



RURAL
MEDICAL
EDUCATION
Australia



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

INNOVATE

Reconciliation Action Plan

2023 - 2025





Acknowledgements

Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC)

The Rural Medical Education Australia (RuralMedEd) reconciliation action plan is supported by QAIHC – Queensland’s peak body for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

Artwork

The cover artwork and illustrations were painted by renowned Aboriginal artist Colin Jones. The painting is entitled “Healthy Land, Healthy People”. It narrates the intimate relationship between the health of the People and the health of the Land.

The camouflaged hand is symbolic of Aboriginal People living within the land – that the land is a part of them. The largest circle embodies a place of physical, spiritual and mental healing as represented by the footprints coming toward it.

The painting gives a clear message about the importance of Country and culture in healing.



Reconciliation action plan for Rural Medical Education Australia

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is the foundation on which we, RuralMedEd, have built our Reconciliation Action Plan. We recognise the hardships inflicted on the first sovereign Nations of Australia by dispossession and colonisation, we acknowledge that health and education are pivotal contributors to the reforms desperately required to resolve these hardships, and we acknowledge our unique sphere of influence in research, learning and teaching.

Through our work, RuralMedEd has access to and impacts on the training of medical students, vocational education and training students and rural general practitioners. With this access comes a great opportunity to acknowledge the past and positively influence the future health of First Nations People. Through teaching and research, we can improve the clinical and cultural competence of the next generation of rural doctors and health workers.

To this end, the medical training programs and research projects supported by RuralMedEd are firmly directed to ensuring access to high-quality, culturally safe primary care by delivering appropriate clinical and cultural safety training to health learners providing services to rural Queenslanders. These efforts are and will continue to contribute to closing the gap in health equity for rural and First Nations communities.



Innovate RAP

Reconciliation Australia commends Rural Medical Education Australia on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Commencing an Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build strong foundations and relationships, ensuring sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for Rural Medical Education Australia to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff, and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, Rural Medical Education Australia will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process, as well.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Rural Medical Education Australia is part of a strong network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

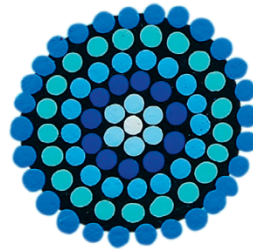
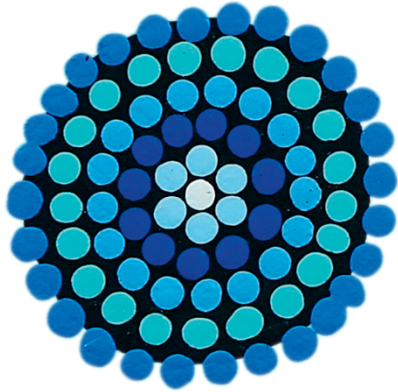
Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Rural Medical Education Australia's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Rural Medical Education Australia on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

**“reconciliation
is a collection of
actions that
results in healing”**



Why is reconciliation important to RuralMedEd?

The Uluru Statement from the Heart graciously calls for the establishment of a First Nations Voice in the Constitution as the first step to Makarrata – the coming together after a struggle – and to redress the injustice and powerlessness that currently exist for First Nations People.

For RuralMedEd, Makarrata sets the pathway to a fair and truthful relationship with our First Nations People and a just and empowered future for our children.

Makarrata and reconciliation are about a future of hope, where the gift of the First Nations culture is acknowledged by the people of Australia. It is about working with like-minded and supportive people to create a future where reconciliation can be realised.

Reconciliation is realised when First Nations People are no longer fearful of being discriminated against; when their relationships with other Australians are strong, thriving and embedded in the Constitution; when truth-telling and constitutional reform create a just and fair relationship with all the people of Australia; where First Nations People and culture are respected and celebrated for their contribution to Australia; and where First Nations People resume their rightful place in their own country.

Our vision for reconciliation

At RuralMedEd we believe that the strength of our company lies not only in our ability to do meaningful work to support rural communities, but in our recognition of the privilege and pleasure of working with like-minded people.

Our vision for reconciliation is an enduring alliance with First Nations People in the regional, rural and remote communities that we serve.

It is about working together with First Nations People to speak the truth about the past, to alleviate the hurt of the past and to acknowledge its continuing impact. It is about appreciating the contribution of the rich and diverse culture of First Nations People in our contemporary environment, and it is about the pursuit of a just future for First Nations People and for all Australians.

We believe that this vision will be made possible through:

- Respectful inclusion of First Nations People in our decisions and actions;
- Training and student placement programs;
- Research and innovation in the everyday work of rural clinicians; and
- The desire to make a difference in the lives of the people we serve.

“Our vision for
reconciliation is an
enduring alliance with
First Nations People”



Our business

In 2002, a group of rural doctors formed Rural Medical Education Australia with a vision to “train to retain” doctors in rural Queensland.

This vision expanded in 2011 in a partnership with Griffith University School of Medicine to be the university Rural Clinical School. This partnership is unique in Australia and represents the successful collaboration of a large, established and well-resourced university with a flexible, responsive, not-for-profit community-based organisation acutely attuned to the changing needs of the rural communities it serves.

Our flagship LongLook program supports year long clinical placements for medical students in rural communities. These placements provide an alternative to the model of short-term clinical rotations for city-based medical students and is focussed on achieving a return to rural practice following graduation. 74% of our students who spend 2 years in the rural program return to work in a rural community once they have graduated.

RuralMedEd employs medical and clinical educators and trainers in Stanthorpe, Warwick, Dalby, Kingaroy, Beaudesert, Roma, Goondiwindi and Toowoomba. All educators live and work in their rural community and all have, or are working towards, postgraduate qualifications in clinical education.

RuralMedEd has training and accommodation facilities at Stanthorpe, Warwick, Kingaroy, Dalby, Beaudesert, Goondiwindi, Jandowae, Chinchilla and Toowoomba, with a capacity for 100 students.

In 2020 RuralMedEd established a Registered Training Organisation to deliver Vocational Education and Training (VET) certificate courses in our rural communities and in 2021 achieved 7 year accreditation with ASQA.

RuralMedEd trains VET students in Cert 111 and Cert IV in Health Services Assistance, Allied Health Assistance and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner. Our VET courses offer an entrance pathway to health studies at University of Southern Queensland. We are the only health training organisation in Australia training and graduating a broad spectrum of health practitioners, from high school students, VET students, medical students through to General Practitioners.

Research at RuralMedEd is focused towards improving health and wellbeing of rural and remote communities, with a focus on First Nations health. The research group has the capacity to analyse medical problems unique to rural communities such as exposure to agricultural endeavours including trauma through accidents, cancer, cardiovascular disease and mental health issues as well as researching innovative and effective methods of teaching cultural competence. Our research program plays a vital role in training the next generation of health professions to support excellence in delivering rural healthcare and healthcare for First Nations people. A key feature of our research success is access to a wide network of rural generalist hospitals, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and General Practices where our students regularly undertake ongoing clinical audits and research projects.

Actions

RuralMedEd addresses the paucity of health services in rural communities by educating a highly skilled health workforce in rural communities to meet the needs of rural communities.

Our strategic objectives are to:

- Educate the rural workforce
- Establish a pipeline of rural health learners and trainees
- Pursue innovation in education
- Improve rural health in our communities through collaboration, research and workforce sustainability.

In our reconciliation action plan we have three strategic intents:

Partner with respect – a coming together of our staff and the Aboriginal Medical Services we serve to determine training and research actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share training resources• Collaborate on training programs• Collaborate on research projects
Reconcile through actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit to and invest in research to transform the teaching of cultural competency for health students• Establish a First Nations' student placement program in Community• Embed Acknowledgement of Country in all our works
Empower through education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct vocational education and training for First Nations' primary care workers and practitioners• Conduct clinical skill training for the First Nations' health workforce in our communities



Our RAP

RuralMedEd believes that as a rural health education company it is important to be proactive in supporting and working with First Nations peoples and rural communities to lead efforts to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for First Nations peoples. The widely recognised inequities that exist with respect to access to health services and in health outcomes for First Nations peoples have been a concern of RuralMedEd for many years. RuralMedEd also believes that it is important to act as a leader and champion of efforts to redress health inequities within our own sphere of influence through our organisational policies, positions and advocacy activities.

In 2022 the RuralMedEd Board requested that a formal Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) be developed.

Our progress:

- Established a RAP Working Group (RWG) comprising of the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Training (RAP Champion) supported by all staff and Board members, and by input from external stakeholders, including the CEO of Goolburri Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) and the CEO of the Jadon Adams Foundation and Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC).
- Commenced these innovative research projects and established partnerships:
 - **Assessing cultural safety in general practice consultations for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.**
Grant funding: Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF): Clinician Researchers Applied Research in Health Grant
Status: Data collection and analysis (Phase 1)
Project team: RuralMedEd, James Cook University, University of Southern Queensland.
 - **Assessing cultural safety in telehealth general practice consultations for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.**
Grant funding: RHMT program Status: Data collection
Project team: RuralMedEd, James Cook University, University of Southern Queensland.
 - **Exploration of cultural safety training and culturally safe practices by GP registrars when consulting with Indigenous patients.**
Grant funding: ACCRM Education Research Grant Status: Data collection
Project team: RuralMedEd, James Cook University, University of Southern Queensland.

Our RAP (cont.)

- Maintained and sought to develop strong relationships with First Nations AMSs and organisations in our rural communities at Charleville, Roma, Chinchilla, Dalby, Kingaroy, Goondiwindi, Stanthorpe, Warwick, Toowoomba.
- Formally endorsed the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- Raised awareness of key issues related to the health of rural First Nations peoples through our media and communications channel
- Utilised our media and communications channels to celebrate National Reconciliation Week (NRW) and NAIDOC Week and enabled and encouraged staff to attend events
- Developed a protocol for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country at key events and for acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of all the lands from which its Board members participate in its meetings
- Developed a cultural safety program with our First Nations Elders for medical students in the Rural Clinical School. The program is delivered by First Nations' Elders.
- Following requests from the AMSs in our rural communities we increased the scope of our Registered Training Organisation to include Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner to increase the numbers of rural First Nations health practitioners and to enhance the financial reliance of rural AMSs.
- Provide professional development and upskilling for rural First Nations health clinicians in their rural communities.
- Offer an annual bursary to support a First Nations High School student with expenses related to their studies in Cert III in Health Services Assistance
- Developed a First Nations clinical placement program for the Griffith University final year medical students in the Rural Clinical School.



Relationships

Existing approaches to First Nations peoples' health have had a limited effect in improving health outcomes and life expectancy and Closing the Gap initiatives are not yet making their expected impact especially for First Nations peoples who live in rural areas. RuralMedEd knows that building strong connections between us, individuals and organisations promotes shared understanding and purpose, and fosters the collaborative efforts necessary to redress these unacceptable health inequities.

Focus area: Our relationships with our key stakeholders and community engagement are an essential part of our work to improve access to health training and services, and health outcomes in rural Australia.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement. 	May 2023	CEO and DOT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. Meet with the AMSs in our communities at least annually. 	October 2023, 2024	CEO, DOT, RAP group
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. 	May 2023, 2024, 2025	Media Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. 	27 May- 3 June 2023, 2024, 2025	RAP group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. 	27 May-3 June 2023, 2024, 2025	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise at least one NRW event each year. 	27 May-3 June 2023, 2024, 2025	CEO and Events manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website 	May 2023, 2024, 2025	Event manager
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce. 	June 2023	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly. 	May 2023	Media Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes. 	June 2023	RAP group
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation. 	June 2023	RAP group
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	May 2023	HR team
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation. 	May 2023	CEO and HR team
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy. 	May 2023	HR team
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate senior leaders, our staff and our students on the effects of racism. 	May 2023	First Nations Elder session

Respect

RuralMedEd believes that respecting the traditions, cultures, histories, knowledge and rights of First Nations peoples is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of First Nations peoples and must be a key tenant of health training in rural Australia..

Focus area: Increased understanding among health students, health workers and staff of the importance of and positive impact of respecting the traditions, cultures, histories, knowledge and rights of First Nations peoples in relation to health and wellbeing.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. 	May 2023	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy. 	May 2023	DOT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff. 	May 2023	CEO RAP group
6. Create and implement innovative solutions to enhance cultural safety of rural healthcare professionals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning. 	May 2023	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement outcomes of research project and develop tools and workshops to enhance cultural safety of rural healthcare professionals. 	May 2023, 2024, 2025	DOT and Research Team
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share and promote these tools and workshops to other education providers and health care services. 	May 2023, 2024, 2025	DOT and Research Team
7. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	May 2023	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. 	May 2023	CEO and Board Chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year. 	At each event	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings. 	At each meeting	CEO
8. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	First week in July 2023, 2024	Chair, RWG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week. 	May 2023	HR Manager and CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff. 	First week in July 2023, 2024	CEO and Event Manager

Opportunities

First Nations peoples' health is a key part of rural health. Work to improve access to culturally appropriate health services through education, training and research and continuing professional development of First Nations health professionals, and to increase the number of First Nations people in health care professions are critical aspects of this.

Focus area: Ensuring rural health First Nations health professionals and students can undertake health education, training and skills for the rural communities they serve and in the rural communities they live.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. 	June 2023	HR Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy. 	June 2023	HR Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy. 	July 2023	HR Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. 	June 2023	HR Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace. 	March 2024	HR Manager
10. Offer Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner, target Allied Health Assistance and Cert III Health Services Assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at our rural clinical training centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence Cert IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner in Toowoomba. 	January 2024, 2025	Director of Training
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence Cert IV in Allied Health Assistance with targeted enrolments to AMSs workforce. 	January 2024, 2025	Director of Training
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence Cert III in Health Services Assistance with targeted and subsidised enrolments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Kingaroy, Chinchilla and Toowoomba. 	January 2024, 2025	Director of Training
11. Conduct clinical professional development workshops annually for the AMSs in our communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer Annual professional development courses to AMS workforce. 	July 2023, 2024, 2025	Director of Training
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Professional development courses in consultation with AMSs to ensure relevancy. 	January 2024, 2025	Director of Training
12. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy. 	June 2023	CFO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Supply Nation membership. 	June 2023	CFO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff. 	June 2023	CFO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. 	June 2023	CFO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses. 	June 2023	CFO

Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG. 	October 2023, 2024 March 2024, 2025	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RWG. 	May 2023	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation. 	May, July, October 2023, 2024, 2025 March 2024, 2025	CEO and RWG
14. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define resource needs for RAP implementation. 	March 2024	Chair, RWG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments. 	March 2024	CEO and RWG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. 	July 2023	CFO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management. 	March 2024	RWG and CEO
15. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence. 	June 2023, 2024	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire. 	1 August 2023 2024	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia 	30 September 2023, 2024	CEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly. 	May, June, August, November 2023, 2024, 2025	CEO and RWG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually. 	November 2023, 2024	Media Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer. 	May 2024	RWG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia at the conclusion of this RAP. 	May 2025	CEO
16. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. 	January 2025	CEO and RWG



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