

Westside Community Lawyers



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

REFLECT

February 2026 to February 2027

Our business

Westside Community Lawyers is a community legal centre dedicated to providing free and accessible legal services to members of the local community. At Westside, we enhance access to legal justice for people experiencing financial, social or other disadvantage by:

- Providing legal services to individuals and to community and not-for-profit organisations;
- Making referrals to appropriate government and non-government agencies for non-legal issues;
- Involving individuals and community and not-for-profit organisations in recognition, understanding and solution of their own legal and related problems;
- Supporting and empowering clients to resolve their own legal problems where possible;
- Assisting in, encouraging and fostering unusual cases; and
- Co-operating and/or affiliating with organisations in Australia and elsewhere having similar objectives and/or common clients.

Westside Community Lawyers services a vast geographical area spanning around 50% of South Australia. This includes the western suburbs of Adelaide as well as the Mid-North and Outback Regions of South Australia. We operate from two office locations in South Australia: Port Adelaide and Port Pirie. We acknowledge that the Traditional Owners of the lands where our offices are located are the Kurna People and the Nukunu People respectively. These offices enable us to deliver services both in metropolitan and regional settings, helping to meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve. Our work in regional and remote areas ensures that clients in these communities can access the legal support they need.

At Westside, our team is proud to have a team of highly experienced lawyers, covering a range of areas including family law, family and domestic violence, criminal law, and civil disputes. Our workplace currently employs approximately 14 staff members across legal, administrative, wellbeing support and management roles.

We currently employ one Aboriginal staff member. We recognise the importance of cultural diversity and inclusion and are committed to improving representation and fostering a culturally safe and welcoming workplace.

At Westside, our vision is to provide just and equitable access to quality legal advice and representation for all members of the community. Our values outline the expectations we have for the way we interact with each other, our clients and the community. These values are ones we hold dear. They are:

- **Responsive:** We listen to the needs of our diverse communities, and adapt our service accordingly.
- **Empowering:** We provide support and legal education to empower people to take control and help prevent legal issues occurring in the future.
- **Accountable:** We regularly review our services to ensure services are appropriately directed to the needs of our priority clients, who are those that are vulnerable or disadvantaged.
- **Collaborative:** We have a strong, cohesive team who work tirelessly to meet the needs of clients. We also partner with a large number of private, community and government agencies to enhance our service delivery and increase access for our communities.

Our RAP

Westside Community Lawyers is developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) because we are committed to fostering meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. We aim to deepen our understanding of the histories, cultures, and contributions of Australia's First Nations Peoples, and we are dedicated to promoting justice, equality, and cultural understanding through our work. As a community legal centre, we have a responsibility to ensure our services are accessible, safe, and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Developing a RAP provides us with a structured and accountable framework to strengthen our commitment to reconciliation and to contribute to broader societal change.

At Westside, we proudly acknowledge that we are in the Reflect RAP phase, marking the beginning of our reconciliation journey. This phase represents an important opportunity for us to build a strong foundation based on genuine relationships, respect, and meaningful opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are committed to listening and learning, deepening our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and perspectives to guide our actions.

We intend to approach the implementation of our Reflect RAP through a collaborative and reflective process. Our focus will be on building genuine relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, listening to their voices, and learning from their experiences. We will engage staff across all levels of our organisation to promote cultural awareness and competency, and we will review our internal policies and practices to ensure they align with the principles of reconciliation. We will also set clear, measurable actions and outcomes, and regularly monitor our progress to ensure accountability and transparency.

We have established a RAP Working Group (RWG) responsible for developing, leading, and overseeing the implementation of our Reconciliation Action Plan. Our RWG comprises key members of our team, including the CEO/Managing Lawyer, Deputy Managing Lawyer, Solicitor ("RAP Champion"), and Wellbeing Support Officer.

Our current CEO/ Managing Lawyer has over 35 years' experience representing Aboriginal people before metropolitan and regional courts in South Australia and is a former senior manager employed by the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc (ALRM), and the Legal Services Commission of South Australia. He has also represented Aboriginal families in several Coronial Inquests. This group reflects a diverse representation of staff across legal, wellbeing support, and management roles, ensuring a wide range of perspectives are considered.

Importantly, our Wellbeing Support Officer is an Aboriginal person who has a strong connection with the Aboriginal community in South Australia and, in addition, has extensive social work and counselling experience, which strengthens our commitment to authentic engagement and culturally informed leadership in our reconciliation journey. As we are currently experiencing some staff changes, we are also aiming to expand the RWG in the coming months to include additional staff members and broaden representation across our organisation.

Our reconciliation journey to date has been informal but growing. We acknowledge that we are at an early stage of this journey and that there is much more to learn and do. We have begun by increasing staff awareness of reconciliation and the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the SBS First Nations Inclusion Cultural Awareness Training courses. We have also started building connections with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations near our Port Adelaide office. The development of our RAP marks a significant step forward in embedding reconciliation more deeply into our organisational culture and daily practice. Westside embraces this journey with humility and openness, recognising that reconciliation is a shared responsibility requiring ongoing commitment and collaboration.

Our partnerships/current activities (if applicable)

Westside Community Lawyers recognises the importance of building meaningful and respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations. While we are in the early stages of formalising our reconciliation journey through the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), we have already begun engaging in a number of partnerships and activities that reflect our commitment to reconciliation.

In terms of community partnerships, we are actively working to strengthen our relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in both the Adelaide West and Mid-North/Outback regions. In December 2024, our management team visited two Aboriginal organisations located near our Port Adelaide office that serve clients in the Western suburbs. The first was Kura Yerlo Council, which offers a broad range of services for clients aged 5 to 85, including a Women's Health and Wellbeing Group, Children's Centre, Elder Care Support Services, NDIS support group, and Youth Services. They were very interested to learn about the legal services we provide in the Western suburbs and regional areas and identified clients who may benefit from our assistance in matters such as assault charges, tenancy disputes, and DCP involvement – particularly where the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM) is unable to assist due to conflicts of interest. We left materials with them and invited future referrals and opportunities to conduct community legal education (CLE) sessions for their clients; they were enthusiastic about exploring potential collaboration.

The second organisation was **Tiraapendi Wodli**. Tiraapendi Wodli operates under a justice reinvestment framework, which focuses on redirecting funds from the prison system into community-based services. It serves as a community hub providing safe and supportive services to the local Aboriginal community, working in close partnership with other organisations. They are involved in the Nunga Court and Youth Court processes and often host meetings between the Department for Child Protection (SA) with Aboriginal families. Like Kura Yerlo Council, they expressed strong interest in collaborating with us and in having us deliver CLE at their hub to further support their clients.

Westside Community Lawyers also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM). This partnership represents an important step in our reconciliation journey, as outlined in our Reflect RAP.

Through this agreement, we aim to foster a collaborative working relationship and facilitate the referral of clients between our organisations, ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have improved access to culturally safe legal services and support. The MoU also supports our broader commitment to building respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and strengthening our capacity to provide services that are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Internally, we have been working to raise awareness of reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories among our staff. We incorporate Acknowledgement of Country into meetings and events and encourage team participation in community events such as National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. Staff have also undertaken SBS First Nations Inclusion Cultural Awareness Training to help build cultural competency across our organisation. These efforts, combined with our emerging partnerships with local Aboriginal organisations, are helping us foster an inclusive and culturally safe workplace while enhancing the responsiveness and accessibility of our services.



RELATIONSHIPS



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	- Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. - Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	February 2026	Wellbeing Support Officer
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	- Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. - RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. - Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	- May 2026 27 May - 3 June 2026 27 May - 3 June 2026	Wellbeing Support Officer
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	- Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. - Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. - Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	February 2026	CEO
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	- Research best practice and policies in area of race relations and anti-discrimination. - Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	- June 2026 - July 2026	- RAP Champion - CEO



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. • Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	• April 2026 • February 2026	• CEO • Wellbeing Support Officer
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. • Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	February 2026	• Wellbeing Support Officer • CEO
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. • Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. • RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	• June 2026 • June 2026 • First week in July 2026	• RAP Champion • RAP Champion • RAP Champion, CEO & Wellbeing Support Officer



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. • Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	September 2026	CEO
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. • Investigate Supply Nation membership.	August 2026	CEO



GOVERNANCE



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	• Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementations. • Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG. • Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	• February 2026 • April 2026 • February 2026	• CEO • RAP Champion • Wellbeing Support Officer
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	• Define resource needs for RAP implementation. • Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments. • Provide support to a senior leader to effectively champion our RAP internally. • Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	• February 2026 & ongoing • February 2026 & ongoing • February 2026 & ongoing • April 2026	• RAP Champion • CEO • CEO • RAP Champion
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	• 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. • Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Survey. • Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia.	• June 2026 • 1 August 2026 • 30 September 2026	RAP Champion
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	• Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	February 2027	RAP Champion



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