Ability Linkers and Early Linkers in Campbelltown, Lithgow, Griffith, Walgett and Bourke areas with potential to deliver parent/carers gatherings.	June 2020	Team Leader Early Days

Governance			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
17. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP	17.1 Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	November 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
	17.2 Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG	June 2020	Inclusion Officer
	17.3 Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation	March, June, September and November 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
	17.4 Develop RAP Supporter Networks and Champions across business units and schools to drive RAP implementation at a local level	November 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer, ACA Manager, Regional Manager Choose & Connect and Practice Lead Speech Pathology





18. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments	18.1 Define resource needs for RAP implementation	March 2020	Inclusion Officer
	18.2 Engage and involve the Board, Executive, Management and other employees in the delivery of RAP commitments through use of Yammer, reports, Management Network Meetings, performance plans etc.	November 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer, ACA Manager, Regional Manager Choose & Connect and Practice Lead Speech Pathology
	18.3 Define and maintain systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP commitments	May 2020	Inclusion Officer
	18.4 Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	March 2020	National Director People
19. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally	19.1 Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia	30 Sept, 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer
	19.2 Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly through Aspect Employee newsletter	April , June August October 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer and Senior Communications Officer
	19.3 Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually	November 2020, 2021	Inclusion Officer and Senior Communications Officer
	19.4 Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	April 2020	Inclusion Officer
20. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP	20.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia's <a href="#">website</a> to begin developing our next RAP	August, 2021	Inclusion Officer

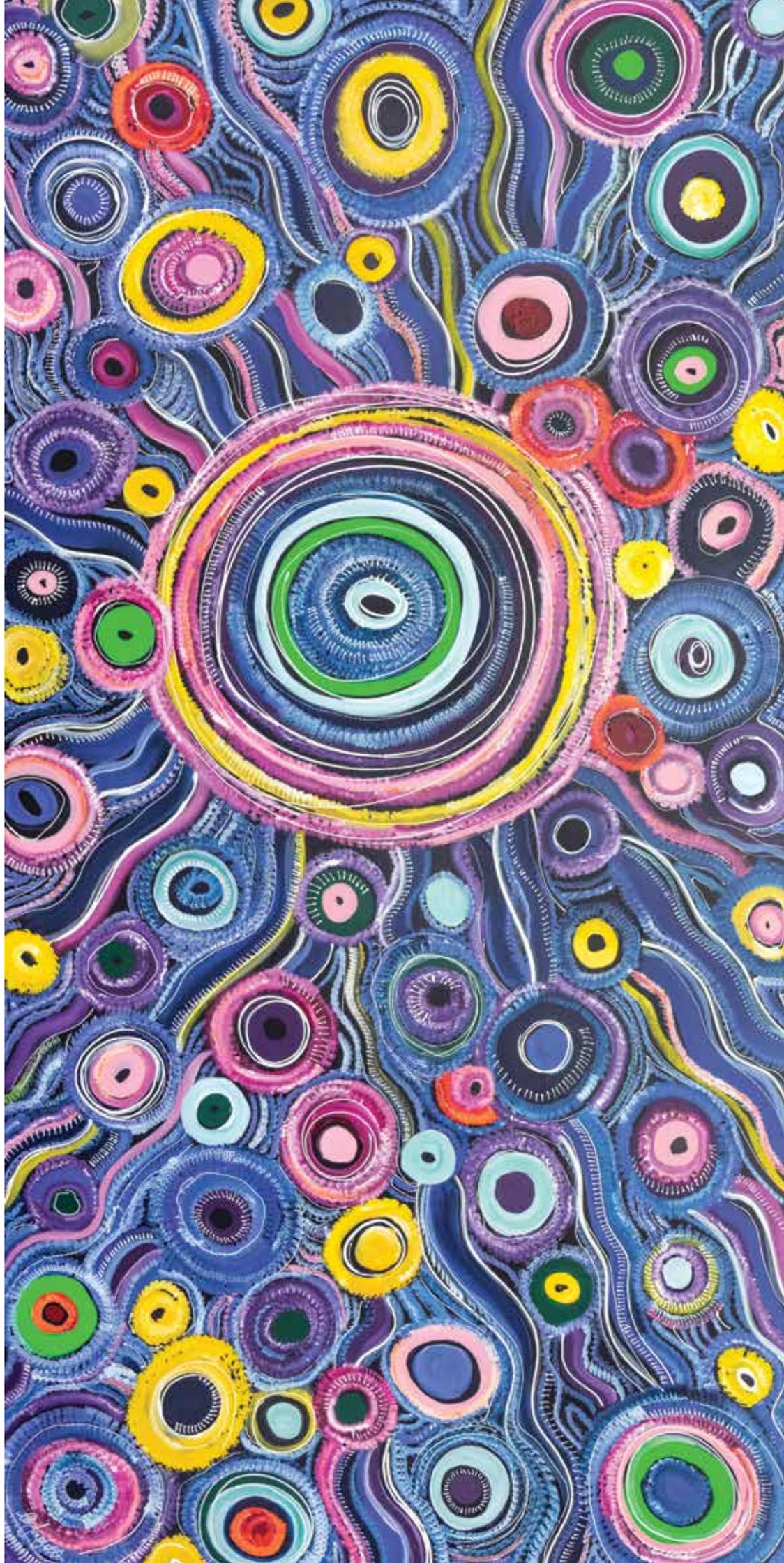
## Feedback and contact

For public inquires about our RAP please email [rap@autismspectrum.org.au](mailto:rap@autismspectrum.org.au)

**"As an Aboriginal women of the Wiradjuri People, I am passionate to share my cultural knowledge to support non-Indigenous people understand our shared history. Working and walking together on a collaborative journey."**

*Maria Watson-Trudgett,  
RAP Working Group member*





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