



REFLECT

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

JUNE 2020–NOVEMBER 2021



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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.

WEstjustice

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WEstjustice acknowledges the ancestors, Elders and families of the Kulin nations, who are the traditional owners of Western Melbourne, the country we are located on. As we work to achieve a just and fair society we pay our respects to the deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal custodianship of Country. We acknowledge this land as a place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal, and that the Kulin peoples' living culture has a fundamental role in the life of this region.

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Twilight Black Cockatoos¹

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.

¹ This artwork was created through The Torch, a not for profit organisation, that provides art, cultural and arts industry support to Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders in Victoria.

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OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

WEstjustice has a vision for reconciliation where First Nation peoples' rights to self-determination, culture and land are celebrated and respected throughout Australia. We are committed to contributing to a future in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 healed. We recognise that the law has been a crucial element of the matrix of government control to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been subjected and remain subject; we work towards a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can harness the law for their own advancement.



WEstjustice staff attend NAIDOC week rally, July 2019.

OUR BUSINESS

WEstjustice is a community legal centre that was formed in 2015 as a result of the merger of three community legal centres: the Footscray Community Legal Centre, Western Suburbs Legal Service and Wyndham Legal Service. We are the largest provider of legal services in western Melbourne.

WEstjustice provides free legal assistance to people experiencing disadvantage who live, work, study or access services in the local government areas of Hobsons Bay, Wyndham, and Maribyrnong. We work towards a vision of a just and fair society where the law and its processes don't discriminate against vulnerable people, and where those in need have ready and easy access to quality legal education, information, advice and casework services.

We also provide free community legal education and work in partnership with our local communities to deliver innovative projects that build legal capacity and improve access to justice. An important aspect of our work is undertaking law reform activities in line with our vision so that the law operates more fairly for people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and vulnerability. Our approach is based on strong links between our casework, community development and policy and law reform. According to our Strategic Plan, policy and law reform projects guide the legal practice of our centre and effect the manner in which services are delivered. We specifically target our work to people experiencing disadvantage, including young people, people experiencing homelessness, people experiencing psychosocial disability and mental ill-health, women experiencing family violence and refugee and newly arrived communities. Whilst our services are available to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our regions, our RAP provides the opportunity to deliberately target and expand our offerings.

We work from offices in Werribee, Footscray and Sunshine, and also operate numerous outreach sites across the western suburbs. We employ approximately 45 staff and are governed by a Board of Directors. We aim to create a safe environment in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can work and flourish, and we specifically intend to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes in this and future RAPs.

OUR RAP

WEstjustice is committed to working towards justice for marginalised groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

WEstjustice is committed to being a culturally safe, responsive and respectful organisation. The development of a Reconciliation Action Plan is integral to these objectives and will provide the framework for our reconciliation journey.

OUR PARTNERSHIPS AND CURRENT ACTIVITIES

This Reflect RAP formalises our intention to commit to a reconciliation journey and acknowledges that First Nations' community and individual legal needs are a priority for WEstjustice.

In 2017 we started to attend what is now called the Aboriginal Services Network of Wyndham. This network is a group of organisations that provide services for Aboriginal people in western Melbourne, and is led by Aboriginal people. Through that work we supported the development of the Wunggurrwil Dhurrung Centre, which is a project supported by Wyndham Council for a cultural centre for Aboriginal people in the Wyndham area.

We continue to develop our relationship with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Association (VACCA) (Werribee Office) by providing support to the family violence team, enhancing referral pathways for Aboriginal women and providing ongoing secondary consultations. In 2019 we provided a training session to the VACCA family violence team on accessing our family violence services. Members of the broader VACCA team also attended more extensive family violence training provided by our service and provided input on working with Aboriginal families.



In 2018 we initiated a partnership with Elizabeth Morgan House whereby they outreach from our Werribee office. Elizabeth Morgan House is an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation that provides specialist family violence legal services for Victorian Aboriginal women. We supported Elizabeth Morgan House to establish a Western outreach program, assisted with establishing key stakeholders in the area and in our service, which in turn, developed our understanding of Aboriginal women's experiences of family violence.

In 2018 WEstjustice implemented foundational reconciliation actions, including introducing an Acknowledgement of Country in our email signatures, implementing an Acknowledgement of Country at events, and displaying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at our office. In April 2018 almost all WEstjustice staff participated in local Aboriginal tours of the Werribee River area where we work with the Waddawurrung Aboriginal Corporation. In November 2019 a cultural advisor from VACCA delivered cultural safety training to all WEstjustice staff.

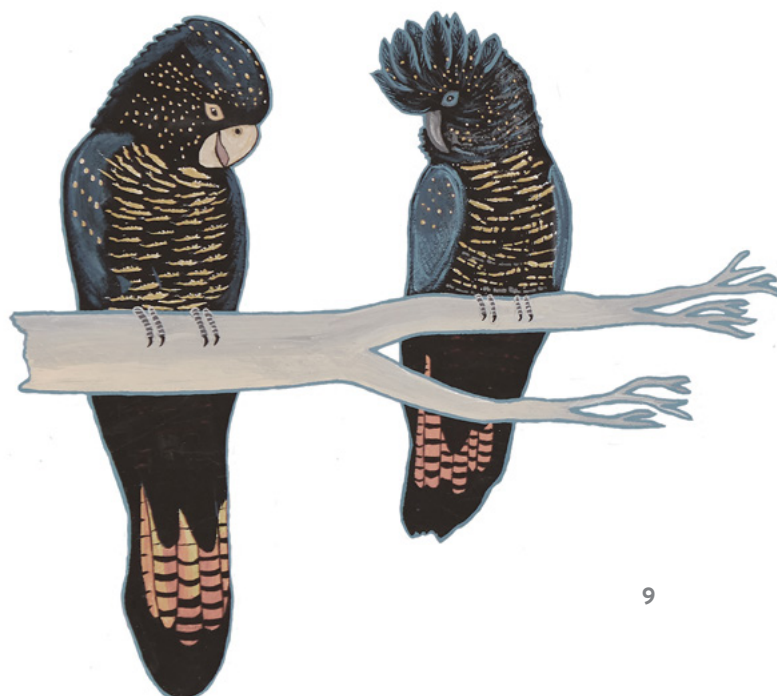
We will continue to build on our knowledge, commitment to and support for our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and enhance our learning, awareness of and respect for the history, traditions and practices of our First Nations people.



WEstjustice staff attend on-country walk in April 2018 at the Werribee River with Tammy Gilson from the Waddawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. 	March 2021	Director, Policy, Innovation, & Enterprise Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of People policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	May 2021	Director, Operations
Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey. 	December 2020	Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	March 2021	Director, Policy, Innovation, & Enterprise Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage our staff and senior leaders to attend a NRW event. 	May–June 2021	Chair, RAP Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. 	May–June 2021	Chair, RAP Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. 	May–June 2021	Chair, RAP Committee

Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness amongst all staff across the organisation about our RAP commitments. 	July 2020	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a plan to engage and inform key internal stakeholders of their responsibilities within our RAP. 	September 2020	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a list of RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey. 	December 2020	Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. 	December 2020	Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate opportunities to become a member of the Legal Professional Reconciliation Network (LPRN). 	February 2021	Legal Directors



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capture data and measure our staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements. 	July 2020	Chair, RAP Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural awareness training needs within our organisation. 	July 2020	Chair, RAP Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange cultural awareness training and encourage all staff to participate. 	December 2020	Chair, RAP Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. 	February 2021	Chair, RAP Committee
Increase the cultural safety of our organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with local Aboriginal organisations around culturally appropriate practice and service delivery. 	December 2020	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a cultural audit of our organisation using a tool such as the HealthWest Cultural Audit Tool.² 	June 2021	Director, Operations
Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week which includes information about our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. 	First week July 2020, 2021	Chair, RAP Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote NAIDOC community events to our clients and stakeholders in our local area. 	July 2020, 2021	Chair, RAP Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the RAP Working Group and staff participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	July 2020, 2021	Chair, RAP Committee

² healthwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/mtww_audit_tool.pdf

Demonstrate respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area. 	March 2021	Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope and develop a list of local Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisation's sphere of influence. 	December 2020	Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research demographics of First Nations people living in the western suburbs. 	December 2020	Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness and understanding of the meaning and significance behind Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols (including any local cultural protocols). 	October 2020	Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage all staff to include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all meetings. 	October 2020	CEO
Demonstrate respect through increasing awareness of and support for significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate opportunities to participate in and mark 26th January in a more appropriate and considered way. 	January 2021	Chair, RAP Committee

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. 	September 2020	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment and development opportunities. 	September 2020	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence providing opportunities for all new staff to indicate diversity backgrounds upon commencement of employment or through the induction process. 	September 2020	Director, Operations
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. 	December 2020	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses, using Supply Nation. 	February 2021	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Supply Nation membership. 	February 2021	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a list or source an existing list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses to procure from and circulate throughout the organisation. 	March 2021	Director, Operations



Investigate measures to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients we assist so that this is better reflective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in western Melbourne.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current client statistics to determine the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients assisted. 	August 2020	Director, Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider surveying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients to understand barriers to seeking assistance from WESTjustice. 	February 2021	Director, Operations Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review client statistics to measure whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client numbers have changed. 	November 2021	Director, Operations Director, Policy, Innovation & Enterprise
Support the Wunggurwil Dhurrung Aboriginal Community Centre Committee's work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide legal advice to the Wunggurwil Dhurrung Aboriginal Community Centre in the development and construction of an Aboriginal community centre. 	July 2020	Legal Directors
Investigate developing or supporting an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander civil law clinic in Melbourne's west.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) to determine the legal needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in western Melbourne and explore opportunities for a clinic to respond to these. 	July 2021	Legal Directors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with VALS to consider development and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander of an Aboriginal civil law clinic, outreaching from an Aboriginal community-controlled service in the west. 	November 2021	Legal Directors
Develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student groups on campus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make contact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university student groups and create opportunities for volunteering and internships. 	December 2020	Director, Community Development, Education, & Engagement



GOVERNANCE AND TRACKING PROGRESS

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish a RAP Working Group.	• Form a RAP Working Group to govern RAP implementation.	June 2020	Chair, RAP Committee
	• Draft a Terms of Reference for the RAP Working Group.	June 2020	Chair, RAP Committee
	• Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAP Working Group.	June 2020	Chair, RAP Committee
	• Review and maintain the RAP Working Group.	June 2020	Chair, RAP Committee
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation.	September 2020	Director, Operations
	• Define systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP activities.	September 2020	Director, Operations
	• Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	September 2020	CEO
Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	• Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2021	Chair, RAP Committee



Review and refresh RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements. 	August 2021	Chair, RAP Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review. 	September 2021	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement. 	November 2021	CEO



WEstjustice