

# Illawarra Legal Centre **RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN**



Illawarra  
Legal  
Centre  
Inc.



**RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN**

**REFLECT**

## Our Acknowledgement

Illawarra Legal Centre acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay deep respect to Elders past, present and emerging and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Illawarra Legal Centre acknowledges Dharawal Country and Yuin Country as the land that we work and live upon.

## Our Vision for Reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is to promote access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in NSW by delivering culturally appropriate services in all areas of our business.

We aim to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples receive the help needed to overcome legal problems and fully exercise their legal rights.



**Illawarra Legal Centre Inc Reconciliation Action Plan**  
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# Reconciliation Australia CEO's Message



Reconciliation Australia welcomes Illawarra Legal Centre to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Illawarra Legal Centre joins a network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate – allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Illawarra Legal Centre to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Illawarra Legal Centre, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

**Karen Mundine**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia



# About Illawarra Legal Centre

*Illawarra Legal Centre's (ILC) core business is supporting people living with disadvantage to access free legal services that may otherwise not be available.*

Illawarra Legal Centre (ILC) is an independent, not-for-profit, community based legal centre.

We provide free legal services to the public by telephone, at our centre and at a range of outreach locations.

ILC assists people to realise their legal rights. We promote social justice for all, with a particular focus on reaching those who experience social and economic disadvantage in the Illawarra and surrounding areas.

We are one of nearly 180 community legal centres across Australia.

We aim to

- Maintain services relevant to the diverse community of the Illawarra and surrounding areas.
- Provide advice, advocacy and/or referral on a full range of legal matters to the Illawarra and surrounding areas.
- Undertake policy analysis, review existing laws and lobby in relation to law reform and legal processes which affect the rights of those in our community.
- Develop and implement community legal education programs which are both proactive, as well as responsive to community needs.



## Our Business

ILC currently employs 25 people, across two sites. We deliver our services to people living in the Illawarra Region and surrounds, the Wingecaribee, Shoalhaven, Bega Valley and Eurobodalla Local Government areas.

All of our services deliver outreach to communities in those areas to ensure we are providing services to people where they live and are needed.

ILC currently employs one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff member.

### General Law

We offer a range of free legal services to residents of the Illawarra including information, referral, advice and representation.

Our solicitors provide legal advice in a broad range of areas including: employment law, discrimination, fines, victims' support, credit and debt matters, child support (for carer parents only), domestic violence, (AVO) (complainants only) and care and protection (child protection).

### **Illawarra & South Coast Tenants Service**

The Illawarra & South Coast Tenants Service (ISCTAAS) services the Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama, Wingecarribee, Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla, and Bega Valley areas.

We provide free information, advice and advocacy to tenants across the region. This includes help with applications and hearings in the NSW Civil & Administrative Tribunal.

We assist social housing tenants, Aboriginal housing tenants, permanent residents of caravan parks and manufactured home estates, boarders and lodgers, and private tenants.

### **Financial Counselling: Credit & Debt Service**

Our Financial Counselling Service provides free professional assistance to anyone experiencing financial difficulties. We can provide assistance over the phone or face to face to assist clients identify their options. We also provide advocacy if necessary to assist clients resolve their problems.

In addition to providing financial counselling services at our Warrawong Office, we can arrange to provide outreach services when needed in our service area (Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven LGAs).

### **Aboriginal Legal Access Program**

The goal of our Aboriginal Legal Access Program (ALAP) is to promote access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in NSW by delivering culturally appropriate legal assistance services to ensure that Indigenous Australians receive the help needed to overcome legal problems and fully exercise their legal rights.

Our ALAP worker works in conjunction with ILC's services and offers free socio-legal support. Clients can choose to have the ALAP worker present to assist with accessing and using our services.

### **Welfare Rights Service**

The ILC Welfare Rights Service deals with Centrelink matters. This service provides independent and free advice to Centrelink pension recipients.

We assist by explaining clients' rights and entitlements and provide assistance to appeal against decisions. In some matters we are able to represent clients at Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

### **Community Legal Education (CLE)**

ILC offers free legal education to the general community, community services, community groups, organisation and schools.

Our service aims to raise awareness and understanding about:

- the law and legal processes,
- how to identify, prevent and deal with legal problems, and
- creating an awareness of the help available from legal and support services.

### **Child Support Service**

Our Child Support Service provides free legal advice, advocacy and representation (where appropriate) in relation to child support to the parent who has the child the majority of the time.

We provide advice and representation in a range of areas including Child Support Assessments, Change of Assessment, Limited Child Support Agreements, Child Support Enforcement, Child Bearing Expenses, over 18's Maintenance, paternity matters, and liaising with Services Australia.

### **University of Wollongong Student Service**

The Student Legal Services Clinic provides free legal advice to current students of the University of Wollongong (UOW).

The Student service encourages and supports students in solving their own legal problems. Ongoing assistance in individual cases or court representation is not provided, however appropriate referrals are offered where required.

### **Children's Court Assistance Scheme**

ILC operates a Children's Court Assistance Scheme (CCAS) which takes place every Tuesday and other days as required at Port Kembla Children's Court.

The CCAS provides support to young people and their families. For example, we provide basic information about the court process, assistance to fill out Legal Aid application forms, referral to appropriate community support services and assistance to young people to link with their solicitor and other support workers

### **Law Reform and Policy Work**

ILC's policy and law reform work is focused on challenging potential and existing unfair laws and practices and making recommendations for improvements.

## Our RAP

*By developing a RAP, Illawarra Legal Centre can turn good intentions into positive actions and join the collective action for reconciliation. This means that we will be part of the steps forward – actively helping to build higher trust, lower prejudice, and increased pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.*

ILC is developing its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The purpose of this Reflect RAP is to lay the foundation for ILC to prepare our organisation for more detailed reconciliation initiatives in future RAPs.

This RAP outlines our commitment to spend time scoping and developing mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, before committing to specific actions or initiatives.

A Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (the Working Group) will be established to ensure the actions of this RAP are completed. The Working Group will report to the Management Committee each quarter on its progress.

The RAP Champions within our service, who have been dedicated and committed to having ILC develop a RAP and have been integral in championing the RAP are:

- Levenia, the Aboriginal Legal Access Program Worker. Levenia has worked tirelessly to support the development of the RAP and utilised her strong connection to community to provide valuable insights and education to ILC for our RAP.
- Phillip, the Principal Solicitor, is a strong champion of the RAP, and uses his position to ensure the team has a good understanding of and investment in the RAP.
- Louise, as Coordinator, and Truda, as previous Coordinator, are both very invested in the RAP.

The above mentioned staff were all heavily involved in the development of the RAP, and ensured inclusion of all ILC staff.

Additionally, our RAP was supported in its development with guidance and advice from Errolyn Strang of the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, and Teressa O'Brien from Warrigal Employment. We are very grateful for their guidance and support.

## Our partnerships/current activities

ILC has strong partnerships with several services, to ensure that we understand community need and deliver services that are needs-based.

We currently work with the following services: Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service, Warrigal Employment, Warrawong Community Centre, Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre, Mission Australia, Southern Youth and Family Services.

Each of these services partners with ILC to deliver outreach to these community, Community Legal Education sessions, and to ensure smooth and easy referral pathways.

### Internal activities/initiatives

Illawarra Legal Centre recognises the importance of our centre's Legal and Social Justice Teams in developing internal processes to appropriately engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. As our centre begins on our reconciliation journey we are proud to participate and offer the following activities.

Our Legal and Social Justice Teams participate in the following activities

- Sorry Day Events
- National Reconciliation Week Events
- NAIDOC week celebrations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness training



## Activities

### Aboriginal Fishing Rights

- In February 2016 we assisted ABC Illawarra and a freelance journalist to find sources to talk about Aboriginal fishing rights.
- In April 2016 we held an Aboriginal Fishing Rights presentation at Wreck Bay.

## Outreaches

- Young Aboriginal people at Children's Court
- In September 2016 Beck and Georgina presented a paper at the NACLC Conference on addressing the support needs of young Aboriginal people at Children's Court- developing a mentoring project
- In February 2017 Beck met with the Court Users Group (Children's Court at Port Kembla) regarding Aboriginal young people at court.
- In March 2017 Beck and Georgina attended the Illawarra Aboriginal Community Based Working Group meeting to publicise the Aboriginal Children's Court day.
- From April 2017 Beck attended Children's Court on the last Tuesday of every month to increase connections between services and Aboriginal young people. The services include Driving Change (Shellharbour Aboriginal Community Youth Association) and Koori Strong (Warrigal Employment, Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation).

- In April 2017 Beck attended/presented to the Illawarra Aboriginal Community Based Working Group on presence of support services for Aboriginal young people at Children's Court.
- In March 2017 Beck presented at a meeting on the presence of support services for Aboriginal young people at Children's Court, requesting input and support from services.
- September 2019, January 2020: ALAP continued to attend Children's Court at Port Kembla.

## Barnardos Aboriginal Playgroup

- July, August, October, November and December 2019 Judi and Levenia attend sessions at Barnardos Aboriginal Playgroups to promote ILC's child support service to Indigenous parents.
- As of October 2019, the percentage of referrals to child support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients increased from 0% to 4% as a result of this outreach.

## Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre

- April, June, July, August, October 2017: Beck attended the Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre on a fortnightly basis to support the ILC outreach.
- October 2017: Ian presented a CLE at Berkeley Neighbourhood Centre in conjunction with Beck, with the target group being older Indigenous Australians. The outreach at Berkeley has been very successful in increasing this Centre's case-work and profile amongst the local indigenous community.
- May, June, August, September, October, November, December 2019; January, February, March 2020: Levenia attended twice monthly Aunty Jean's Chronic Care Group.





# Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Build internal and external relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>	April 2022	CLE Worker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a list of RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to connect with on our reconciliation journey.</li> </ul>	April 2022	
2. Participate in and celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW)s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage our staff to attend a NRW event.</li> </ul>	May 2023	ALAP Worker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.</li> </ul>	May 2023	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure our Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</li> </ul>	27 May-3 June 2023	
3. Raise internal and external awareness of our RAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a plan to raise awareness amongst all staff across the organisation about our RAP commitments.</li> </ul>	June 2022	Coordinator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a plan to engage and inform key internal stakeholders of their responsibilities within our RAP.</li> </ul>	June 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post information about our RAP on our Website</li> </ul>	June 2022	CLE Worker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post information on our Facebook page</li> </ul>	June 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore further ways to raise awareness about the RAP</li> </ul>	June 2022	Coordinator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.</li> </ul>	April 2022	ALAP Worker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.</li> </ul>	March 2022	Coordinator



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural learning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a business case (reason) for increasing awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements within our organisation.</li> </ul>	March 2022	ALAP Worker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capture data and measure our staff's current level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievement.</li> </ul>	March 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of cultural awareness training needs within our organisation.</li> </ul>	March 2022	Coordinator
6. Participate in and celebrate NAIDOC Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff of the meaning of NAIDOC Week which includes information about the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.</li> </ul>	July 2023	CLE Worker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting community events in our local area.</li> </ul>	July 2023	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure our Working Group participates in an external NAIDOC Week event.</li> </ul>	July 2023	
7. Raise internal understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore who the Traditional Owners are of the lands and waters in our local area.</li> </ul>	May 2022	ALAP Worker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scope and develop a list of local Traditional Owners of the lands and waters within our organisations sphere of influence.</li> </ul>	May 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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).</li> </ul>	May 2022	
8. Acknowledge, recognise and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders dates of cultural significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and create a calendar for dates of significance</li> </ul>	June 2022	ALAP Worker
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote dates of significance to staff</li> </ul>	June 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage and support staff to attend events commemorating significant dates</li> </ul>	June 2022	

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.</li> <li>Identify current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment and development opportunities.</li> <li>Investigate an internal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional mentoring network.</li> </ul>	<p>July 2022</p> <p>July 2022</p> <p>July 2022</p>	Coordinator
10. Investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an understanding of the mutual benefits of procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.</li> <li>Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.</li> <li>Investigate opportunities to increase pro bono activities.</li> </ul>	<p>March 2022</p> <p>March 2022</p> <p>March 2022</p>	Finance Manager





Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
<b>11.</b> Establish a RAP Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Maintain a RAP Working Group that is operational to support the development of our RAP, comprising of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and decision-making staff from across our organisation.</li></ul>	June 2022	ALAP Worker
<b>12.</b> Build support for the RAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Define resource needs for RAP development and implementation.</li><li>Define systems and capability needs to track, measure and report on RAP activities.</li></ul>	30 Sept, annually	Coordinator ALAP Worker
<b>13.</b> Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia.</li></ul>	30 Sept 2022	Tenancy Team Leader
<b>14.</b> Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.</li></ul>	December 2022	Coordinator

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