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# INNOVATE

## RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

October 2024 – September 2026



**Westjustice**

Westjustice acknowledges the Peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters of our region. We acknowledge their ongoing connection to Country, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. As we work to achieve a just and fair society, we acknowledge the fundamental role of First peoples in the life of this region, as Custodians of the world's oldest living Culture.



**Twilight Black Cockatoos<sup>1</sup>**

**Stacey | Taungurong/Boon Wurrung people**  
**Acrylic on canvas, 2020**

"In the evening I walk in the yard with my sister girl. We talk about our life in jail and what we will do after jail. It's a time for reflection."

Stacey is a Taungurong/Boon Wurrung woman with traditional connections to the Melbourne region. Stacey's grandfather and his siblings were removed under government policies and today Stacey describes herself as a grandchild of the Stolen Generation. Stacey has been living in Melbourne and has been exploring her identity, art and culture more recently as an adult. In 2013 Stacey started working at the Koorie Heritage Trust where she met an Elder who helped her join the dots with her family connections.

"The Elder told me that I am Taungurong/Boon Wurrung. Since that day I don't paint dots anymore. My inspiration is the beautiful designs and patterns from traditional artefacts of my ancestors. Painting diamonds is healing for me. And now I can pass that healing down to my children and future grandchildren."

Stacey is exploring and reclaiming southeast Australian designs through her paintings, referencing concentric diamond designs from traditional shields and clubs from south eastern.

<sup>1</sup> This artwork was supplied by The Torch, a not for profit organisation, that provides art, cultural and arts industry support to Indigenous individuals who have come into contact with the justice system in Victoria



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# OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

Westjustice has a vision for reconciliation where First Nations peoples’ rights to self-determination, culture, and land, are celebrated and respected throughout Australia. We are committed to contributing to a future in which First Nations people have equal access to the law and legal services to uphold their rights, and in which our colonial legal system’s violent history of oppressing, dispossessing, and harming First Nations

peoples is acknowledged and addressed. We recognise that the law has been a crucial element of the matrix of government control to which First Nations people have been subjected and remain subject. We work towards a future where First Nations people can harness the law for their own advancement. Further, we support the Victorian Treaty and Truth telling processes. We will continue to provide support and advocacy when appropriate.

## OUR BUSINESS

**Our organisational Vision is for fairness, safety and justice for Melbourne’s West. Our Purpose is to deliver targeted services to drive meaningful change.**

We are a human rights community legal centre in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne servicing the local government areas of Maribyrnong, Hobsons Bay and Wyndham, along with the broader Western suburbs community (a population of over a million people). We provide free legal advice, representation, education, community development, financial counselling, advocacy, and systemic reform across five impact areas: Women and Gender Diverse People’s Rights, Workers’ Rights, Children and Young People’s Rights, Economic and Housing Rights, and Our People.

Westjustice currently has three offices across two locations: Sunshine and Werribee. Westjustice has approximately 70 staff members. Currently, none identify as First Nations people. Our clients are people who live, work or have a connection to the Western Suburbs. The population demographics means our client cohort is largely multicultural with a significant number of recently arrived migrants engaging in our services.

The West comprises areas of significant disadvantage and higher than average rates of youth offending, family

violence, workers in casualised and insecure employment, chronic health issues and criminalisation of poverty. In this environment, we consistently see complex legal issues and the cyclical impact this has on longer term economic, health, and life outcomes. This is why our services and programs focus on prevention and early intervention in the cycle of economic precarity, criminalisation, violence and housing insecurity to produce benefits for the people we work with and save government significant investment in downstream impacts of social problems.

A central aim of our work is to end the over-criminalisation of over-represented groups of people and to create access to justice for those who have been historically excluded. This requires ending the systems that create and maintain over-criminalisation such as colonisation and racism whilst also ensuring that those who interface with the justice system are treated equitably and fairly. We will work with First Nations communities and organisations to address the causes of these issues and not just the symptomatic manifestation.



# OUR RAP

**Melbourne's West is currently home to a large and growing First Nations population. These lands and waterways are, and always will be, the lands of the Bunurong, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.**

Through our Innovate RAP, we will build on our work from our Reflect RAP and deepen our relationships with local and statewide First Nations organisations and communities. We acknowledge First Nations peoples' sovereignty and right to self-determination which includes leading, determining, and designing the most appropriate methods by which to service legal needs of First Nations peoples in the West. It is for these reasons that we are guided by our First Nations partners as to how we can best support advocacy for changes to policy, institutions, and all levels of government to ensure that First Nations people have access to a fair and equitable justice system. We understand that our internal systems need to reflect our intention to provide an inclusive environment in which First Nations people access our services and reform agendas. We are therefore committed to being a culturally safe and responsive organisation and we understand that this is a constant and deliberate process. Over the years we have enjoyed celebrations across significant First Nations events and milestones and stood alongside our partners to advocate for change, including Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility and providing evidence at the Yoorook Justice Commission Hearings. Our RAP Working Group currently leads our RAP implementation supported by all layers of our governance. We will explore the viability of a First Nations Advisory Group and continue to be led and guided by local and statewide expertise and knowledge.

Through our Reflect RAP we undertook a cultural safety audit. This ensured we thoroughly and systematically reflected on all our process and practices. Further, we were grateful to have the audit undertaken by First Nations consultant (VACCA) to ensure a First Nations lens and level of independence when critically reflecting on our organisation. The audit provided clear actions on how to improve our organisation. Some of these actions have already been implemented such as creating a cultural leave policy, embedding acknowledgments and symbolic recognition across our day-to-day processes and practices and adding cultural safety trainings into staff work plans. Other actions will be addressed through our Innovate RAP such as creating employment opportunities for First Nations people and collocating with Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) to deepen our working relationship and referral pathways for clients.

Since undertaking our Reflect RAP we have committed to annual celebrations and recognition including Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week (inclusive of the 1967 referendum anniversary and Mabo day), NAIDOC week and Invasion/Survival Day. We have deepened partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and actively supported their process for, and development of, self-determination



Sarah Breen - Naidoc Week



**We increased our capacity to support First Nations businesses and proactively sought out procurement opportunities. Further details include:**

**RESPECT & RELATIONSHIPS**

We consulted with VALS and Djirra on First Nations issues, legal need and services for First Nations communities (including advocacy for the recent Referendum and determining the most effective means by which to address service shortage in the West). We collaborated with Kirrip Aboriginal Corporation, Djirra, VACCA and Western RAJAC on collaborative projects such as TARGET ZERO and the Youth Crime Prevention and Early Intervention Program. We recently agreed to share our offices at Werribee with a team of VALS staff. We have engaged a First Nations consultant to attend our RAP Working Group meetings and consult on the implementation of our Innovate RAP.



Supporting the NAIDOC Week March



Celebrating International Women’s Day with Cape York Partnership CEO, Fiona Jose, and Kayla Mallie.

**STRATEGIC AND POLICY CAMPAIGNING**

We worked with several organisations on important campaigns such as Raise the Age of criminal responsibility. We have ensured that we have strategic First Nations partners involved in our programs and on our relevant steering committees. For example, VACCA and VALS have representatives on the advisory committee for our Out of Home Care Legal Clinic and we work closely with Koorie Youth Council as part of the Smart Justice for Young People consortium.

**PROCUREMENT & SERVICE DELIVERY**

We engaged partners such as Djirra to deliver our First Nations cultural awareness training for all staff annually. We regularly engage catering companies, such as Jarrah Catering, to provide catering at our events.

We have experienced challenges trying to achieve all the desired outcomes of our Reflect RAP. We’re still yet to see meaningful representation across our organisation and client base of First Nations people. This will be a really deliberate focus for our Innovate RAP.

**RAP WORKING GROUP**

- Emma Probert, Director, People & Culture (RAP Champion)
- Annie Belcher, Senior Policy Officer, Policy, Impact & Engagement
- Anoushka Jeronimus, Legal Director, Youth Law
- Kirstyn Campbell, Senior Lawyer, family Violence Family Law
- Briana Ganesharajah, Lawyer, Employment and Equality Law
- Sheri Shwe, Program Manager, Policy, Impact & Engagement
- Rachel Athaide, Program Manager, Employment and Equality Law
- Jillian West, First Nations Consultant

As Westjustice doesn’t have any staff presently who have identified as First Nations people, we will ensure First Nations input and perspectives through engaging a First Nations consultant to oversee our RAP. Further we will explore whether a First Nations Advisory Committee is appropriate.





RELATIONSHIPS

Westjustice believes relationships are central to reconciliation. We intend to create new and deepen existing relationships over the course of this RAP. Further, we intend to support and champion self-determined solutions to the problems experienced by First Nations people. In particular, we intend to support, learn from and work with First Nations legal services.

**FOCUS AREA:** Support the right to self-determination for all First Nations peoples and organisations

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with First Nations stakeholders and organisations.	Meet with local First Nations stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	December 2024	CEO and People & Culture Director
	Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with First Nations stakeholders and organisations.	June 2025	CEO and People & Culture Director
	Explore the opportunity to support, co-locate and/or work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services in Melbourne's West.	October 2024	CEO & Operations, Practice & Finance Director
	Engage regularly and proactively in service and other networks which are cultural and relevant to local First Nations communities, including the ASNoW network and produce an annual report.	June 2025 & 2026	CEO & Executive Assistant
	Review the viability of a First Nations Advisory Committee through discussions with local First Nations community members and the Westjustice Board and ensure a paid position is financially viable within Westjustice's budget.	August 2025	CEO
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2025 & 2026	RAP Convener
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May – 3 June, 2025 & 2026	RAP Convener
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May – 3 June, 2025 & 2026	RAP Convener
	Organise at least one NRW event each year.	27 May – 3 June, 2025 & 2026	RAP Convener



	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website	May 2025 & 2026	RAP Convener
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce.	December 2024	People & Culture Director
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation by posting information about our RAP publicly on our website and across social media.	November 2024	Policy, Impact & Engagement Director
	Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes. This includes promoting the reduction of the criminalisation of First Nations young people in Melbourne's West with Coalitions that we convene.	October 2024	RAP Convener
	Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation.	June 2025 & 2026	CEO and People & Culture Director
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	December 2024	Cultural Safety & Inclusion Committee Convener
	Engage with First Nations Advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	June 2025	RAP Convener and Cultural Safety & Inclusion Committee Convener
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	June 2025	RAP Convener and Cultural Safety & Inclusion Committee Convener
	Conduct a review of People and Culture policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	June 2025	Policy & Procedures Working Group Chair
	Advocate to State Government Ministers with relevant portfolios to implement the asks outlined in our Social Justice 4 Young People (SJ4YP) guide.	July 2025	Youth Law Program Legal Director
5. Establish mechanisms for First Nations communities to inform and influence our service design, strategic direction and actions towards reconciliation.	Investigate and scope the development of a First Nations Advisory Committee to inform and guide our organisational strategy and external engagement.	August 2025	CEO
	Maintain relationships through regular meetings with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations such as Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and produce an annual report.	September 2025	CEO & Executive Assistant



6. Integrate reconciliation aims into our organisational strategy and strategic advocacy.	Engage with First Nations stakeholders to understand community needs and priorities to embed into our organisational work.	December 2024	Policy, Impact & Engagement Director
	Revise our organisational strategy to include First Nations community priorities and reconciliation aims.	October 2024	Policy, Impact & Engagement Director



It is a privilege to live and work on the lands of the peoples of the Kulin Nation. We feel proud to live in a country that is home to the oldest, continuous living culture. As an organisation we intend to not just recognise but celebrate and learn from First Nations cultures, histories, and knowledges.

**FOCUS AREA:** Ensure our organisation is culturally safe and look to First Nations peoples knowledge to inform our work priorities and practices

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
7. Support the process of Truth and Treaty.	Continue to contribute to the Yoorrook Justice Commission Inquiry, in consultation with First Nations community stakeholders and community-controlled services.	December 2024	CEO and Policy, Impact & Engagement Director
	Deliver at least two education sessions to staff, clients and stakeholders on the importance of treaty, including both in-person and online options.	June 2026	Learning & Development Director
8. Increase understanding, value and recognition of First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Consult local First Nations advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy.	November 2024	Learning & Development Director
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff.	December 2024	RAP Convener
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, People and Culture Management and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning. There will be in person and online options available to staff.	December 2025	RAP Convener



	Ensure over 50 per cent of staff participate in online cultural learning trainings such as decolonial literacy trainings.	December 2024	Learning & Development Director
	Integrate into all staff induction and onboarding processes training on cultural protocols, reconciliation and opportunities to learn more about First Nations histories and cultures.	December 2024	People & Culture Director
9. Demonstrate respect to First Nations peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocol.	December 2024	RAP Convener
	Revise all cultural protocol documentation, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.	October 2024	RAP Convener
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year including our two AGMs during the relevant period.	October 2024, November 2024, November 2025.	RAP Convener and SLT Executive Assistant
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings.	October 2024	RAP Convener
10. Build respect for First Nations cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2025, 2026	RAP Convener
	Review People and Culture policies and procedures to remove barriers and encourage staff to participate in NAIDOC Week.	July 2025, 2026	People & Culture Director
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff.	July 2025, 2026	RAP Convener
11. Increase visibility of First Nations cultures and histories through our offices.	Include artwork by First Nations artists and reading material, toys or other activities that celebrates or honours First Nations cultures and histories in our office and particularly public-facing spaces, mindful of community consultation and protocols from cultural safety training.	January 2025	RAP Convener
	Ensure our website and social media presence provides a platform to celebrate and amplify First Nations community voices, cultures and histories in a culturally safe manner.	August 2025	Policy & Innovation Director
12. Build cultural safety within our workplaces, services, and online spaces.	Develop and implement a plan to improve cultural safety for First Nations staff, clients and community members accessing our services, including cultural safety within our physical office and online spaces.	July 2025	Cultural Safety & Inclusion Committee Convener



Ensure all recommendations from the cultural safety audit are implemented.	July 2025	RAP Convener
Ensure our branding and communications build cultural safety and trust in our services for First Nations community members by making clear public displays of support for First Nations rights.	October 2024	Director of Operations, Practice & Finance
Develop and communicate statement of commitment to cultural safety, a statement of commitment to First Nations peoples' right to culture, and a statement of welcome, and ensure this is communicated appropriately in physical and online spaces where we provide access to our services or information about the law and our services.	January 2025	Director of Operations, Practice and Finance
Review People and Culture policies and procedures and applicable enterprise agreements to consider any barriers or enablers to support staff who wish to mark days such as January 26th or coronation days for the British monarchy in ways that are more culturally safe and appropriate.	March 2025	People & Culture Director



It is often easier to stay with the status quo, to not disrupt. However, as an organisation we know that there is an urgent need to disrupt colonial and racist systems and that affirmative action is required to ensure equal opportunities.

**FOCUS AREA:** To create employment opportunities through our hiring and promoting practices

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
13. Improve employment outcomes by increasing First Nations recruitment, retention, and professional development.	Build understanding of current First Nations staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	October 2024	People & Culture Director
	Engage with First Nations staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	December 2025	People & Culture Director



	Develop and implement a First Nations recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	June 2026	People & Culture Director
	Develop an employment advertising process to effectively reach First Nations stakeholders.	December 2025	People & Culture Director
	Review People and Culture and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to First Nations participation in our workplace.	March 2025	People & Culture Director
	Encourage staff to regularly view and provide content to the Western Deadly Connections website, including job vacancies or other employment opportunities.	March 2025	People & Culture Director
14. Reduce the criminalisation of First Nations children & young people.	Implement TARGET ZERO in Melton, Wyndham and Brimbank.	July 2026	Youth Law Program Legal Director
	Co-convene the SJ4YP coalition.	September 2026	Youth Law Program Legal Director
15. Increase First Nations supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop and implement a First Nations procurement strategy.	December 2024	Director of Operations, Practice & Finance
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	December 2024	Director of Operations, Practice & Finance
	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from First Nations businesses to staff.	February 2025	Director of Operations, Practice & Finance
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from First Nations businesses including using the Kinaway directory.	December 2024	Director of Operations, Practice & Finance
	Develop further commercial relationships with First Nations businesses.	January 2025	Director of Operations, Practice & Finance
16. Investigate measures to improve the accessibility and cultural safety of our services for First Nations community members and clients.	As part of organisation-wide monitoring and evaluation, survey First Nations clients and service or community stakeholders to understand barriers to seeking assistance and experiences of cultural safety when engaging with Westjustice.	February 2025	Cultural Safety and Inclusion Working Group Convener
	Implement feedback processes to identify opportunities for improvement in how we meet cultural safety and other needs for First Nations clients.	February 2025	Cultural Safety and Inclusion Working Group Convener



Develop and implement a plan to improve accessibility and service experience and, where possible, compare outcomes with future monitoring and evaluation processes to measure progress.	February 2025	Cultural Safety and Inclusion Working Group Convener
Consider establishing priority intake processes to provide more responsive and culturally safe services for First Nations clients and how we can better identify and respond to their needs.	February 2025	Cultural Safety and Inclusion Working Group Convener
Explore opportunities for partnerships to develop and establish culturally safe and holistic referral pathways for legal and non-legal support services, including services to support health and wellbeing, for First Nations clients and community members. This includes creating a space for VALS staff to collocate at our offices.	October 2024	CEO



GOVERNANCE

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
17. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain First Nations representation on the RAP Working Group.	October 2024	RAP Convener
	Review Terms of Reference for the RAP Working Group.	November 2024	RAP Convener
	Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	November, 2024, 2025, February, May 2025, 2026	RAP Convener
18. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	October 2024 – September 2026	CEO
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	December 2024	CEO
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	November 2024	RAP Convener



	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	October 2024	CEO
19. 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.	June annually	RAP Convener
	Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey.	1 August annually	RAP Convener
	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, annually	RAP Convener
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	October 2024, 2025 and January, April and July 2025, 2026	CEO
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually.	November annually	CEO
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	November 2022	RAP Convenor
	Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP.	September 2026	RAP Convenor
	Establish pathways to support transparency and accountability direct to First Nations communities on the progress and delivery of our RAP commitments in consultation with First Nations stakeholders, service partners and community networks.	December 2024	RAP Convenor
20. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	December 2025	CEO





Westjustice provides free legal help to people in the Western suburbs of Melbourne.

We can help with a broad range of everyday problems.

Please call (03) 9749 7720 to find out more about our services or to make an appointment.

**Sunshine**

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