

Reconciliation Action Plan

April 2020 - April 2022







COVER ARTWORK

Mina Mina Jukurrpa (Mina Mina Dreaming) - Ngalyipi 91 x 91 cm

The country associated with this Jukurrpa is Mina Mina, a place far to the west of Yuendumu, which is significant to Napangardi/Napanangka women and Japangardi/Japanangka men. All of them are the custodians of the Jukurrpa that created the area. The Jukurrpa story tells of the journey of a group of women of all ages who travelled to the east gathering food, collecting 'ngalyipi' (snake vine [Tinospora smilacina]) and performing ceremonies as they travelled. The women began their journey at Mina Mina where 'karlangu' (digging sticks) emerged from the ground. Taking these implements the women travelled east creating Janyinki and other sites. Their journey took them far to the east beyond the boundaries of Warlpiri country. The 'ngalyipi' vine grows up the trunks and limbs of the 'kurrkara' (desert oak [Allocasuarina decaisneana]) trees. 'Ngalyipi' is a sacred vine to Napangardi and Napanangka women that has many uses. It can be used as a ceremonial wrap, as a strap to carry 'parrajas' (wooden bowls) that are laden with bush tucker and as a tourniquet for headaches.

Artist - Mary Napangardi Gallagher

Mary Napangardi Gallagher was born in Napperby, a homestead 120 km from Papunya. When she was a young adult she moved with her family to Yuendumu. She met and married her husband in Yuendumu and later moved to Nyirripi to bring up her five children Ben, Duncan, Richard, Eldy and Rea, and several grandchildren. Mary and her grown-up children still lives in Nyirripi, a remote Aboriginal community 160 km north-west of Yuendumu.

Mary has been painting with Warlukurlangu Artists Aboriginal Corporation, an Aboriginal owned and governed art centre located in Yuendumu, since 2006. Yuendumu is also a remote Aboriginal community located 290 km north-west of Alice Springs in the NT of Australia. The art centre staff regularly visit Nyirripi to collect finished work and drop off canvas, paint and brushes for the artists. Mary paints her father's Jukurrpa Dreamings which relate to Pikilyi Jukurrpa (Vaughan Springs) a large and important waterhole; and Janmarda Jukurrpa (Bush Onion Dreaming). Mary remembers playing in this area as a child, while collecting bush tucker with her family. The Jukurrpa (dreaming) at Napperby belongs to all Napangardi, Napanangka, Japangardi and Japanangka and has been passed down for millennia. When Mary is not painting she likes to go hunting with her family for goanna and bush tucker.

With thanks to the Warlukurlangu Art Centre: www.warlu.com

PIAC

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The Public Interest Advocacy Centre office is located on the land of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. PIAC provides services across New South Wales and Australia, and we acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we work as the first people of this country.

Our vision for reconciliation

We acknowledge the central place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our nation's history and future.

Our vision for reconciliation is to create a society that is fair, equal and just for all Australians. This must involve recognising the unique and significant role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in defining our identity as a nation and taking active steps to address systemic injustice.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre's commitment to pursuing social justice means we are well-placed to contribute in a practical way to reconciliation in the community. We embrace our responsibility to work proactively towards reconciliation.

PIAC aims to:

- Identify systemic injustice against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Advocate for the elimination of those wrongs and redress for those affected
- Strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to engage in public policymaking and advocacy

Reconciliation is critical to Australia's future as a cohesive nation. It requires understanding how history has shaped our relationship with each other and the importance of respecting and valuing each other's cultures.

Our business

PIAC is an independent, non-profit legal centre that works for social justice by driving changes to laws, policies and practices that cause or entrench disadvantage.

PIAC removes barriers to justice and fairness experienced by people who are vulnerable or facing disadvantage, through promoting transparency, challenging decision-makers to hold them accountable, developing solutions with others and empowering people to influence positive change.

Our work combines legal advice and representation with research, policy development, advocacy for reform, education and training.

One of our priorities is justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. PIAC has worked over many years to provide access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to highlight systemic issues that particularly affect First Nations communities, while progressing social change.

PIAC works in close partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations and ensure our work reflects the priorities identified by these organisations and is delivered in an effective and culturally sensitive way. Our partners include the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), First People's Disability Network, Gamarada, the Indigenous Law Centre and the Shed.

Our work has included

- tackling discrimination and the over-policing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and pushing for changes to laws, policies and practices that disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- helping to secure the return of wages, allowances and pensions held in trust by the NSW Government for Aboriginal people, who were denied access to these funds;
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through clinics of our Homeless Persons' Legal Service held at welfare agencies across Sydney and the Hunter;
- our Indigenous Child Protection Project, a partnership with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), to make change in the child protection system and get better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families;
- highlighting the issues that contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system, supporting justice reinvestment and raising the age of criminal responsibility;
- supporting truth-telling in partnership with the Indigenous Law Centre at UNSW, as part of our commitment to the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Since our establishment in 1982, PIAC has grown from a staff of four to a staff of approximately 30 as well as secondees, professional placements, and interns. We are based in Sydney but work across NSW and sometimes nationally. At the time of finalising our RAP, we have one Indigenous Graduate Secondee (by arrangement with the Australian Government Solicitor) an Aboriginal legal intern/cadet and two Aboriginal staff members in identified part-time positions. We actively encourage applications from suitably qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and this RAP forms part of our commitment to increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within PIAC.

Our RAP and our reconciliation journey

Consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, PIAC is committed to consulting, working with and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve access to justice.

PIAC's first RAP was launched in July 2017 following consultation with key Aboriginal stakeholders and with full support from PIAC's Board and staff. Our first RAP brought many successes, including strengthening our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners such as the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Ltd, increasing staff knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and current issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through regular RAP events and activities, and the creation of new identified positions. A staff survey on the impact of our RAP confirmed these positive changes and reflected some areas for improvement, including making the RAP relevant to the work of all staff members and sharing RAP responsibilities across the organisation.

Our new RAP builds on our successes and introduces new initiatives that deepen our commitment to reconciliation across the organisation. This includes developing principles of engagement to guide our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, formalising our commitment to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and taking further measures to embed RAP work across all areas of our practice.

PIAC's RAP working group includes our CEO, who is also our RAP Champion, Principal Solicitor, Senior Solicitor (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice), Media and Communications Manager and representatives from each of our practice areas.

The RAP is designed to empower every staff member to play a role. We recognise that our RAP must be relevant to the work of all staff and partners and reflect our core values as an organisation. The process of bringing our RAP to life must be a consistent and continuous part of our work. We look forward to continuing to review and refine our RAP over time.

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Relationships

PIAC recognises that enhancing relationships between staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and communities, complements the objectives of our organisation and enhances the quality and the value of PIAC's work.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes.	Senior Solicitor, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice	July 2020; Review July 2021.	Develop and implement, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, principles for engagement and an engagement plan to guide our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and partner organisations across PIAC's program areas.
	CEO; Principal Solicitor; Team leaders	Review November 2020, 2021.	• Ensure the induction process for new staff members includes introductions with key contacts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
	CEO; Principal Solicitor; Team leaders	Review November 2020, 2021.	Develop a process for departing staff to record key contacts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, and provide handover of relationships.
2.Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Media and Communications Manager	27 May - 3 June 2020, 2021	Organise at least one NRW event each year.
	Media and Communications Manager	27 May - 3 June 2020, 2021	• Register all NWR events on the Reconciliation Australia website
	Senior Policy Officer	27 May - 3 June 2020, 2021	 Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. Encourage PIAC staff to attend other National Reconciliation Week key stakeholder events (eg. Community Legal Centre breakfast or Aboriginal Legal Service picnic). Ensure our RAP Working Group participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	Media and Communications Manager	Review progress August 2020, 2021	Communicate our RAP and our commitment to reconciliation publicly including in PIAC newsletters, on social media, our annual report and on our website.
	RWG Chair	April 2020 ongoing	Participate in the Legal Profession Reconciliation Network to drive reconciliation outcomes in the legal sector.

	RWG Chair	November 2020, review November 2021	• Include an overview of the RAP as part of staff induction processes.
	Managing Solicitor, HPLS	Review August 2020, 2021	• Encourage PIAC staff to take part in relevant networks and forums such as the NSW Law Society Indigenous Issues Committee
4. Promote positive race relations through antidiscrimination strategies	Deputy CEO	September 2020	• Review existing anti-discrimination protections in PIAC policies to ensure these continue to reflect best practice, including seeking input from staff.
	Senior Policy Officer	May 2020, review May 2021	• Join the 'Racism. It Stops With Me' campaign.
	Policy and Communications Officer, EWCAP	May 2020	Investigate ways to use resources from Beyond Blue's Invisible Discriminator campaign to increase staff understanding of the effects of racism.

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Respect

PIAC is committed to conducting its work in a manner that respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, lands and histories. Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is important to PIAC because we want our work to reflect an acknowledgement of the role which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have had in shaping our country's history. We also want our work to contribute towards establishing a future for Australia that is based on mutual respect and understanding.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Senior Legal Officer, CMAP	April 2020, 2021	Annually review and circulate our cultural protocol document on Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country ceremonies.
	Relationships and Events Coordinator	Report on progress, October 2020, 2021	• Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country at all significant PIAC events.
	CEO	Report on progress, October 2020, 2021	Ensure an Acknowledgement of Country is included in standard meeting agendas and made at the commencement of important internal meetings.
	Media and Communications Manager	Report on progress, October 2020, 2021	Display an Acknowledgement of Country on PIAC's website and publications.
2.Ensure policies and procedures are culturally appropriate and inclusive.	CEO, with the RWG	Report on progress, August 2020, 2021	• RWG to review all new policies and procedures to ensure they are culturally appropriate, inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and sensitive to the values, traditions and customs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
3. Increase understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.	Principal Solicitor	April 2020, 2021	• Annually review and update PIAC's Cultural Awareness Strategy.
	Principal Solicitor	To be provided prior to 30 November 2020, 2021	 Ensure all staff participate in at least one cultural awareness training event each year. Board Members will be invited to participate in cultural awareness training events provided by PIAC. Cultural awareness training for staff and Board members will be selected in accordance with PIAC's Cultural Awareness Strategy, and will be provided in person by a presenter/s selected by the RAP Working Group.

	Managing Solicitor, HPLS	To be provided prior to 30 November 2020, 2021	 Ensure cultural awareness training is provided for all staff and volunteers involved in Homeless Persons' Legal Service clinics, including lawyers from participating law firms. Cultural awareness training for HPLS staff and volunteers will be selected in accordance with PIAC's Cultural Awareness Strategy, and will be provided in person by a presenter/s selected by the RAP Working Group.
4. Provide opportunities for PIAC staff to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities through NAIDOC Week.	Media and Communications Manager	July 2020, 2021	Encourage and provide opportunities for all staff to attend at least one NAIDOC Week event in their local community.
	CEO	May 2020, 2021 July 2020, 2021	 Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week. Communicate with staff to ensure staff are aware how PIAC's HR policies will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate with their cultures and communities during NAIDOC Week. Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate with their cultures and communities during NAIDOC Week, consistent with PIAC's HR policies.
	RWG Chair	July 2020, 2021	• RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.
5. Support efforts in the broader community to progress Reconciliation and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination.	Senior Legal Officer, CMAP	Review June 2020, 2021 August 2020, 2021	 Demonstrate public support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including on PIAC's website, in publications such as the annual report and on social media. Organise at least one event annually to educate staff on the aims of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
	RWG Chair	May, August, November 2020; February, May, August, November 2021	Host a Reconciliation Film Club or book club event every quarter, bringing staff together to deepen understanding, ignite conversation and spark change.

Reconciliation Action Plan



Opportunities

PIAC is committed to improving employment and professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within our organisation. We believe a more inclusive and equitable workplace will improve our organisation for all staff and will enable us to be more effective in addressing systemic problems alongside our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
Improve employment outcomes at PIAC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	CEO	June 2020, 2021	Annually review and update our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention strategy in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and stakeholders.
			 Annually 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.
			• Investigate options for structural change to ensure that PIAC can attract and retain permanent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
			Promote and support professional development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
	Operations Manager	Review May 2020, 2021	Advertise all job vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media
2.Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes	Deputy CEO	December 2020, 2021.	 Develop a PIAC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier list, which is accessible to all staff. Review and circulate list to all staff annually. Maintain at least one commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned business.
3. Maintain Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander membership of StreetCare homeless consumer advisory committee	Managing Solicitor, HPLS	Report on progress November, 2020, 2021	 Maintain at least one Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander member of StreetCare. Consider options to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in StreetCare when recruiting new members.

4. Partner with tertiary education providers to promote professional learning opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	Senior Solicitor, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice PLT Coordinator PLT Coordinator Managing Solicitor, HPLS	Review June 2020, 2021 Review June 2020, 2021 September 2020 November 2020	 Maintain a list of key contact people within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education units; in particular at University of Western Sydney, University of Wollongong, Southern Cross University and other institutions in regional areas which may have a high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student population. Maintain opportunities to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to undertake practical legal training or other placement programs at PIAC. Investigate options with partner tertiary education providers to fund a scholarship for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student to undertake practical legal training at PIAC. Develop work experience pathways for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander high school students through a work experience partnership with a school in Western Sydney with a diverse student body, including a high proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.
5. Provide secondment opportunities to facilitate professional development for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers	Principal Solicitor	August 2020, 2021	• Recruit annually for the Australian Government Solicitor graduate secondment program, which provides an opportunity for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander law graduate to complete a year-long secondment with PIAC.
	CEO, Principal Solicitor, Senior Solicitor Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice	August 2020, 2021	Work with AGS to ensure secondment program remains sustainable over time.
6. Maintain Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander membership of PIAC Board	CEO	Report on progress November, 2020, 2021	 Maintain at least one Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Director. Consider options to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on PIAC's Board when recruiting new members.



Governance			
Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Deliverable
Maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP	CEO	Review November 2020, 2021	PIAC's RWG will consist of at least four people, including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander members and internal staff from across PIAC's program areas.
	RWG Chair	May, August, November 2020; February, May, November 2021	The RWG to meet at least four times per year to monitor and report on RAP implementation.
	RWG Chair	July 2020	• Establish Terms of Reference for the RWG
2. Embed RAP initiatives across PIAC	CEO, Principal Solicitor, Team Leaders	May 2020	• Incorporate support for PIAC's RAP into position descriptions for all staff.
	CEO, Principal Solicitor, Team Leaders	July 2020, 2021	• Include engagement with the RAP as a topic to be discussed in annual staff performance reviews.
3. Report on achievements, challenges and learnings to measure impact of PIAC's RAP	RWG Chair	May, November 2020, 2021	•PIAC RWG to report biannually to the PIAC Board on achievements, challenges and learnings.
	Media and Communications Manager	October 2020, 2021	• Publicly report our RAP achievements and learnings in PIAC's annual report.
	RWG Chair	Monthly 2020, 2021	• PIAC RWG and staff to report on progress and action items under the RAP at monthly staff meetings.
	RWG Chair	August 2020, 2021	Conduct annual staff RAP survey to identify impact of PIAC's RAP and areas for improvement.
4. Report achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia	Media and Communications Manager, RWG Chair	September 2020, 2021	Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually

	RWG Chair	April 2020	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.
5. Produce PIAC's next RAP	RWG Chair	August 2021	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.
	RWG Chair	August 2021	Conduct consultations for PIAC's next RAP so that it can commence immediately after the expiration of the current RAP.
	RWG Chair	September 2021	Work with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings and challenges of this Innovate RAP.
	RWG Chair	February 2022	Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement.

Contact details

Please contact PIAC's Media and Communications Manager, Gemma Pearce, for all enquiries regarding the PIAC RAP.

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