

Alice Springs Town Council

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan *September 2019 – March 2021*



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners



Alice Springs Town Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Mparntwe (Alice Springs), past, present and future.


References

This *Reconciliation Action Plan* has been guided by the following documents and work:

- Reconciliation Australia Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan Template
- Feedback from Council staff through interviews conducted by Ken Johnson AM PhD, of Desert Connections
- Feedback from Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation
- *Alice Springs Town Council Strategic Plan 2018-2021*

Scope

This *Reconciliation Action Plan* (RAP) has been written with the reconciliation journey of the Council organisation as its focus with the Reflect RAP template prescribed by Reconciliation Australia as its basis. It is therefore an internally facing document, though viewable by the public. It is not intended to be a plan for the broader town of Alice Springs, though Council is supportive of reconciliation initiatives locally, regionally and nationally. However, it is important that the RAP contain actions that are tangible and deliverable, within the organisation's sphere of direct influence and with available resources.





Inaugural raising of the Aboriginal flag for NAIDOC Week , 18 July 2018

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From the Mayor

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) has an extensive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, providing many opportunities for engagement and connection for our visitors and residents to enjoy. As elected representatives for the community, we recognise and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Mparntwe (Alice Springs), past, present and emerging.

Our community embraces its diverse and shared history, and here, in the ancient heart of Australia, the journey to becoming a proud, empowered community continues with Alice Springs Town Council's *Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, 2019-2021*.

A living Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) demonstrated by a local government authority – via its employment strategies, workplace initiatives and service delivery – offers greater opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with the benefits flowing to the entire municipality.

In implementing the RAP's practical steps, Council staff will enjoy stronger, respectful collaborations guided by a greater awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history. Empowered and informed, staff will embody this RAP when engaging with key external suppliers, community and stakeholder groups as well.

Alice Springs Town Council welcomes this milestone in the journey to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their integral role in our community's future social, cultural and economic wellbeing.

Damien Ryan
Mayor of Alice Springs



Alice Springs Aquatic & Leisure Centre



From the CEO

I am very pleased to present Alice Springs Town Council's *Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan 2019 – 2021* (RAP).

The contents of this plan represent a formalising of actions and detailing of strategies that will assist the organisation in achieving its future vision of an inclusive workforce.

The purpose of the RAP is to consolidate and strengthen the Council's existing connection with Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander peoples by focusing attention on sensitive and practical ways to build strong and lasting relationships with employees and residents from the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The RAP's actionable strategies are also designed to guide all Council employees forward in their cultural awareness, and to encourage further engagement and fostering of connections between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues.

As it adapts and evolves over time, the RAP will continue to assist in identifying the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and provide the tool for developing appropriate responses, with an aim to maintaining workplace flexibility, impartiality and relevance.

In creating this RAP, our organisation reaffirms its commitment to respect and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Mparntwe, the Arrernte people, their history and connection to country, and to keep this front-of-mind in everything we do – our daily processes, project planning and implementation, and presence in the community.

I would like to acknowledge Ken Johnson of Desert Connections, Council staff and community members who have consulted, contributed to, or collaborated on this plan. Their thoughtful work has created a solid foundation upon which to build an inclusive and respectful organisation that accurately reflects the dynamics of our community.

May the journey ahead proceed with open ears, minds and hearts.

Robert Jennings

CEO Alice Springs Town Council



Overview of Council

The organisation and its role in the community

Alice Springs Town Council provides local government services and advocacy for the community of Alice Springs (Mparntwe). The municipality is located in the heart of Central Australia, on the traditional lands of the Central Arrernte people, and serves as a regional hub for a range of services and activities. There are roughly 13 Aboriginal language groups, with languages still spoken fluently in and around Central Australia by Aboriginal residents and visitors to Alice Springs.

Alice Springs Town Council provides local government services to the municipality and has a broad regional influence, working in cooperation with neighbouring councils and organisations, as well as Territory and Federal governments, to deliver the best possible outcomes for residents.

Specifically, services include maintenance of Council's public facilities, such as the Alice Springs Public Library, Alice Springs Aquatic & Leisure Centre, Regional Waste Management Facility, sporting facilities and ovals, parks and open spaces, plus management of roads, pathways and waste collection.

Council regularly provides free community events, development programs for families, seniors and youth, and civic functions including four annual citizenship ceremonies.

Council consists of nine Elected Members, including the Mayor, who discuss and direct decision-making on behalf of the community. Council's services are delivered by its employees of which there are currently 185 permanent staff, with 25 (13.5%) identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Council is one of the largest and longest standing employers in Alice Springs, recognising that its workplace culture also influences interactions with the community.

The Council Chamber and the main administration centre are located within the Alice Springs central business district (CBD) at the Civic Centre, adjacent to the Todd River (Lhere Mparntwe), with four more service offices located within the township.

The Alice Springs Town Council Strategic Plan 2018 to 2021 makes a firm and unambiguous commitment to a strong, co-operative working relationship with Traditional Owners.



Alice Springs Town Council *Reflect Reconciliation* Action Plan, 2019 – 2021
Building a better future through relationships, respect, opportunities and governance.

Council outdoor workers



Council staff clearing debris after a storm, 2017

Background

Alice Springs Town Council has developed a *Reconciliation Action Plan* (RAP) to take meaningful steps forward, in the organisation's culture and practice, towards a respectful, relationships-based approach to work and service provision. Council acknowledges that its activities within the municipality of Alice Springs (Mparntwe) take place on the traditional lands of the Central Arrernte people.

The initial RAP Working Group was established in 2017 and carried out preliminary work in the development of a RAP.

In 2018, independent local consultant, Ken Johnson, was engaged to interview 25 Council staff, drawn from horizontal and vertical cross-sections of the workforce, 11 of whom identified as Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Interviewees were invited to offer personal opinions on the organisation's cultural literacy, its relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and also for views on how the organisation might improve as a welcoming workplace.

Each year, within our facilities and out in the community, Council staff are interacting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people representing diverse language groups, for many of whom, English may be a third or fourth language. The majority of these interactions and relationships



Council staff member with local children on National Tree-planting Day 2017

are positive. However, there is more to be achieved and a *Reconciliation Action Plan* provides a helpful framework for developing relationships and understanding together.

This *Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan* is the formal commencement of Alice Spring Town Council's reconciliation journey. Despite our organisation having more frequent interaction and greater exposure to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures than many other local government authorities in Australia, we acknowledge that, for change to be lasting and effective, our journey is just beginning.

Council can learn much from engaging with the proven processes that Reconciliation Australia has in place. Internally, the RAP Working Group comprising a cross-section of the organisation, and working with Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation will monitor actions and measure progress outlined in the *Reflect RAP* and, in due course, develop future RAPs.

As a member of Council's Executive team, the Director of Corporate & Community Services (CCS) is the designated 'RAP Champion', reporting directly to the CEO. Both Human Resources and Governance units reside within the CCS Directorate in Council's organisational structure.



HR Manager Biggi Gosling with Charlie King of 'the No More' Campaign, 2018

Council's partnerships

Community partnerships

- Alice Springs Town Council (ASTC) has a formal Partnership Agreement in place with Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation, acknowledging the organisation as the peak body for matters affecting Aboriginal people in Alice Springs (Mparntwe).
- ASTC also has in place a *Memorandum of Understanding* with Tangentyere Council establishing cooperation between both organisations to enhance outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Alice Springs (Mparntwe).
- ASTC has made a strong commitment in solidarity with the 'No More' campaign, advocating against family and domestic violence amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Initially using sport as the primary medium of engagement, the campaign's focus has since expanded to a broader audience. 'No More' representatives Charlie King and Adrian McAdam launched Alice Springs Town Council's engagement with the campaign at a presentation in 2018. Council is committed to continued support of 'No More' campaign initiatives.



Alice Springs Public Library's Roo-tail BBQ, NAIDOC Week 2019

Internal activities / initiatives

- ASTC has historically supported NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Weeks with the Community Development Unit and Public Library, in particular, hosting free community events and programs for the general public in support of these important initiatives. Council events are often promoted as opportunities for members of the public to engage directly with Elected Members and Council staff.
- ASTC Ranger Unit's Indigenous Liaison Officer provides internal advice and informs, guides and supports Rangers in being culturally aware when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the course of their duties.
- ASTC Public Library's Indigenous Library Services Officer assists peer Officers in promoting meaningful services and access to Library programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- A component of ASTC's induction process for new permanent staff is cultural awareness training, including appropriate communication and response, which is facilitated by a local Aboriginal trainer. Staff are given an overview of language, kinship, connection to country as well as contemporary issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



NAIDOC Week rally on Council lawns, 2019



NAIDOC Week rally on Council lawns, 2019



Alice Springs Public Library staff



Council outdoor workers

Working together to serve the community

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. 	September, 2019	Indigenous Liaison Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	December, 2019	Director, Corporate & Community Services
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, 2020	Administrative Trainees x2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. 	27 May – 3 June, 2020	RAP Working Group Chair supported by RWG members
	<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, 2020	RAP Working Group Chair supported by RWG members
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation and RAP Actions to all staff (all staff email from CEO, statement from CEO and / or Mayor at all-staff Coffee Morning, ASTC RAP Launch event.) 	September 2019, then ongoing	Mayor, CEO & Directors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on the reconciliation journey. 	November, 2019	Manager Governance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that could be approached to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 	November, 2019	Manager Governance
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. 	March, 2020	Manager Governance & Manager HR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	May, 2020	Manager Governance & Manager HR

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	• Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	February 2020	Director Corporate and Community Services
	• Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	May 2020	Manager HR
	• Engage a qualified and experienced Arrernte consultant to prepare and deliver cultural awareness training appropriate to the needs of Council staff.	Feb 2020	Manager HR
	• Embed cultural awareness training into employee on-boarding and compulsory annual refreshers.	July 2020	Manager HR
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	• Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	June 2020	CEO, supported by Directors & Managers
	• Increase staff understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	June 2020	CEO, supported by Directors & Managers
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	• Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2020	Manager Community & Cultural Development Unit
	• Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2020	Manager Community & Cultural Development Unit
	• RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July, 2020	RAP Working Group Chair supported by RWG Members



Smoking Ceremony, NAIDOC Week, 2019



Central Australian Aboriginal Congress supporting Alice Springs Public Library NAIDOC Week event, 2019

Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	• Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	May 2020	Manager HR
	• Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	Feb 2020	Manager HR
	• Establish relationships with key Aboriginal employment and training organisations to promote Council job vacancies	October 2020	Manager HR
	• Explore expansion of ASTC Contact Officer positions to include additional Indigenous Contact Officers at Depot, Regional Waste Management Facility and Civic Centre/Library	July 2020	Manager HR
	• Investigate renumeration and non-renumerated options to enhance flexibility of cultural leave provisions including recognition of extended leave with no threat to job security.	October 2019	CEO, supported by Directors & HR Manager
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	• Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	Feb 2020	Manager Finance
	• Investigate Supply Nation membership.	Feb 2020	Senior Finance Officer

Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	• Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	September 2019	Director, Corporate & Community Services
	• Draft Terms of Reference for the RWG.	October 2019	Manager Governance
	• Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	October 2019	Manager Governance with support from Indigenous Liaison Officer
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	September 2019	Director, Corporate & Community Services
	• Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	September 2019	RAP Working Group Chair
	• Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	September 2019	Manager Governance
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	• Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, 2020	Director, Corporate & Community Services
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	• Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	September 2020	Director, Corporate & Community Services



Mayor Damien Ryan with participants in National Tree-planting Day, 2017

For further information on this RAP, contact Alice Springs Town Council on (08) 8950 0500, or by email to astc@astc.nt.gov.au



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