



Community
Legal Centres
NSW



Reconciliation Action Plan

2014–2017



Community Legal Centres NSW

CLCNSW acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Owners of the land on which the CLCNSW State Office is located.

Community legal centres in NSW

Community legal centres (CLCs) are independent community organisations that work in the public interest of the most disadvantaged and marginalised members of the community. CLCs provide a range of legal services including advice, referrals, strategic casework, community legal education and law reform.

Community Legal Centres NSW Incorporated

Community Legal Centres NSW Inc. (CLCNSW) is the peak body representing the network of CLCs throughout NSW and is the organisation producing this RAP. It has 40 members, including generalist and specialist CLCs. It provides services to member CLCs in the areas of network support and development, communications and information, legal policy development and advocacy, and sector development. It represents the interests of CLCs, co-ordinates strategic direction and development for the sector as a whole, and liaises and negotiates with government on relevant legal and equity issues, as well funding and program issues.

Acknowledgements

CLCNSW acknowledges the contribution of its Aboriginal Advisory Group and stakeholders in the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan.

Artwork and Artist

'Seven Sister Increase Song Cycle' by Anthony Walker, Yiman/Gurreng Gurreng. The artwork depicts: Seven sisters being sung up by Aboriginal men, as the stars would guide the turtles to shore to lay their eggs.

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Foreword

Community Legal Centres NSW (CLCNSW) recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples face significant barriers in access to justice. The CLCNSW Reconciliation Action Plan (the Plan) has been developed to provide our organisation and our member Community Legal Centres (CLCs) with a clear way to develop and implement strategies that will enable us to address these barriers.

CLCs have a proud history of striving for a fair and just society for all, particularly for those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged. We are committed to working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to assist in the development of social and legal rights for all.

The growth and maintenance of strong relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other CLC staff within the CLC sector symbolically and practically represents the relationships at large between Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities and Community Legal Centres throughout NSW. CLCNSW is committed to supporting CLCs to employ and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, as well as maintaining and increasing meaningful engagement between CLCs and their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Reconciliation Action Plan acknowledges the importance of developing strong effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to inform the services delivered by CLCs. The Plan demonstrates our commitment for the bringing together of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures and a broader community understanding in every aspect of the Plan. We are committed to ensuring that the perspectives, values and experiences of CLC staff, clients and stakeholders are valued, respected and acknowledged in all levels of service delivery for CLCs. As a legal sector, our written policies, and the practices that follow, should enshrine our shared values and achievable goals. In conjunction with our existing Aboriginal Employment Strategy, we continue, through this Plan, to be committed to providing real and meaningful employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at all levels of service delivery. The Plan outlines measurable targets, including how we will report on achievements to our sector and stakeholders.

This is an exciting period for our communities and our sector. I look forward to the journey ahead as we build stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities around New South Wales to work to achieve access to justice for all.



Nassim Arrage
Chairperson
July 2014

Our Vision for Reconciliation

CLCNSW's vision for reconciliation is to address barriers in access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in NSW, thereby reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the justice system. CLCNSW recognises, respects and values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures. CLCNSW endeavours to carry out, in a responsible way, its role in delivering access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. CLCNSW aims to develop strategies that meet the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout NSW. In collaboration with its various justice sector stakeholders, the CLCNSW Aboriginal Advisory Group (AAG) assists in informing and guiding the work undertaken by CLCNSW for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations.

Through the implementation of this Reconciliation Action Plan, CLCNSW reaffirms its commitment to growing and maintaining strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and to continuously developing partnerships that strengthen and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Our Business

Community Legal Centres NSW Incorporated (CLCNSW) is the peak representative body for Community Legal Centres in NSW. Included in our 4.6 EFT (Equivalent Full-Time) staffing structure, we have 1 EFT Aboriginal-identified role. Community Legal Centres (CLCs) are independent community organisations that provide equitable and accessible legal services. CLCs offer a broad range of legal assistance and information services to the community. CLCs undertake test cases in the public interest, particularly for Australia's most vulnerable peoples. CLCs undertake law reform and systemic advocacy work and provide community legal education, including to community workers, such as tenants advocates, to assist them to develop practical skills to act as advocates for their clients. CLCNSW promotes human rights and social justice by advocating for systemic changes to the legal system. CLCNSW also works to enhance the links between the legal profession and social services that protect vulnerable peoples, environments and cultural heritage. United Nations conventions that are ratified by Australia underpin the values of our work. This includes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

CLCs throughout NSW employ qualified staff including solicitors, social workers and community legal educators. CLCs also harness the energy and expertise of thousands of volunteer solicitors, barristers, law students and other volunteers, who work with CLC staff to provide generalist and specialist legal services. CLCs are committed to collaboration with government, Legal Aid Commissions, other public legal assistance providers, the legal profession at large, and our community partner organisations to ensure the best outcomes for clients, communities and the justice system in Australia.

As a peak body, CLCNSW is well positioned to influence and represent the Community Legal Centre sector of NSW.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff of the Community Legal Centre sector play an essential role in delivering an accessible legal system. Currently much of this work is undervalued due to entrenched systems, attitudes and beliefs that are considered relevant by policy makers and funding bodies. Consequently, Aboriginal-focused centres, programs and projects are unable to meet the civil and family law needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in NSW. The high volume of unresolved and often complex civil and family law matters experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a driver of Australia's internationally criticised Indigenous incarceration rates.¹ Through highlighting the achievements and challenges carried out in the CLC sector by Aboriginal-focused centres, programs and projects, CLCNSW works to address this systemic issue, much of which is historically and attitudinally based.

Our RAP

Community Legal Centres NSW Incorporated (CLCNSW) realises the need for our organisation and sector to develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan that supports our organisation to champion reconciliation, and thereby influence the community legal centre sector in becoming more culturally aware. Our RAP also serves to strengthen our existing policies and procedures, and to assist in developing an overarching framework of how we can contribute to reconciliation in Australia. The first drafts of the RAP were contributed to by our early RAP champions; Virginia Marshal, Nancy Walke, Gemma McKinnon, Christine Robinson, Donna Hensen, Zachary Armytage and Alastair McEwin. Following wider consultation, the CLCNSW Aboriginal Advisory Group (AAG), CLCNSW board, CLCNSW Director Alastair McEwin, and Reconciliation Australia all gave further considerable input into the RAP. Together with artist Anthony Walker, we are proud to present our RAP.

The RAP Working Group consists of the Chairperson of CLCNSW Board, Nassim Arrage; the Director of CLCNSW, Alastair McEwin; the Convenor of the CLCNSW Aboriginal Advisory Group, Shannon Williams, a Dharawal/Woddi Woddi woman; the CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program Community Development Worker, Zachary Armytage, a Wiradjuri/Kuku Thaypan man; and a member from an Aboriginal organisation from outside the CLC sector.

CLCNSW's passion for creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was clearly demonstrated before the development of our RAP. For example, we currently provide access to programs and strategies that work towards Reconciliation; these include access to; Legal Aid's 'Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training' program, the CLCNSW Aboriginal Employment Strategy, the CLCNSW Yarn-Up and Training program, and the Continuing Professional Development program. These actions and more are organised throughout our RAP.

1. Cunneen, C & Schwartz, M 2008, *The family and civil law needs of Aboriginal people in New South Wales*, final report, University of NSW, Sydney.

SECTION 1

Relationships

CLCNSW acknowledges the importance of developing strong effective relationships based on mutual respect and trust. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, beliefs and cultures need to inform the services delivered by CLCs in order to maintain positive working relationships, and to fulfil the future goals and ambitions of CLCs, the community, and CLC stakeholders. The CLCNSW RAP will support our organisation’s commitment for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures and a broader community understanding.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target	
1.1	RAP Working Group (RAP WG) to guide and monitor the development and implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting of the CLCNSW Reconciliation Action Plan.	CLCNSW Board RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker (CLCNSW ALAP CDW)	December 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017	The RAP Working Group is to: 1. Oversee the development, tacking and progress and launch of CLCNSW's RAP. 2. Meet at least twice per year to monitor and report on the RAP implementation.
1.2	Promote CLCNSW's RAP to CLC Stakeholders, CLCNSW membership and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	AAG RAP WG ALAP Community Development Worker (ALAP CDW) ALAP CDW, AAG, RAP WG	December 2015 November 2015 December 2015 November 2014	1. ALAP Community Development Worker to meet with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CLC staff and Stakeholders at CLCNSW meetings. 2. ALAP Community Development Worker to send RAP Report to the CLC sector after each RAP Working Group meeting. 3. CLCNSW Board to have strong representation of AAG members (e.g. one AAG Board Member, and 1 observer with speaking and voting rights on issues that relate to anything that may affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in NSW and Australia at large). 4. Develop a webpage to promote the RAP Program and CLCNSW's RAP and RAP progress as a model for the CLC sector. 5. Upload and showcase CLC members RAPs on the CLCNSW RAP website.
1.3	Support CLCs and the legal profession to build effective partnerships working towards a culturally appropriate justice system.	AAG RAP WG ALAP CDW	May 2015 August 2015	1. Develop and communicate policies and position statements to the CLC sector that guide best practice for a culturally appropriate justice system. 2. Develop and distribute a range of resources that assist CLCs and legal professions in achieving culturally appropriate work environments.
1.4	Celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW) to provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and other employees to build strong relationships.	RAP WG, Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	27 May – 3 June 2015, 2016, 2017	1. Promote and host at least one NRW event for all CLCNSW employees to attend. 2. Provide the opportunity for CLC employees to attend and support local NRW events. 3. Register CLC's NRW event on Reconciliation Australia's website to capture participation and support. 4. Circulate RA's NRW factsheet to all CLCNSW employees, stakeholders and membership prior to NRW.



Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target	
1.5	Continue to support and strengthen the CLCNSW's Aboriginal Advisory Group.	AAG RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	May 2015 December 2016	1. Schedule two Yarn Up meetings twice per year for the AAG to formally meet to discuss policies, procedures, training and law reform submissions. 2. Review and, where appropriate, revise the Terms of Reference between the AAG and CLCNSW.
1.6	Advocate for the establishment of Aboriginal Advisory Groups for all CLCs.	AAG RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	May 2015	1. Raise the issue of AAGs for all CLCs at a CLCNSW General Meeting. 2. Develop and circulate to the sector a discussion paper on AAGs for all CLCs.

SECTION 2

Respect

CLCNSW is committed to ensuring that the perspectives, values and experiences of CLC staff, clients and stakeholders are valued, respected and acknowledged in all levels of service delivery for NSW CLCs. We believe that respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, lands, and histories, form an important basis to establish a safe and healthy environment that is sensitive towards the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As a legal sector, our written policies, and the practices that follow, enshrine our values and achievable goals. Our policies and procedures should ensure that **respect** is symbolic as well as practical.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target	
2.1	Promote and implement a sector-wide commitment to the Legal Aid 'Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training' program to increase CLC employees understanding and appreciation of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.	CLCNSW Board, AAG Convenor CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	December 2015	1. Develop and pilot a cultural awareness training strategy for CLCNSW. In particular, provide opportunities for RAP WG Members, RAP Champions, Managers and other members of CLCNSW's leadership team to participate in training. 2. Provide the opportunity for all other employees of CLCNSW to participate in cultural learning training. 3. Distribute to all CLCs information, guidelines and strategies to encourage all CLC staff to participate in cultural awareness training.
2.2	Encourage CLCs to provide a culturally safe and welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CLC staff and clients.	RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	November 2014	1. CLCNSW will continue to promote to members to display and acknowledge culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork, flags, posters and advertisements in CLC offices and meeting rooms. 2. Continue to encourage CLCs to provide staff and clients with resources and reading material utilised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples such as <i>Koori Mail</i> and <i>National Indigenous Times</i> .
2.3	Encourage all NSW CLC staff to participate and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events such as NAIDOC Week and Survival Day.	RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	November 2015 July 2015	1. CLCNSW will continue to provide leadership for CLCs to participate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events by organising NAIDOC Week and Survival Day events. 2. Review Human Resource policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to CLCNSW staff in participating in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events. 3. Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and other staff to participate in local NAIDOC events.

SECTION 2: Respect (continued)

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target	
2.4	Encourage and support CLCs to improve CLC service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities by engaging staff in understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols.	CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker AAG RAP WG	May 2015 November 2014 May 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocols workbook for CLCNSW to engage employees in understanding around Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement to Country. 2. Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a 'Welcome to Country' at CLCNSW's Annual General Meeting. 3. Through the National Accreditation Scheme, work with NALC and CLCs to implement the requirements of the 'Cultural Safety' standards within the National Accreditation Scheme.
2.5	Promote the importance of CLCs to contribute to addressing issues of injustice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a matter of core business.	CLCNSW Board AAG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	July 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allocate a portion of CLCNSW's core funding to fund projects that contribute to better justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in NSW. 2. Develop and distribute guidelines and strategies to member organisations to encourage members to allocate funds for projects that benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

SECTION 3

Opportunities

CLCNSW is committed to providing real and meaningful employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at all levels of service delivery, and to progress and achieve individual and community goals, because we recognise and respect the wealth of knowledge and experience that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have as 'First Peoples' of Australia, and understand that their knowledge and experience contribute significantly to the goals and responsibilities of CLCNSW and CLCs throughout NSW. We are committed to creating a more inclusive and culturally appropriate environment that will ultimately create increased quality and culturally appropriate legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target	
3.1	Investigate the opportunity to increase recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees within CLCNSW and the CLC sector.	CLCNSW Board RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	August 2015 November 2014 May 2015 November 2014 July 2015	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review Human Resource policies and procedures to ensure that barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are addressed. Engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies, including professional development. 2. Advertise all identified CLCNSW vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media channels. 3. CLCNSW to develop and distribute to member CLCs guidelines and strategies that encourage CLCs to implement the Aboriginal Employment Strategy and set employment targets. 4. Review and update CLCNSW's Aboriginal Employment Strategy. 5. In accordance with CLCNSW's Aboriginal Employment Strategy, CLCNSW will set, monitor and progress targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. 6. Develop position descriptions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified positions within CLCNSW and the CLC sector.

SECTION 3: Opportunities (continued)

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
3.2 Investigate and promote cadetships and work experience placements in CLCs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait students, graduates and volunteers.	AAG CLCNSW Board RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	May 2015 November 2015 November 2015	1. Develop and implement a pilot cadetship program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. 2. Implement, monitor and evaluate an Indigenous Cadetship Support (ICS) program.
3.3 Promote and encourage partnerships between CLCs, stakeholders, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure the National Indigenous Cadetship Support Project (NICSP) realises its full potential.	AAG CLCNSW Board RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	June 2015 November 2015	1. Identify and develop a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders that CLCNSW could increase mutually beneficial partnerships with such as Tranby Aboriginal College, Aboriginal Legal Service, the legal profession and universities. 2. Continue to develop strategies and a resources booklet to inform CLCs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff about the Indigenous Cadetship Support program.
3.4 Investigate the opportunity to increase Supplier Diversity within CLCNSW and the CLC sector	RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	December 2014 March 2015 December 2014	1. Investigate and Develop a supplier diversity strategy to procure goods and services offered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. 2. Develop and circulate a list that identifies local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses CLCNSW and CLCs can use to procure goods and services from. 3. Investigate the opportunity to become a member of Supply Nation.
3.5 Promote and encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation on CLC boards and management committees.	CLCNSW AAG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	December 2015	1. Advertise an expression of interest for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander CLC employee to join CLCNSW's Board. 2. Encourage CLCs to introduce quotas and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander positions on CLC boards and management committees.
3.6 Provide and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CLC staff with professional development opportunities.	RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker ALAP CDW CLCNSW Sector Development Program AAG	December 2014, 2015, 2016 November 2015 November 2015 November 2015 November 2015	1. Encourage CLCs to review HR policies to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to apply for study leave to assist with professional development opportunities. 2. Provide 2 Professional Development opportunities per year specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CLC staff. 3. Identify and promote study and leadership opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff by displaying relevant courses and workshops on CLCNSW's intranet and by circulating via email. 4. Suggest to CLCs to provide and provide sourcing assistance for course fees. 5. Provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for NSW CLCs on Aboriginal legal issues and current themes, including partnering with other agencies in joint Continuing Professional Development initiatives.

SECTION 4

Tracking Progress & Reporting

CLCNSW is accountable to its responsibilities. Tracking progress and reporting on successes and challenges assists us in evaluating and developing our strategies, work and outcomes.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
4.1 Implement, track and report on the RAP to the CLCNSW Board, AAG and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CLC staff on a quarterly basis.	RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker AAG Convenor	August 2014 December 2014	1. Send CLCNSW's RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement. 2. Prepare Progress reports to provide to the CLCNSW Board on a quarterly basis.
4.2 Promote the CLCNSW RAP to the CLC sector and wider community, including publication on the CLCNSW and Reconciliation Australia websites.	CLCNSW Board CLCNSW Director	November 2014, 2015, 2016	Reporting of RAP progress, achievements and events is included in the CLCNSW Annual Report.
4.3 Report achievements, challenges and learnings, to Reconciliation Australia for inclusion in the Annual Impact Measurement Report.	RAP WG CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	June 2015, 2016, 2017	Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually.
4.4 Refresh and update CLCNSW's RAP.	CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker	June 2017	1. Review and update a new RAP for CLCNSW based on learnings, challenges and achievements from previous RAP. 2. Investigate developing CLCNSW policies and procedures based on the learnings from the Review of the RAP.

Acronyms

RAP: Reconciliation Action Plan
CLCNSW: Community Legal Centres New South Wales Inc
CLC: Community Legal Centre
AAG: Aboriginal Advisory Group

RAP WG: Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group
ALAP: Aboriginal Legal Access Program
CLCNSW ALAP CDW: CLCNSW Aboriginal Legal Access Program, Community Development Worker
EFT: Equivalent full-time

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