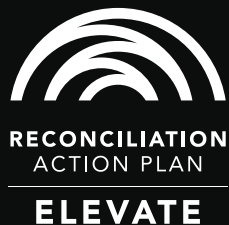


Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan

Summary

July 2022 – July 2025



**LIFE
WITHOUT
BARRIERS**



Acknowledgement of Country

Life Without Barriers acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and their connection to land, water and community. We pay our respect to them, their cultures and customs and to their Elders past, present and emerging. We believe that reconciliation must live in the hearts and minds of all Australians.

We are committed to an ongoing journey towards truth telling and reconciliation. We recognise and value the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, carers, people we support, peak bodies, organisations, their leaders, and communities across Australia as we continue our reconciliation journey together.



'Empowered Voices' artwork created by Keisha Leon, Lisa Sorbie Martin and Gilimbaa.

Our Values



WE ARE COURAGEOUS



WE ARE RESPECTFUL



WE ARE RESPONSIVE



WE BUILD RELATIONSHIPS



WE ARE IMAGINATIVE

Executive Summary



Claire Robbs

Claire Robbs
Chief Executive

Our guiding principle is our founding purpose – to partner with people to change lives for the better.

Life Without Barriers has been deeply involved with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities for twenty-five years through the provision of services Australia-wide. We established our relationship with Reconciliation Australia in 2008 and our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2009. The purpose of our RAPs has been to provide tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families and communities. We strive to do this by gaining an understanding of our sphere of influence and the best approach to advance reconciliation through empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. During our reconciliation journey, we have sought to expand our knowledge of, and embrace, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdom, and to learn more about the criticality of identity, belonging and culture as well as the

role Elders play in the lives of their children. During the past thirteen years, we have addressed the five dimensions of reconciliation through our three RAPs as well as numerous commitments beyond our RAP responsibilities.

In 2019, through a whole-of-organisation reflection on our reconciliation journey, we recognised we wanted to show greater leadership and challenge ourselves in order to affect change nationally. The Elevate RAP was designed to be to be more courageous, accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and partnering towards achieving an equitable and reconciled nation.

The Elevate RAP 2022-2025 demonstrates our vision for reconciliation where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions

that affect their children, young people and families, prioritising self determination to strengthen connection to culture, community and country. Our vision will radiate from what is in the hearts and minds of our people; it speaks to the journey we are undertaking, the injustices we are seeking to right, and the opportunities we are looking to leverage.

This document is a summary of the full Life Without Barriers Elevate RAP. It highlights the key intentions and commitments with a focus on the two key components of our Elevate RAP:

- Life Without Barriers Transformation Project
- Life Without Barriers commitments within the Three Pillars: Relationships, Respect, Opportunities, founded upon strong Governance

Our Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Children, Youth and Families

Life Without Barriers will progressively step away from providing out-of-home care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by 2031.

Life Without Barriers is committed to Closing the Gap Campaign which reinforces the need for large scale systemic reform, and a paradigm shift in Australia’s approach to truly empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (2020) includes 17 targets and outcomes.

The primary target from the Closing the Gap strategy that is related to Life Without Barriers’ transformation Project is Target 12, which is to “reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% in 2031.” This Closing the Gap target is aligned with the Family Matters campaign to end the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040.

Life Without Barriers is partnering with SNAICC – National Voice of our Children, the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children – and the primary agreement maker with the Commonwealth government, and the lead of Family Matters – to achieve our commitment to broad and sustainable changes. We will work with SNAICC to develop the first National Partnership Agreement between SNAICC and a non-government organisation that outlines the roadmap for reform with the Coalition of Peaks, non-government services and government departments across states and territories.

Life Without Barriers’ commitment to the transformation project is informed and guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



“ The future of decision-making about the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is community-controlled. Our communities are the experts. We know that culturally appropriate services designed, led and delivered by our services, get better outcomes. ”

*Catherine Liddle,
Chief Executive Officer
SNAICC – National Voice
for our Children*

Transformation Project

Our commitment to step away from providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and in partnership with SNAICC, contribute to the systems reform of the child protection system is informed and influenced by many determinants including two of the five dimensions of reconciliation.

Institutional Integrity

The Transformation Project will generate multi-partnerships with joined up responses including with Reconciliation Australia and Elevate and Stretch RAP partners. The multiplicity of external political, corporate, not-for-profit and community partnerships and our internal relationships across Australia will be leveraged to actively support reconciliation which will result in mainstream partners’ accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Equality and Equity

The Transformation Project is founded in the unique rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and participation in decisions across the spectrum of child and family welfare to ensure genuine responsiveness to needs, and decisions in the best interests of their children. The commitment to transition children to community-control will ensure they grow up strong in family, kin, and culture, and can experience choice, and control and equal opportunity in all aspects of their lives.

There can be no more significant project nationally than the need to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the out-of-home care systems. The drive and advocacy by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their leaders over many years have created a clear roadmap for Life Without Barriers and the child and family service sectors to advocate for systems reform. Life Without Barriers will not only advocate, but also assume a leadership position in the child, youth, family and human services sectors, through our planned transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to community control.

Our transformation project is founded upon the building blocks identified by Family Matters, the national campaign to eliminate the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out -of-home care. The transformation project will also focus on changing the bias in legislation, policy and systems which result in the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems.

Family Matters

Building Blocks for Change

BUILDING BLOCK 1

All families enjoy access to quality, culturally safe, universal and targeted services necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive.

ACTION

We will influence and advocate for investment by government to reorient the child protection system to family support, early intervention and prevention services.

We will ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lead our practice and direction to improve culturally safe and targeted services.

We will ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receive care that is culturally safe, secure and founded in connection to family, kin, culture, community and country.

We will lead and influence the mainstream community service sector to embed systems that deliver improved outcomes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

BUILDING BLOCK 2

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.

ACTION

In partnership with SNAICC and community, we will influence systemic change.

We will ensure our priorities and actions are led by the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, support self-determination and the resourcing of services.

We will lead and influence the child, youth and family service sectors to ensure improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families through children’s transition to family, kin or ACCOs.

BUILDING BLOCK 3

Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally safe and responsive.

ACTION

We will influence networks to contribute to the reform agenda, challenging structural and institutional racism and be champions for change.

We will focus on influencing child and family sector networks and key partners to contribute to collective impact to maximise the longer-term outcomes of Building Block 3 across our 10-year commitment:

- A transformed child protection system.
- A change in focus from child protection to intervention and family support.
- A system grounded in self-determination and focused on healing.
- Strengthening oversight functions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.
- A focus on connection to culture.

*Deliverables in Building Blocks 1, 2,3 and 4 will contribute to achieving the longer-term outcomes of Building Block 3.

BUILDING BLOCK 4

Governments and services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

ACTION

We will ensure greater accountability and transparency to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We will focus on developing greater accountability and transparency to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Life Without Barriers.

We will make a public commitment that Life Without Barriers will only engage in initiatives where participation principles are adhered to by partners.

Deliverables in each of the Building Blocks will contribute to the outcomes of Building Block 4:

- Roles for Children’s Commissioners in all jurisdictions.
- Addressing structural racism and discrimination across the service system.
- Strengthening accountability in applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles.
- Improved cultural capability in the operation of the child protection system.

The long term aims of our transformation project are that by 2031

- The number and percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children Life Without Barriers support in foster care is reduced and this aligns to a reduction in the number of children in care nationally.
- 100% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a connection to culture and are proud of their unique identity – either through transition to family or community control, cultural planning or kinship care.
- Care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Life Without Barriers has been successfully transferred to community control where possible in each state and territory.
- The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations who care for their children, families and communities has increased, and their capacity and expertise are recognised as the priority approach to care in Australia.
- Significant reduction in the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the out-of-home care system and that entering the care system is the last option, used only in exceptional circumstances.
- Elevate and Stretch RAP partners are strongly connected to Closing the Gap targets and the Family Matters campaign and have driven the reform agenda in partnership with non-government agencies, ACCOs, peaks and government.
- We are on track to meet our obligations under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We will measure the impact of the Transformation Project, by focusing on the Project's two goals, namely that Life Without Barriers:

1. Steps away from providing out-of-home care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by 2031.
2. Influences the sector to adopt and implement the priority reforms at the centre of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the Family Matters campaign to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.



“ Progressing to an Elevate RAP signals a readiness to step into a leadership role, to guide and galvanise the RAP network, and to set the standard for reconciliation activities across its industry. Underpinning this is the potential of Elevate RAP partners to create far-reaching, systemic and transformational change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across their sphere of influence, and beyond. This Elevate RAP, and Life Without Barrier’s considered and wide-reaching plans for the next three years and beyond, encapsulates the kind of brave action needed to help our nation move past this tipping point.

Karen Mundine CEO, Reconciliation Australia



Relationships, Respect, Opportunities, Governance

RELATIONSHIPS

Respectful relationships are founded on an understanding of reconciliation. With our breadth of relationships and our capacity to grow and strengthen these, we will put our relationships and resources to work to promote and pursue outcomes of reconciliation.

ACTION

- Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).
- We will communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly.
- We will continue to build relationships that foster our own and others' understanding of reconciliation.
- We will build a strong understanding of anti-discrimination and anti-racism strategies and promote positive race relations internally and in the public sphere.
- We will collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to strengthen mutual capacity to achieve collective impact.

RESPECT

With an organisational footprint that reaches across Australia and brings us alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we are committed to ongoing learning that recognises and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights, self-determination, cultures, histories, knowledge and wisdom. We will embed opportunities for employees to celebrate our shared history, build their cultural knowledge, cultural capability and cultural safety responsibilities.

ACTION

- We will increase cultural capability, create culturally safe workplaces and be accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- We will demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.
- We will engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures by celebrating NAIDOC week.
- We will make our offices more welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

OPPORTUNITIES

We will use our resources to provide opportunities for access to education, employment, career pathways and leadership programs and to culturally safe and appropriate supports. We will continue to grow and maintain an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, extending opportunities through our supplier and business activities to impact economic and social outcomes.

ACTION

- We will hear the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we support with disability.
- We will connect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to address intergenerational trauma.
- We will improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.
- We will support the development and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interns and students.
- We will increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.

GOVERNANCE

In keeping with our vision for reconciliation, we will elevate the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations through our RAP governance and leadership opportunities. We will be accountable to the National Reconciliation Strategy Group and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Advisory Panel, as well as through participation in Reconciliation Australia's opportunities for review and reporting.

ACTION

- Provide forums for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to directly engage with senior leadership to ensure cultural governance across the business.
- We will maintain a tiered structure of RAP Working Groups, each inclusive of equal representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous members.
- Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.
- We will build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP progress, achievements, challenges, and learnings both internally and externally.
- We will continue our reconciliation journey.

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www.lwb.org.au



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

ELEVATE

LIFE
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