

Collaborate

Reconciliation in education: What we know and where we need to go

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Partners



RECONCILIATION
AUSTRALIA



Australian
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CENTRE FOR SOCIAL
RESEARCH & METHODS

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This Collaborate research summary explores the:

- ⚡ findings from the Australian National University’s Centre for Social Research and Methods’ recent evaluation of Reconciliation Australia’s *Narragunnawali:Reconciliation in Education program*
- ⚡ supports available to teachers and school leaders to help them develop culturally responsive teaching practices and engage meaningfully with reconciliation alongside their students.
- ⚡ benefits of reconciliation activities for students, teachers and other staff, school communities, and the broader community.
- ⚡ the significant role early learning services, schools and the education sector more broadly will continue to play in progressing reconciliation into the future.

Introduction

Australia's formal education system was first developed in the context of colonisation and, historically, was often used to deny Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children access to their cultures, identities, histories, and languages (AITSL, 2020). *The National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations & Australian Governments, 2020) and other national strategies recognise the ongoing impact Australia's colonial history has on life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"... Australian education systems were never designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The legacy of colonisation – including its policies, systems and structures – still exists today and continues to undermine the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to a fair and just education as any student in this nation. ... Addressing [the detrimental gaps apparent between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples] is only possible if teachers and the systems they work within are willing to make the necessary changes and reflect on themselves and their structures "

– AITSL, 2022, p. 2

Schools and early learning services now play a significant role in progressing reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. Teachers and school leaders are supported by system-wide commitments and broader policy initiatives to make reconciliation a core part of their professional practice. *The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* commits all Australian governments to ensuring all students learn about Australia's diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and possess the knowledge and skills to contribute to reconciliation (Council of Australian Governments Education Council, 2019).

Reconciliation

At its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, for the benefit of all Australians (Reconciliation Australia, n.d.-b). Recent events such as the Australian Government's commitment to the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and the upcoming referendum on enshrining an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in the Australian Constitution indicate that Australia's reconciliation movement is maturing.

Reconciliation is embedded in education through various mechanisms. Focus areas 1.4 and 2.4 of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* require educators to develop specific strategies to effectively teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and to "promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians" (AITSL, 2011). The Australian Professional Standard for Principals encourages school leaders to foster reconciliation and build a school culture that promotes understanding of, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and languages (AITSL, 2014).



📹 Millie and Laiko study Indigenous language at Mossman State School. See AITSL resource [Implementing an Indigenous language program](#)

The Australian Curriculum's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority aims to provide "... Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the ability to see themselves, their identities and cultures reflected in the curriculum and allows all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures" (Council of Australian Governments Education Council, 2019). Emphasising the importance of early engagement with these concepts, reconciliation is embedded in early childhood education and care through the Early Years Learning Framework, which promotes a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being (Council of Australian Governments, n.d.).

Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali (pronounced narra - gunna - wally) program is an initiative available to early learning services and schools across all sectors to help guide their reconciliation journey. This Collaborate draws on findings from an evaluation of the Narragunnawali program conducted by the Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods (ANU-CSR) between 2015 and 2022. Funded by Reconciliation Australia, the evaluation highlights the Narragunnawali program's successes, challenges, and next-step imperatives.

Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education

Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali program was launched in 2015 to leverage education as a tool towards reconciliation. The program aims to support early learning services and schools to engage in reconciliation activities in the classroom, across the learning setting, and with their local community. Narragunnawali comprises [professional learning](#) and [curriculum resources](#), a [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#) framework and development tool, and the [Narragunnawali Awards](#), which celebrate outstanding commitment to reconciliation in the education sector. The program plays a significant role in driving intergenerational change towards reconciliation.

Narragunnawali

Narragunnawali is a Nggunawal word meaning ‘alive,’ ‘wellbeing,’ ‘coming together’ and ‘peace’ (Reconciliation Australia, n.d.-a). It is an important reminder that, in order to foster a stronger sense of wellbeing, coming together and peace in the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community, reconciliation in education needs to be ‘alive’; it needs to be actively driven on an everyday, embedded basis. The word narragunnawali is used as the program’s title with permission of the United Nggunawal Elders Council. You can watch a video about the program [here](#).

Narragunnawali has expanded rapidly since its launch. As of the end of 2022, 10,446 early learning services and schools had registered to develop a RAP on the Narragunnawali platform. The most common type of user is teaching staff, comprising 38% (50,134) of total registered users. Importantly, teachers are able to access and use Narragunnawali resources even if their early learning service or school does not have a RAP or they are not involved in a RAP Working Group.

Looking to explore the development of a RAP

Looking to explore the development of a RAP for your own school or early learning service? The process involves establishing a [RAP Working Group](#), completing a [Reflection Survey](#), writing a [vision for reconciliation](#), adding [Actions](#) to your RAP, [submitting](#) your RAP, and [refreshing](#) your RAP 12 months after publication. Visit the [Narragunnawali website](#) or watch [this video](#) for more information.

The importance of reconciliation activities in education

Reconciliation Australia monitors progress towards reconciliation through their biennial Australian Reconciliation Barometer (ARB) survey. Of the 2,522 general community members who responded to the survey in 2022, almost all indicated they think the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians is important (89%). More than half said they want to do something to help improve reconciliation (53%), but fewer than one-third said they know what they can do to help (30%) (Reconciliation Australia, 2022).

This lack of know-how demonstrates an important role for education systems in giving young Australians the skills and insights to make a meaningful and informed contribution to reconciliation processes. Reconciliation activities in schools and early learning services can help

educators to critically reflect on their own knowledge and cultural responsiveness. It is important that school leaders – and system and sector policies – provide time and resources for teachers to meaningfully reflect and embed culturally inclusive and responsive practices into their teaching.

Building cultural responsiveness in your early learning service or school

AITSL is working towards a vision for an education system that is more culturally inclusive and responsive, and that values and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and living cultures. AITSL has developed a [professional learning toolkit](#) that supports the intercultural development of teachers to enhance their culturally responsive teaching practice. The toolkit comprises an [intercultural development self-reflection tool](#), an [intercultural development continuum](#), and an [intercultural development capability framework](#). The development of these tools was informed by a [discussion paper](#) and [final report](#).

Noting that [Cultural Competence for Staff](#) is one of the required RAP Actions under the Narragunnawali program, teachers and school leaders who engage with these tools and resources together contribute to a whole-school approach to reconciliation and strengthen their individual and collective cultural responsiveness in a supportive environment. Regardless of their role or existing level of cultural responsiveness, all teachers and school leaders will benefit from engaging regularly with these resources.

There is a clear and urgent need for early and ongoing exposure to reconciliation activities in order to combat [racism](#) and racial [discrimination](#). Research suggests between one-third and almost all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have experienced racial discrimination (Kelaher et al., 2014; Priest et al., 2011; Thurber et al., 2021). According to the ARB survey, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely than the general community to agree that Australia is a racist country (57% versus 42%) and much more likely to have experienced racial discrimination by healthcare staff, employers, police and educators (Reconciliation Australia, 2022).

Research conducted with 1,033 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians found that for many, racism at work is endemic:

- Almost two-thirds (63%) experience a high level of [identity strain](#)
- Over a third (39%) carry the burden of high cultural [load](#) , and
- More than one quarter (28%) work in culturally [unsafe](#) workplaces (Diversity Council Australia & Jumbunna Institute, 2020).

These instances of racism limit the ability of workplaces to employ and retain diverse staff. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who experience high cultural load and/or identity strain are less likely to be satisfied with their job or recommend their workplace to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and are more likely to intend to leave their workplace within the next year (Diversity Council Australia & Jumbunna Institute, 2020).

Reflecting broader societal behaviours and dynamics, racist and discriminatory attitudes inevitably permeate school gates. In addition to experiences of verbal and physical abuse, students who are victims of racism report higher levels of loneliness and depressive symptoms (Priest et al., 2014). These experiences can also undermine the development of healthy racial identities and have detrimental impacts on educational engagement and outcomes. Making learning settings culturally safe and inclusive spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, and community members, through meaningful reconciliation actions, can help to counter harmful attitudes. Broader societal changes can be supported by efforts to combat racism and support reconciliation at the early learning service and school level.

“... schools as microcosms of social realities have the potential to change social attitudes gradually, including those about diversity, culture and race ”

– Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010, p. 93



📹 Making learning settings culturally safe and inclusive spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, and community members, through meaningful reconciliation actions, can help to counter harmful attitudes.

The potential positive impacts of reconciliation include increased social interactions, reduced stress, improved workplace productivity, and more positive perceptions of society (Biddle & Priest, 2019). Rather than encouraging negative feelings about national identity or history, reconciliation can, when done well, create positive views about the future. Reconciliation activities in education can help to combat negative attitudes between groups and increase trust and give Australians a more accurate understanding of history (Biddle & Priest, 2019). These activities can

also foster learners' abilities to engage with complex policy debates and understand the impact of different policies that support improved opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Biddle & Priest, 2019).

Support for reconciliation activities in early learning services and schools

As outlined above, schools and early learning services are required to foster reconciliation through numerous policies and frameworks. These national commitments are underpinned by strong public support for education settings to play an active role in reconciliation. According to Reconciliation Australia's ARB research, close to three-quarters of the community agree that educational institutions should help to improve reconciliation (28% strongly agree, 44% agree), highlighting a clear call to action for early learning services and schools (Reconciliation Australia, 2022).

In line with strong community support, parents and carers also support reconciliation activities in education settings. A recent survey of 3,558 parents and carers conducted by the ANU-CSRMR demonstrated strong support for the principles underpinning Narragunnawali and reconciliation activities in education more broadly. Approximately three-quarters of parents and carers supported:

- Teachers encouraging mutual respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children/young people (62% definitely support, 16% probably support).
- Teaching all children/young people to value and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights as part of a shared national identity (56% definitely support, 22% probably support).
- Encouraging participation in community events of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (for example NAIDOC Week or National Reconciliation Week activities) (41% definitely support, 30% probably support) (Biddle & Ellen, 2022).

While awareness of the Narragunnawali program itself was low (8%), the vast majority of parents and carers said their child's learning setting should participate in a program *like* Narragunnawali (48% definitely should, 39% probably should). Engagement among parents and carers who were aware of Narragunnawali was high. More than half (52%) of parents and carers who indicated they were aware of the program had visited the Narragunnawali website, and more than one in 4 (26%) said they had been a member of a RAP Working Group (Biddle & Ellen, 2022).

Parents' and carers' awareness of the concept of reconciliation was strongly associated with support for participation in a program like Narragunnawali. More than half (56%) of those who were aware of reconciliation thought their child's institution should definitely participate in a program like Narragunnawali, compared to only 27% among parents and carers who were not aware of the concept. Younger parents and carers were more likely to have heard of Narragunnawali, suggesting that the proportion who have heard of the program, and therefore want their own child's institution to participate, may grow over time (Biddle & Ellen, 2022).

The impact of reconciliation activities in education settings

Participating in Narragunnawali gives students, staff and families meaningful opportunities to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures (Biddle et al., 2019). Qualitative findings from the ANU-CSRSM's evaluation of Narragunnawali highlight positive outcomes for learners, teachers and staff, parents and carers, and the broader community. At the whole-school and service level, the ongoing benefits are clear: "those schools and early learning services engaged with Narragunnawali maintain the [reconciliation] activities that they are already doing, and increase the activities through time" (Biddle & Ellen, n.d., p. 30). The research highlights the depth and diversity of education settings that are engaged in Narragunnawali, demonstrating the program's accessibility and relevance to education settings across Australia.

Benefits for students

The evaluation of Narragunnawali revealed various benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students. Interviews with school and early learning service staff revealed positive impacts on students and their wellbeing – no adverse effects on students were reported (Biddle & Ellen, n.d.).



📷 Participating in Narragunnawali gives students, staff and families meaningful opportunities to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures.

Staff indicated that some students take on RAP leadership roles, either as RAP Working Group members or in specifically designed student ambassador roles. They also reported increased levels of knowledge and general awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, including cultural understanding, among students (Biddle & Ellen, n.d.). Staff also described growing enthusiasm and respect among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students towards learning about reconciliation, from early childhood all the way to senior high school year levels (Biddle et al., 2019). An additional positive effect of students' participation in Narragunnawali was their sharing of knowledge and understanding with their families (Biddle & Ellen, n.d.).

Some staff members observed increased confidence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as enthusiastic cultural knowledge exchanges between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students (Biddle & Ellen, n.d.). Similarly, some staff were surprised by the level of collaboration between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students to promote reconciliation and the active role non-Indigenous students played in advocating for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers. Research participants did not report that any students expressed negative attitudes towards the program (Biddle et al., 2019).

“I had never anticipated such collaboration... between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students to promote reconciliation and how fiercely and respectfully the non-Aboriginal students support and listen to and advocate for the Aboriginal students. It makes me feel very hopeful about the future ”

– Educator cited in Biddle et al., 2019, p. 42

While such findings represent important reminders of the benefits of reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students alike, through-time evidence also helps to highlight the particular positive impacts of Reconciliation Action Planning on the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth. For example, data from the latest Wave (Wave 12) of the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children demonstrated a statistically significant link between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who attend schools that their parents know have a RAP and the students’:

- Reduced likelihood of being reported as not wanting to go to school.
- Increased likelihood of being reported to think that their school understands their needs and is good for them. (Biddle, 2022)

Benefits for teachers and other staff

While reconciliation activities are crucial to the wellbeing of students, these activities can also help teachers develop their culturally responsive teaching practice in a structured, supportive environment that enhances their wellbeing as well.

Education staff identified information sharing and improved within-institution knowledge relating to reconciliation as a positive outcome of engaging in Narragunnawali. Staff also reported that Narragunnawali provided a formalised process to engage stakeholders and to ensure that knowledge of reconciliation and reconciliation activities are embedded respectfully and meaningfully throughout the education setting (Biddle et al., 2019).

Staff indicated that engaging in reconciliation activities through Narragunnawali gave them the opportunity to discuss and challenge negative staff attitudes to reconciliation in a supportive environment. Participation also resulted in increased confidence and understanding of how staff can address reconciliation within their early learning service or school (Biddle et al., 2019).

Analysis of data from *Footprints in Time: the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children*, undertaken as part of the evaluation, found that teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who work in settings with a RAP are much more likely to feel that their school or early

learning service is engaging in a range of positive activities than teachers in other settings. The teachers themselves are also more likely to be engaging in a range of positive activities (Biddle, 2017).

“Initially the challenge was staff fear they did not know enough, we came together and provided access to Cultural Awareness training, Cultural competency training and through Cultural self-assessment... If staff have an understanding and can self-assess their own morals/beliefs and are encouraged to educate themselves more via training or discussion with other staff, it empowers them to work together to achieve the same goal ”

– Educator cited in Biddle et al., 2019, p. 33

Longitudinal analyses of Narragunnawali RAP Reflection Survey data indicates that the longer schools and early learning services are engaged with the Narragunnawali program and RAP development process, the more likely staff are to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, perspectives and contemporary issues into curriculum planning and teaching. There were no desired outcomes that worsened over time, indicating that the direct benefits of engaging with the Narragunnawali program overtime were achieved without any observed costs (Biddle, 2022).

Broader community benefits

Strengthened respect and community relationships are key tenets of the RAP Framework and the Narragunnawali program more broadly. All early learning services and schools are required to include the Build Relationships with Community Action in their RAP. This commits education settings to building relationships with their local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community that are founded on mutual respect, trust and inclusiveness.

Education staff interviewed through ANU-CSRMs research indicated parent and carer engagement is an important and valuable part of RAP processes and reconciliation activities. Links with the broader community were usually forged through initial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and families. Staff reported that reconciliation activities often led to increased engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, and improved relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families (Biddle et al., 2019).

Beyond the immediate learning setting, staff reported increased engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community members through RAP development processes, including through invitations for feedback on learning settings’ proposed visions for reconciliation. Some early learning services and schools also reported they had strengthened their relationships with other learning settings through sharing ideas about the development and execution of RAP Actions (Biddle et al., 2019).

“We’ve noticed huge progress through the school... we only have nine Aboriginal students and the parents of those students have really noticed a difference in our approach... The families are more involved in the school as well, as a result of [our engagement with Narragunnawali] I think ”

– Educator cited in Biddle et al., 2019, p. 36

Case studies of Narragunnawali Awards winners

The Narragunnawali Awards recognise and celebrate schools and early learning services implementing outstanding reconciliation initiatives. Finalists and winners demonstrate commitment to strengthening relationships and building respect, and provide meaningful opportunities for learners and staff to engage in reconciliation activities.

Early learning services

The Early Learning category finalists and winners demonstrate that even the youngest learners can – and should – engage with reconciliation. Explore & Develop Penrith South (NSW) won the inaugural (2017) Awards for demonstrating that young learners can be sensitively exposed to reconciliation in meaningful ways. The service did not shy away from difficult conversations and engaged their young students in learning about topics such as Stolen Generations and the challenges of holding a national day on January 26.

Forbes Preschool (NSW) won in 2019 in recognition of their strong equality and equity-based approach to reconciliation, as well as their genuine commitment to cultural competence and community relationship-building. The service has strong relationships with community members and has shown a firm commitment to reconciliation, both during formal education/care sessions and 'after hours'. Forbes Preschool has reported a substantial increase in its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments as a result of its reconciliation activities.

In 2021, the Early Learning category award was jointly presented to 2 winners: Tumut Community Preschool (NSW) and Balnarring Pre-School (Victoria). Judges were impressed by the early learning services' commitments to building respectful and constructive relationships with local Traditional Owner groups. Tumut Community Preschool staff bravely embraced the important work of critical reflection and holding each other to account. They demonstrated commitment to anti-racism in policy and practice, working in partnership with their local Aboriginal community. Balnarring Pre-school recognises the importance of children learning the histories and cultures of Australia's First Peoples. The judges highlighted their enduring partnerships with Traditional Owners and active engagement with the local community in developing learning, respect and understanding among members of their pre-school community.

Schools

In 2017, Queanbeyan Public School (NSW) was announced as the winner in the Schools category for having developed deep and broad relationships with community, creating a palpable sense that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures are an integral part of the school and its environs.

Similarly, Maclean High School (NSW) was recognised as the 2019 winner for engaging in respectful consultation and collaboration with local Elders and the Aboriginal community to implement strong cross-curricula learning projects with a focus on local perspectives. The school has fostered positive leadership opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as learning opportunities for all staff and students.

St Virgil's College (Tasmania) was chosen as the 2021 winner for the way in which it embedded reconciliation at all levels – including in the strategic plan; its exemplary inclusion of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in its work; and for prioritising caring for Country on its campus grounds.

Learn more

You can learn more about past Narragunnawali Awards finalists and winners, as well as about how to nominate or apply for future Narragunnawali Awards, by visiting narragunnawali.org.au/awards. You can read more case studies of early learning services and schools that have participated in Narragunnawali in Report 5 of the ANU-CSR's evaluation.

Numerous education and training sector organisations, including AITSL and the ANU, are engaged in Reconciliation Australia's wider RAP program.

AITSL's reconciliation journey

AITSL is made up of diverse individuals who are committed to strengthening their own cultural responsiveness and the organisation's cultural safety. As the custodians of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, which include a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and reconciliation, we support all members of Australia's teaching workforce and model the expectations set for the teaching profession.

Institutional integrity is a dimension of reconciliation — we want schools' and early learning services' commitments to the Narragunnawali RAP development process to be mirrored by our own continued commitment to the RAP program. Our formal reconciliation journey began with the development of our first Reflect RAP in 2013, which was launched in 2014 by Aunty Georgina Nicholson, an Elder of the Wurundjeri people.

In 2019 we began to develop our second Reflect RAP, a process that was underpinned by company-wide engagement, consultation and reflection. Upon the successful completion of our Reflect RAP, our 2-year Innovate RAP was officially accredited by Reconciliation Australia in September 2022.

Guided by our RAPs, we have taken concrete steps to support and enact reconciliation in our organisation. We have established an Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education to bring the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities into the planning, design, delivery, and evaluation of our programs and initiatives. We are pleased to have established a Senior Advisor – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education role as a key member of our staff. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also sit on our Board of Directors, expert standing committees, and other advisory groups.

Our internal communication has consisted of events and information published via our Intranet, Yabber (the Woiwurrung word 'yaba' meaning to talk or chat), where we celebrate and raise awareness of significant events like National Reconciliation Week, Mabo Day, and NAIDOC Week. We also regularly share information that helps staff in advancing their cultural responsiveness journey.

We have worked extensively to refine and update our policies and procedures to reflect our reconciliation efforts. We have implemented an Indigenous Procurement Policy, established Welcome to Country and meaningful Acknowledgement of Country protocols for all meetings and events, and developed comprehensive cultural protocols and guidelines.

While our Innovate RAP outlines what we want to achieve over the next 2 years, we know it's a gradual process that we will build upon as we continue to learn, un-learn, grow and evolve. We will be bold, try new things, and continue to work towards a vision for an education system that is more culturally inclusive and responsive, and that values and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and living cultures.

ANU's reconciliation journey

The Australian National University's first RAP was launched in 2009, but by 2012 the central RAP committee had ceased to function due to a lack of central support and coordination. Then, in 2017, under the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian Schmidt, the ANU renewed its commitment to reconciliation through the development of a 2-year Innovate RAP (2018-2019). The University is currently finalising our next Innovate RAP (2023-2024).

The University has a number of organisational units with a singular or strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement, and that directly or indirectly contribute to reconciliation.

The First Nations Portfolio, established in January 2021, provides leadership and advice to staff across the University regarding the University's engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre provides a meeting place and support base for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying at ANU.

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) is Australia's foremost social science research body focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic and social policy from a national perspective.

The Australian Centre for Indigenous History conducts collaborative and individual research projects on Australian, comparative and transnational Indigenous histories. The Centre hosts the journal, *Aboriginal History*, which is co-edited by 2 staff members, and offers an undergraduate course on Indigenous histories.

The National Centre for Indigenous Genomics aims to create a repository of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bio specimens, genomic data and documents for research and other uses that benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander donors, their communities

and descendants, and the general Australian community.

The School of Music's Indigenous composer initiative, in partnership with other arts organisations, provides mentoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander composers.

The Sir Roland Wilson Foundation offers the Pat Turner Scholarship to high-performing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants to undertake a 1- to 3-year postgraduate qualification in topics of national significance and strategic importance to the Australian Public Service (APS), building connections between the APS and academia.

ANU takes its obligation to acknowledge, understand and contribute to rectifying deep historical wrongs very seriously and very willingly. We still have a way to go. There is, however, enormous goodwill across our community to continue our work towards reconciliation.

The ongoing role of education in reconciliation

Engagement in Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali program continues to grow across Australia. The ANU-CSRMs' evaluation suggests approximately 100 early learning services and schools join the program each month; more than 15,000 early learning services and schools are anticipated to be involved by June 2027 (Biddle & Ellen, 2022). As the program expands, Reconciliation Australia hopes reconciliation activities will become a "normal" part of Australia's education system, and that parents, carers and community members will expect children to engage in meaningful reconciliation-related learning and activities throughout their schooling.

While Narragunnawali facilitates broad engagement in reconciliation activities, reconciliation itself is a deeply personal journey. As more learners engage with concepts such as strengthened relationships, respect and trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, this will precipitate broader societal changes. Achieving meaningful reconciliation across Australian society hinges on our individual willingness to engage in uncomfortable conversations in our personal and professional contexts. Reconciliation asks us to be truthful with ourselves in addressing our personal biases, assumptions and tendencies, and to engage in conversations about racism and discrimination with those around us. These conversations require bravery and honesty.

"For reconciliation to be effective, it must involve truth-telling, and actively address issues of inequality, systemic racism and instances where the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are ignored, denied or reduced. That is, we need to move more of our effort from focussing on the preconditions for reconciliation, to focussing on more substantive change"

– Reconciliation Australia, 2021, p. 4

Teachers and school leaders are supported by various policies, standards and resources to make reconciliation a meaningful part of their professional practice. At the individual level, teachers and school leaders can continue to engage in critical self-reflection, work to create culturally safe and responsive learning settings, respectfully build relationships with their local community, and proactively address fears of being 'tokenistic' or offending (AITSL, 2022). The Narragunnawali platform offers tools and resources to help them do this, recognising that teachers and school leaders are lifelong learners, constantly engaged in learning, un-learning and re-learning. As demonstrated through ANU-CSR's research, learners' enthusiastic engagement in reconciliation activities offers a worthy blueprint for their families, teachers, and communities, as well as Australian society more broadly.

Teachers and school leaders across Australia can use AITSL's professional learning toolkit to strengthen their intercultural development and culturally responsive practice. A whole-school/service approach to intercultural development and culturally responsive teaching can help to ensure that all teachers feel included and supported, for the benefit of all learners.

Resource List

Resources to help educators fulfil their obligations to foster reconciliation and to teach about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages

- ☑ ACECQA Quality Area 1 - Be part of reconciliation information sheet
- ☑ ACARA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority
- ☑ AITSL Illustration of Practice: Australian Professional Standards for Teachers Focus area 2.4 - Promoting reconciliation

State- and territory-based organisations and initiatives

- ☑ Reconciliation NSW - see the Reconciliation in Education in NSW webpage and Schools Reconciliation Challenge (NSW and ACT) website
- ☑ Reconciliation Queensland - see the Reconciliation in Education webpage
- ☑ Reconciliation SA - see the For Schools webpage
- ☑ Reconciliation Tasmania - see the Reconciliation in Education webpage
- ☑ Reconciliation Victoria - see the Reconciliation in Education webpage
- ☑ Reconciliation Western Australia

Indigenous Education Bodies

- ✎ [Torres Strait Islanders' Regional Education Council](#)
- ✎ [New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group](#)
- ✎ [SA Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council](#)
- ✎ [Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated](#)
- ✎ [Victorian Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups](#)

To learn more about Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali program, [visit the website](#). You can [sign up](#) to Narragunnawali to start accessing information, tools and resources.

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