



Social  
Futures



# Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2018 - 2020



*Our Kids, Our Future* by Chantelle Dywer

[socialfutures.org.au](http://socialfutures.org.au)

# Our RAP's Cover Artwork

Chantelle Dwyer created the artwork that appears on the cover of our RAP for her major work for her HSC which placed second in the Sheila Mears Memorial Prize.

Titled '**Our Kids, Our Future**' the painting tells the story of how traditional tribes would gather to meet, with the concentric circles representing the various tribes of the region, including the artist's tribe, the Gamilaraay people of the Northern Tablelands.

"Each tribe is linked by a pathway, and all pathways lead to a central meeting place which is surrounded by women, represented in the painting by the U shapes facing inwards" says Chantelle.



Chantelle Dwyer with the artwork she created for her HSC major art project. Photo: JoJo Newby / The Daily Examiner

# Reconciliation Australia CEO, Karen Mundine

Reconciliation Australia congratulates Social Futures on developing its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). By adopting an Innovate RAP, Social Futures is demonstrating its readiness to develop and test innovative approaches to reconciliation, and champion reconciliation at every level of the organisation. By making progress across the key pillars of reconciliation - relationships, respect and opportunities - Social Futures will take the necessary steps to achieve its goal of social justice for all, and a strong sense of community wellbeing.

Social Futures understands the importance of building and maintaining meaningful, respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations, in order to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. This commitment is displayed in its actionable goal to celebrate and promote reconciliation focused campaigns and events such as National Reconciliation Week (NRW), and host its own NRW events.

Respect and understanding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures is key to Social Futures' core values. It champions these values by committing to invite Elders from the area to assist in naming Social Futures programs and services in local First Nations language(s).

Social Futures is dedicated to driving reconciliation through developing employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It demonstrates this dedication through its aim to update its staff induction package to include cultural awareness training.

On behalf of Reconciliation Australia, I commend Social Futures on its inaugural RAP, and look forward to following its continued reconciliation journey.



Karen Mundine  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Reconciliation Australia**



# Social Futures CEO Message

Reconciliation is central in our work to achieve social change in regional Australia. It is part of who we are, it defines how we work and shows where we want to go. We respect the extraordinary knowledge and custodianship of Aboriginal people in the areas where we work. We are committed to action that promotes reconciliation with, healing and social justice for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In this, the 50th anniversary year of the 1967 referendum, we look back on what has been achieved in our relationships with Indigenous peoples and acknowledge there is much more to be done to achieve true reconciliation.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan has been developed over the past two years, led by a dedicated group of staff who have met regularly to grapple with the issues. It outlines the real actions and measurable steps we will take.

The process has enriched our organisation and we are grateful for the enthusiasm, persistence and dedication of those staff. Equally we are grateful to Reconciliation Australia for their advice, guidance and support. Most of all, we are deeply grateful to the many Elders and Community members who have helped us, providing ideas, feedback and encouragement. You have been incredibly generous with your time, we are indebted to you all and we look forward to continuing our partnership towards reconciliation with you.



Tony Davies  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Social Futures**



# Our Vision for Reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is for genuine relationships, strong partnerships, and connected communities between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We acknowledge that access and connection to country, knowledge and community supports wellbeing. At Social Futures, reconciliation is everyone's business.

Our aim is to develop a RAP that is a document that responds to change and growth, that commits us to real action, by developing strategies for acknowledging and celebrating strength and resilience, and ways to improve our knowledge and understanding.

Through our programs and initiatives we will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to:

- break structural cycles of inequality and injustice
- commit to employ, train and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- welcome, celebrate and share our region's rich diverse cultures, histories and contributions
- provide services that enhance the wellbeing and safety of all children, families and communities
- strengthen relationships with and respect for Australia's First Peoples
- ensure meaningful inclusion in our planning and service delivery

We will know we have achieved our vision when we can show we are doing better to contribute to connected, active and strong children, families and communities.



## Our Acknowledgment of Country

***We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we live and work and their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community.***

***We pay respects to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future.***

# Our Organisation

Social Futures is a community-based not-for-profit organisation working to strengthen community wellbeing in regional NSW through the delivery of projects, programs and services in partnership with local communities, government and other community sector organisations and private sector collaborations. Social Futures has 24 offices located from Tweed Heads in the north, Bathurst in the south and west to Broken Hill.

In 2014, Youth Connections North Coast Inc. and Social Futures (then known as The Northern Rivers Social Development Council) merged. In 2015 we embarked on a strategic planning process which ensured the RAP was embedded into the organisational strategic plan. In 2016, we changed our name from Northern Rivers Social Development Council to Social Futures to better encapsulate our work and our values.

Social Futures works to achieve social justice in regional Australia by making a difference in people's lives; offering support to take control and live well.



## Our services include:

- Support and capacity building with children, young people and families – through the Far North Coast Family Referral Service, Reconnect, Getting It Together, Links to Learning, Computer Clubhouse, Specialist Homelessness Services (Youth, Adult and Complex Needs packages), Communities for Children Young Parents program, Family Relationships Services, Standby Response Suicide Bereavement Service, Our Mijung Jarjums Kids In Mind early intervention mental health program, Homeless Youth Assistance Program, Youth On Track Program, **headspace** and family planning services.
- Social inclusion capacity building programs with individuals and communities across 14 LGAs, including Ability Links NSW, Local Area Coordination and Social Enterprise Development.
- Research, innovation and community engagement projects, benefitting government, non-government and private sector, and local communities through housing and homelessness research, social inclusion research with children with disability, consultation with over 1,200 community members in the development of the first Australian Regional Social Plan, improving service integration and impact through facilitation of Care2Change Out of Home Youth Reference Group, Northern Rivers Housing Forum, Sustain Transport, LGBTI Ageing, Elder Abuse, and the Lived Experience Project which engaged a workforce of 30 Peer Workers with a lived experience of mental illness and recovery.
- Regional community and sector inclusion and sustainability, including Social Impact Investment Fund development, Community Services Development, Transport Development, Ageing and Disability Development, Sector Training and Professional Development and Regional Social Planning.
- As at 1 July 2017 Social Futures employs 148 staff, 14 of whom identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

# Our Reconciliation Action Plan

At Social Futures we believe that reconciliation is everyone's business. A significant proportion of people who access Social Futures' programs are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people require Social Futures to be culturally aware and competent, and we are prepared to be held accountable to this. Social Futures wants to be clear about contributing to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and being tangible and accountable about our goals and achievements. Our commitment to action is demonstrated through our staff survey which indicated a very high level of support for formalising and prioritising real action towards reconciliation.

The development of our RAP has been steered by our RAP Working Group which is made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and other staff, from all levels of the organisation. The RAP Working Group has been meeting regularly to maintain focus on the development of strategies that will contribute meaningfully to reconciliation in our communities and our work. The group consists of our Chair, Programs Manager, Jennifer Parke; CEO, Tony Davies; Marketing and Communications Officer, Amanda Shoebridge; Board members Glenys Ritchie and Deb Stafford; Executive Manager Inclusion, Nicola Garnsey; Assets Officer, Gab Lavis; Infrastructure Coordinator, Kylie Maunder; Programs Manager, Ian O'Reilly; Reconnect & Getting it Together Manager, Sonya Mears-Lynch; Aboriginal Youth & Family Worker, Shaun Jones; Aboriginal Youth & Family Worker, Jenny Nichols; Aboriginal Youth & Family Worker, Gloria Torrens; headspace Aboriginal Youth Access Clinician, Paul Dooner; and Community & Family Programs Manager, Deb Hall. Six of the RAP Working Group members identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Our RAP Champion is our CEO, Tony Davies.

When our RAP is endorsed and launched, the RAP Working Group will continue to meet to ensure we deliver the commitments we have made in our RAP.

The journey of developing our RAP has included the following activities:

## **Reconciliation Activities:**

- National Reconciliation Week events held for all staff showing films and sharing food provided by Aboriginal bush tucker catering.
- Local Elders were consulted about using language in our program names, and art work in our promotional material.
- Social Futures organises Young NAIDOC, now in its fifth year, where young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people spend the day in workshops with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentors identifying their dreams and aspirations and what NAIDOC means to them. The event culminates in a parade before members of the public, family and friends.



- Participation in NAIDOC Week and Close the Gap day acknowledgements - staff are supported to attend and participate in NAIDOC week community events during their work time to join the celebrations and show their support for the local community.
- Aboriginal Artwork Procedure developed to ensure ethical purchase, use, display and acknowledgement of art work.
- All staff, management and Board members attended cultural awareness sessions.
- An Acknowledgement of Country is included at all internal meetings.
- A Welcome to Country is arranged for all large events and activities where people are being brought together.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are displayed in Social Futures waiting rooms and client meeting rooms.
- Promotion of local cultural events - our region has numerous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural festivals and events.

These events are communicated to all staff and where appropriate the opportunity to attend is supported.

- Sponsorship of small, local community events such as family days, and sports events.

### **RAP Development Activities:**

- RAP Working Group conducted a staff survey to inform the RAP. All staff who responded to the survey indicated strong support for developing a RAP, improving engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and the community, and increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and board members at Social Futures.
- Staff attended a workshop with Reconciliation Australia to access expert advice and guidance on the process of joining the program and developing a RAP.
- RAP Working Group meetings were held in Lismore and Grafton with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders
- Members of the RAP Working Group attended team meetings across the organisation to workshop with staff strategies for the Plan.
- Rap Up! An internal publication with updates on the development of the RAP distributed to staff monthly.
- An expression of interest and sitting fee procedure was developed for recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to join the RAP Working Group.
- The Lismore Aboriginal Interagency, Tweed Goori Interagency and Clarence Goori Interagency were consulted during the development of the RAP.
- An email signature acknowledging Traditional Owners was developed in consultation with local Elders and is now included in all staff email signatures.
- RAP focus at monthly Executive Team, Leadership Team and staff meetings as standing agenda item – this ensures staff throughout the organisation have had the opportunity to provide input into the development of the RAP at regular meetings.
- Social Futures participated in the 2016 RAP Barometer Survey and will use the results to track our progress towards reconciliation.



# Relationships

We believe that genuine relationships are fundamental to progressing reconciliation in order to truly understand and respond to the aspirations of Aboriginal communities, families, clients and staff. We are committed to developing new, and strengthening existing, relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
1. RAP Working Group (RWG) actively monitors RAP development and implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting	Executive Manager People and Quality	July 2018 September 2018, 2019 From September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise Terms of Reference</li> <li>• Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented on the RAP Working Group</li> <li>• RAP Working Group to meet quarterly to monitor and report on the progress of the RAP implementation</li> </ul>
2. Raise internal and external awareness of our RAP to promote reconciliation across our business and sector	Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement	September 2018 September 2018, September 2018 September 2018  September 2018  Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute RAP to all employees and Board members.</li> <li>• Upload RAP to our website.</li> <li>• Deliver RAP presentation at induction for all new staff</li> <li>• Develop and implement a strategy to communicate our RAP to all internal and external stakeholders</li> <li>• Provide quarterly updates to staff and Board on the progress of the RAP</li> <li>• Promote reconciliation through ongoing active engagement with all stakeholders</li> </ul>
3. Develop and sustain working partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations operating in areas related to Social Futures' work and priorities	Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement	September 2018  September 2018  September 2018  January 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders</li> <li>• Develop a resource of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and stakeholders within our local area that we can approach to partner with.</li> <li>• Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop arrangements for partnerships and co-delivery of mutually beneficial projects.</li> <li>• Staff attend monthly Aboriginal Interagency meetings in our region to develop relationships.</li> </ul>

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
4. Celebrate National Reconciliation Week by providing opportunities for employees to participate in events and build relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement	27 May - 3 June 2018, 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host at least 2 internal NRW events each year</li> <li>• Register all NRW events via Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.</li> <li>• Support staff to attend other NRW local events to recognise and celebrate NRW.</li> <li>• Promote NRW events through website, newsletter, Facebook page</li> <li>• Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.</li> </ul>



# Respect

Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, histories and lived experiences is vital for Social Futures and our strength based, client focused, trauma informed Practice Framework is built upon it. Social Futures aims to ensure that the principles of respect and self-determination underpin all our work.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
1. Engage employees in understanding the protocols around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country ceremonies to ensure there is shared meaning behind the ceremonies.	Executive Manager People and Quality	August 2018  August 2018 August 2018 August 2018  December 2018 January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.</li> <li>• Develop key contacts for organising a Welcome to Country.</li> <li>• Include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of internal and external meetings.</li> <li>• Update all Social Futures' products and promotions to include an Acknowledgement of Country.</li> <li>• Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country address at significant organisational events including Strategic Planning annual events, and Forums such as Housing Forum.</li> <li>• Organise and display an Acknowledgment of Country plaques in our offices.</li> <li>• Monitor and review the implementation of cultural protocols, across our organisation as it grows.</li> </ul>
2. Recognise and celebrate NAIDOC Week and other significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events	Executive Manager People and Quality	February 2018, 2019, 2020 March 2018, 2019, 2020  March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure Social Futures is represented on local NAIDOC Committees.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for all staff to participate in local NAIDOC Week events, Sorry Day events and Closing the Gap events.</li> <li>• Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in events.</li> </ul>

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
3. Maximise opportunities to use local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in the workplace	Executive Manager Child, Family and Youth	January 2019, 2020  January 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders to assist with naming Social Futures programs and services in languages.</li> <li>• Include Local languages on promotional material where possible.</li> </ul>
4. Ensure Social Futures' office environments celebrate cultures and welcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Chief Financial Officer	September 2018, 2019  September 2018, 2019  December 2018  December 2018, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about how we can make the office space/s culturally welcoming and make changes accordingly.</li> <li>• Ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks, flags, maps and displays include a full acknowledgement of the artist/s, their country and the story and meaning of the work.</li> <li>• Develop policies and procedures for displaying artwork, to ensure cultural protocols are observed when acknowledging First Australian artists and their story.</li> <li>• Commission Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork for use on Social Futures' materials.</li> </ul>
5. Proactively promote positive images, activities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement	January 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all Social Futures' activities that involve positive images, activities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are promoted in a wide range of media.</li> </ul>
6. Engage employees in cultural learning opportunities to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements	Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement	January 2019  January 2019  January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update staff induction package to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness training.</li> <li>• Investigate opportunities to work with local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants to develop cultural awareness training.</li> <li>• Develop and implement an ongoing Cultural Awareness training strategy, which defines cultural learning needs of employees in all areas of our business and considers various ways cultural learning can be provided (online, face to face workshops or cultural immersion).</li> </ul>

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
		January 2019 January 2019, 2020 January 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve Cultural Awareness training as mandatory annual training for all staff.</li> <li>• Record staff participation in cultural awareness training activities.</li> <li>• Record staff feedback and changes in attitudes from training.</li> </ul>
7. Ensure that the work of all staff is informed by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdom and wellbeing practice.	Practice Excellence Manager	May 2018 December 2018 May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an Aboriginal identified learning and development position to work alongside the Social Futures, Practice Excellence Manager.</li> <li>• Develop the Social Futures Practice Framework to include local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdom and wellbeing practice.</li> <li>• Provide ongoing training and development opportunities to all staff to build knowledge &amp; skills around working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.</li> </ul>



# Opportunities

Creating opportunities for economic development and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment is crucial for Social Futures in order to strengthen our commitment to equal opportunity and workplace diversity.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
1. Increase the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.	Executive Manager People and Quality	July 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture baseline data on current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to inform future employment opportunities</li> </ul>
		January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Strategy and identify employment targets for annual RAP review.</li> </ul>
		January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Policy and Procedure on cultural leave for Aboriginal staff</li> </ul>
		January 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer at least one student placement position and at least 2 Aboriginal Traineeships annually</li> </ul>
		January 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer professional development and leadership opportunities for existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members.</li> </ul>
		January 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies and to inform future employment opportunities.</li> </ul>
		January 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertise all vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media.</li> </ul>
		May 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants participating in our workplace.</li> </ul>
		July 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish and support Aboriginal Staff Support Group</li> </ul>

Actions	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
2. Investigate opportunities to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity.	Chief Financial Officer	December 2018 December 2018 February 2019 January 2019 June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop at least one commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business.</li> <li>• Review and update procurement policies and procedures to identify barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to supply our organisation with goods and services.</li> <li>• Develop and communicate to staff a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to procure goods and services.</li> <li>• Promote Supply Nation through Social Futures Newsletter and sector meetings.</li> <li>• Become a member of Supply Nation.</li> </ul>
3. Investigate opportunities to enhance Social Futures' programs, projects and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Executive Manager Child, Family and Youth	April 2019, 2020 January 2019, 2020 June 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage and consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about program design and delivery.</li> <li>• Employ local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to deliver cultural content in relevant programs such as art, storytelling, history and language.</li> <li>• Support all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients with fines to clear fines through Work Development Orders (WDOs).</li> </ul>
4. Improve access to all services and activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement	January 2019, 2020 October 2018, 2019 December 2018, June 2019, December 2019, June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure common access barriers such as transport and cultural safety are considered and explicitly addressed in program design and delivery</li> <li>• Collate current numbers of clients and program participants who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</li> <li>• Analyse client numbers in leadership team meetings to track any trends and develop strategies to increase rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients</li> </ul>





# Tracking Progress and Reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
1. Build support for our RAP and apply a continuous cycle of revision and improvement	Executive Manager People and Quality	June 2018 May 2018 February 2019, 2020 December 2018, 2019 February 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define available resourcing for our RAP (Budget/people/time)</li> <li>• Develop reporting mechanisms to ensure data collection is able to measure our progress and successes.</li> <li>• Seek input and feedback from all staff by circulating the RAP during review and evaluation stages</li> <li>• Incorporate RAP into Strategic Planning process and Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Utilise our website as a vehicle to demonstrate our commitment to ongoing support for our RAP and to display achievements to stakeholders and staff.</li> </ul>
2. Report achievements, challenges and learning to Reconciliation Australia for inclusion in the Annual Impact Measurement Report.	Executive Manager People and Quality	September 2018, 2019, 2020 May 2018, 2019, 2020 December 2019, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually.</li> <li>• Participate in the Reconciliation Barometer</li> <li>• Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings</li> </ul>
3. Review, refresh and revise Social Futures' RAP.	Executive Manager People and Quality	July 2019 March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP for Social Futures</li> <li>• Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review and formal endorsement.</li> </ul>



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