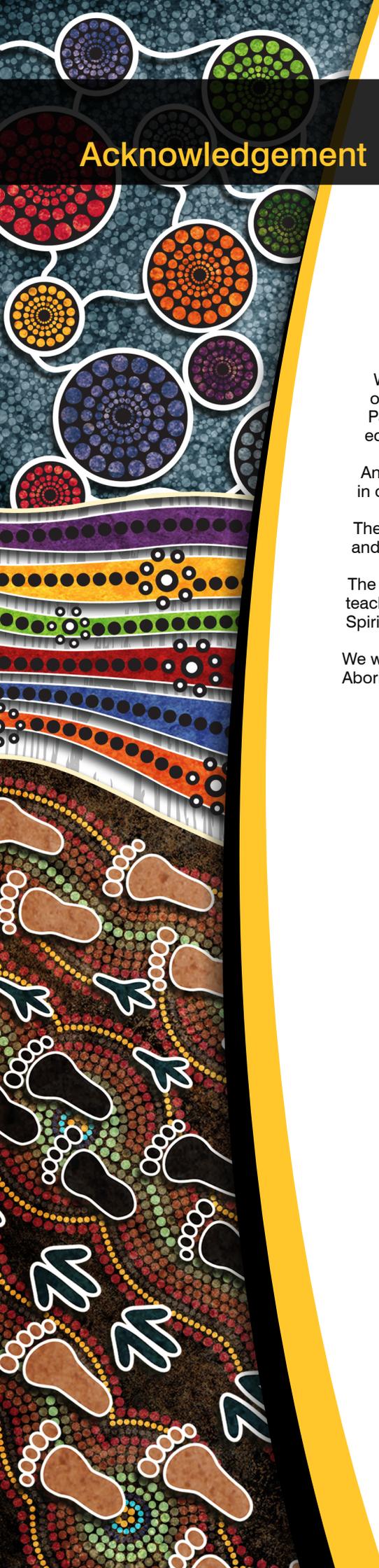




SSI Reconciliation Action Plan

September 2021 - September 2023

Walking Together for Reconciliation



Acknowledgement

Settlement Services International and its subsidiaries (SSI Group) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples of Australia.

We would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we meet, live, work and learn. We pay respect to the Elders of each Nation – Past, Present and Future – and promote the continuation of the cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Ancestors have walked this country and we acknowledge their special and unique place in our nation's historical, cultural, and linguistic identity.

The SSI Group has a deep commitment to know and understand more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' wide ranging cultures, beliefs, and kinship systems.

The SSI Group is grateful for having benefited from insights into a rich culture of traditional teachings, elaborate understandings of the environment, and connection to their Land and Spirituality.

We would like to advise that this resource may contain references to and images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples who may have died.

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The Artist

The painting which is the inspiration for the art direction of the Reconciliation Action Plan was created by Julie Ruttle, a Gomeroi woman from Northern New South Wales.

This artwork and the RAP represent SSI Group's vision to walk side by side with First Nations Australians and acknowledge the value they present to broader multicultural Australia. Walking together after struggle and working together to advocate and recognise in voice, treaty and truth.





The Artwork and its Meaning

The Black Background: The artwork begins with a black backdrop, representing the strength of Aboriginal Australians and that the land always was and will be Aboriginal land.

The Journey: The artwork depicts the feet of Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Caucasian Australians travelling towards “the gathering place”. They travel by land or sea, following their storylines: the ongoing experiences that have brought them to this point in their life. Along the Journey are green circles, representing different communities that exist separately from one another. The Journey highlights the deep spiritual and cultural connection between Indigenous Peoples from countries around the world and how these connections can be harnessed to achieve healing and belonging.

The Gathering Place: The black circle in the centre of the artwork represents the gathering place, where the voices of people touched by SSI come together as one. A circle was chosen, as this shape has no head, all people are equal. In the circle is SSI’s symbol: the dandelion which reflects our values of social justice, equity and access to all, diversity, compassion, respect, quality, ethics, and innovation. Streaming off each side of the gathering place is a rainbow of waves. The waves represent the journey those involved with SSI will embark on, and how from one community – the dandelion – thousands of seeds can travel and spread, sharing their values and knowledge in a continual cycle of growth.

Mother Earth and Father Sky: The two hands, in the Access Community Group colours of blue and orange, represent Mother Earth (orange) and the Sky Father (blue). Mother earth is the life who provides First Nation Peoples with everything they need. Only if you walk respectfully, softly and *right way* upon mother earth will you be protected by the Sky Father. What is walking right way upon the land? Walking right way means walking upon the land in kinship with First Nation Peoples, respecting their cultures and histories and not raising yourself above others.

Spirits of the Ancestors: Spread across the top of the artwork is an intricate design of connected circles. These circles depict the Spirits of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ancestors that guide First Nations Peoples of today and tomorrow. Individuals who meet at the gathering place will leave in kinship with these spirits, acknowledging that together we are one nation of united people.

CEO Statement

Settlement Services International



Violet Roumeliotis (AM & GAICD)
SSI Chief Executive Officer and RAP Champion

- Member of the Order of Australia
- 2017 Telstra Business Woman of the Year and National winner of the For Purpose and Social Enterprise category
- 2018 AFR 100 Women of Influence
- 2018 InStyle Women of Style Community Champion

The SSI Group entered the development of its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) expecting this to be an educational process. What we didn't expect was just how humbling it has also been. We are only at the start of our journey towards realising Makarrata, but already we have gained so much new insight into the immense knowledge and wisdom that resides in the world's oldest living culture.

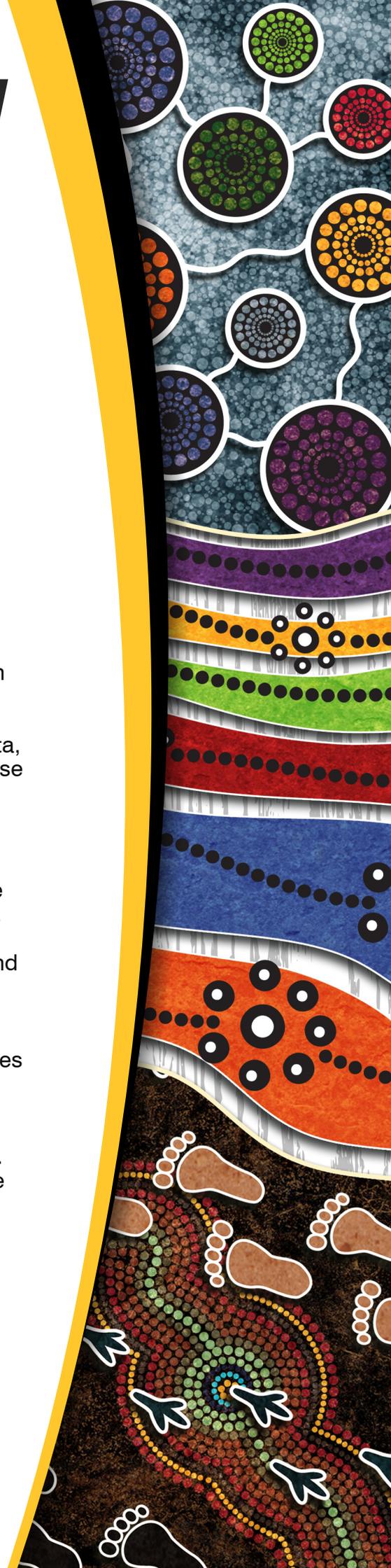
This process has also shone a light on the fantastic work that First Nations Peoples in our workforce are already doing to forge new bonds with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. I hope in time to elevate and add to these voices, creating new opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities.

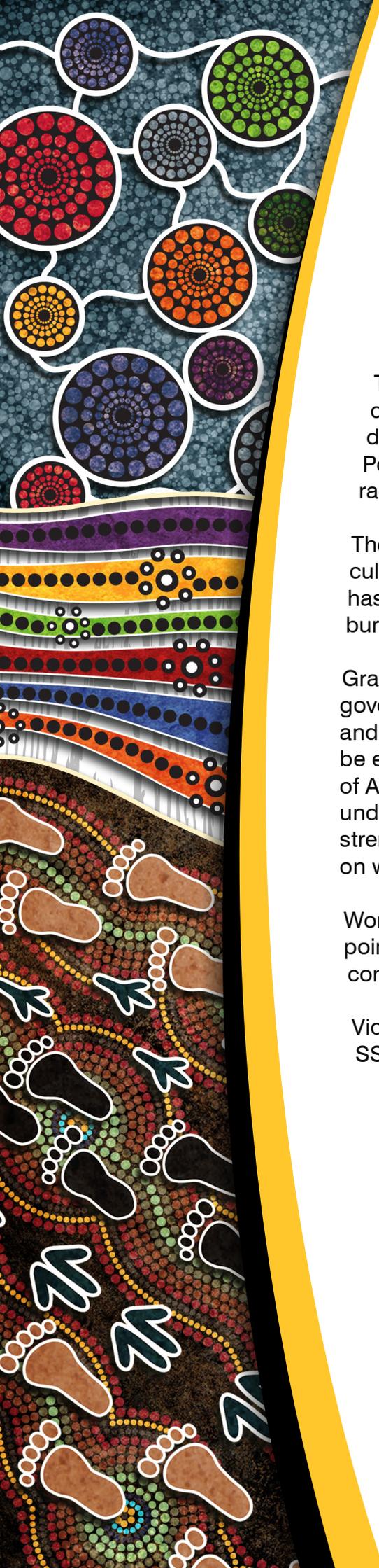
Most of all, this process has shown how much we can learn and achieve through respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – walking side by side with respect and acceptance.

We are an organisation that values partnerships. It is in our DNA. We value meeting people; we value listening and learning. Those are the foundations upon which this RAP is built.

We are committed to creating opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities – a commitment that is reflected in our RAP, which embraces the three key pillars of Relationships, Respect and Opportunities.

I see this RAP and our commitment as a way of embedding a safe environment that increases and promotes the employment, participation, voice, dialogue, and discussion with people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.





This is more than just a proposal – it is our commitment to strengthening our relationship with Australia’s First Nations’ Peoples. It is our commitment to learning and moving forward, in the words of Stan Grant (Wiradjuri man and author, ‘Talking To My Country’ 2016), with ‘truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, reparation, and love’.

Stan Grant states in his book that “we are trapped in this history, all of us, and if we don’t understand it, we will remain chained to it”...

The SSI Group acknowledges and recognises that Australia’s colonial and recent history are the primary causes of continuing discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – the invasion, the marginalisation and institutionalised racism, and the casual racism.

The SSI Group recognises that Australia’s historical, structural, and cultural blindness has removed all human rights and self-image and has left Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples holding the burden of trauma for this Nation.

Grant describes the continued impact and exploitation of government policies, legislation, and legal decisions on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; and this view and experience is to be expected where many have paid a terrible price for the greatness of Australia. The SSI Group aims to build our staff and community’s understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, the strength of these timeless cultures, and their connection to this land on which we stand today.

Working in partnership is our approach, and respect is our starting point; we acknowledge our Nations truth, identity, resilience, and continued survival.

Violet Roumeliotis (AM & GAICD)
SSI Chief Executive Officer

CEO Statement

Reconciliation Australia



Reconciliation Australia commends Settlement Services International 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.

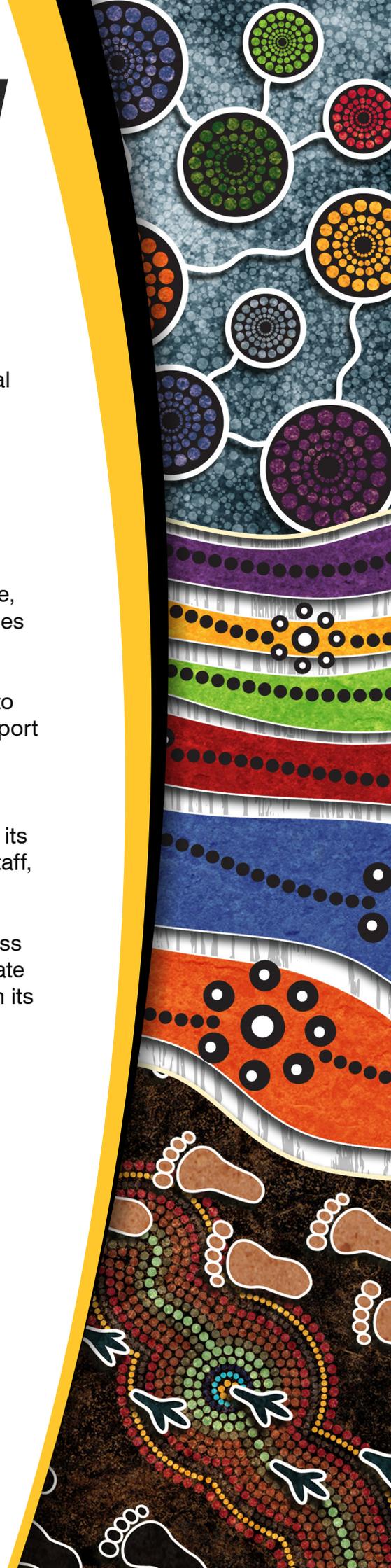
Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for Settlement Services International 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, Settlement Services International 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 over 2.3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Settlement Services International is part of a strong network of more than 1,100 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.





Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Settlement Services International's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff, 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 Settlement Services International on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

Rose Lovelock

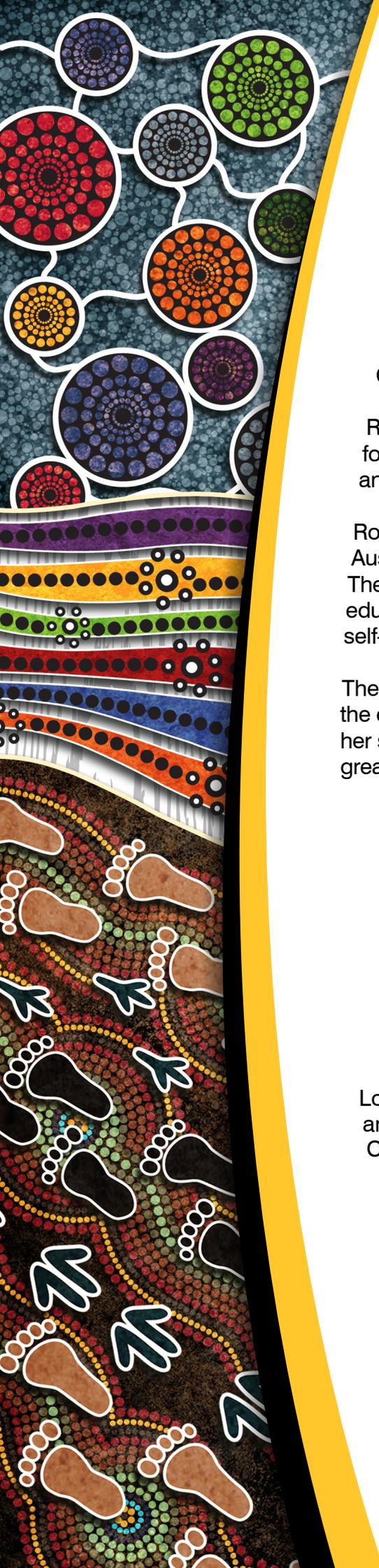
Our RAP Ambassador



“Over the past 12 months the IGNITE organisation has been instrumental in helping us develop and improve our business systems and processes to a level of expertise that was far beyond what we had ever anticipated. The IGNITE staff took the time to fully understand the nature of our business and more importantly to understand our vision and goals of where we believed the business could reach its full potential. The motivation and persistence of IGNITE enabled me to fulfill an expression from my father. ‘Don’t give your past the power to limit your future, in the end we only regret the chances we didn’t take’ for which I am forever grateful.” - Rose Lovelock

We met Rose in 2020 through our Ignite® Small Business Start-Ups program. Ignite® has been working closely with Armidale’s Aboriginal community and in particular Anaiwan Elder and Director of the local Cultural Centre and Keeping Place, Rose Lovelock, who has been supported to grow the influence and impact of the Cultural Centre and Keeping Place in Armidale. The Ignite team has built strong connections with the community and are working hard to provide the resources and support as requested to help them establish and succeed in business.

Rose Lovelock is an Anaiwan woman from Armidale, NSW with a background in academic research and higher education (UNE). Rose has conducted research programs and presented lectures and seminars throughout Australia, (‘The Survival Techniques of Aboriginal Women in The Twentieth Century’, UNE 2009, ‘Rural Urban Aboriginal Enterprise Development



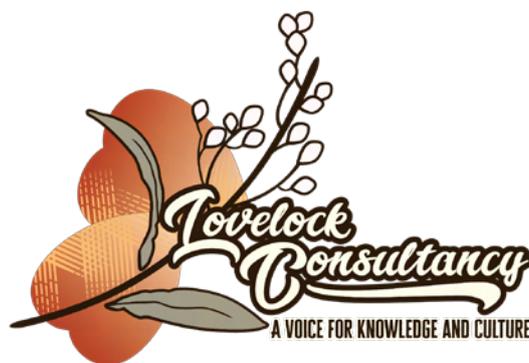
in Eastern Australia' UNE 2004) and overseas ('Transactional Analysis on The Role & Experience of Native Peoples of The World' at the International Peoples Conference, NZ 1992) on Aboriginal history and contemporary issues facing Aboriginal communities.

Rose is currently the Director of the Armidale and Regional Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place. She is passionate about building relationships between communities by improving access and participation for the wider community to the many forms of Aboriginal arts and ceremonies presented through the Centre.

Rose's life experience along with her strong research and educational focus on Australian history, have provided her with a unique insight and perspective into the issues facing Aboriginal Communities today.

Rose experienced first-hand the effects of intergenerational, white Australia policies and the impact of the stolen generation practices. These early childhood experiences led to Rose's desire to use higher education and research to develop teaching skills and practices to drive self-determination and self-management in Aboriginal communities.

The culmination of Rose's long and very professional career has been the establishment of Lovelock Consultancy where she combines her skill, knowledge, and experience towards making change for the greatest good of all.



Lovelock Consultancy is owned and directed by Rose Lovelock and is dedicated to being a voice for Aboriginal Knowledge and Culture by offering services focusing on:

- Cultural awareness training and development
- Policy analysis
- Aboriginal community engagement and development
- Self-determination and self-management
- Mentoring and leadership
- Women's issues

Rose will be supporting SSI through our reconciliation journey by providing consultation, cultural awareness training and advice.

The SSI Group

Who we are and what we stand for

Settlement Services International (SSI Group) is a community organisation and social business that supports newcomers and other Australians to achieve their full potential. We take an integrated approach to our work, always looking at the complete human being and striving to understand how each individual can thrive within the community in which they live – and the wider Australian society.

“Through collaboration and innovation, our services wrap around individuals and families to capitalise on their strengths, identify their priorities and meet their current and future requirements.”

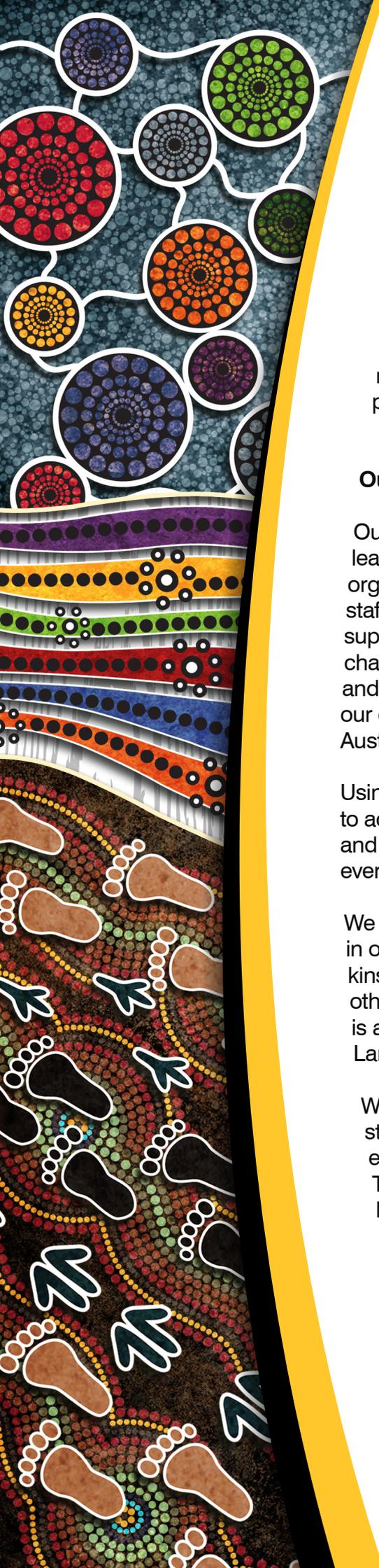
Some of the groups with whom we work include children, young people, and families; people living with disability; people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants. Through collaboration and innovation, our services wrap around individuals and families to capitalise on their strengths, identify their priorities and meet their current and future requirements.

At the international level, we work to influence global policy around refugees and people seeking asylum, participating in key global forums and providing thought leadership.

In 2018, SSI Group established our first Victoria based services and merged with Access Community Services to expand the SSI Group into Queensland.

We now operate locally, nationally, and internationally, with offices in metro and regional Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria. We have more than 900 staff members, 16 of which are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and a bilingual workforce speaking over 100 languages and dialects, enabling us to overcome many cultural and language barriers that often inhibit access and service delivery.





Our Organisational Vision

The SSI Group's vision is to achieve a society that values the diversity of its people and actively provides support to ensure meaningful social and economic participation and to assist individuals and families to reach their potential. As a values-driven organisation, we look beyond the immediate needs of individuals and communities and invest in their aspirations. Drawing on feedback from these communities, we have identified unmet needs and invest in innovative initiatives to close these gaps. In the past five years, SSI Group and its partners have invested more than \$5 million in initiatives that add value to contracted programs.

Our Vision for Reconciliation

Our vision for our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is to listen and learn from First Nations Peoples and Elders in our communities and organisation, as well as our other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, making sure they have a voice in everything we do. We want to support them to use that voice so that we can learn and implement the changes needed within our organisation to allow us to be motivated and pioneering in our impact to promote reconciliation, not just within our organisation but in the communities we serve and throughout Australia.

Using our strength in numbers and partnerships we are committed to advocate reconciliation and to empower and to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples a voice everywhere we go and in everything we do.

We are supporters of the 'Uluru Statement of the Heart'. We want to join in on the vision, to strive to realise 'Makarrata' – to birth a new season of kinship, where all people and cultures acknowledge our past, see each other and walk together in the spirit of strength and unity. Makarrata is a word in the Yolngu language from the Yolngu People in Arnhem Land. The meaning is a coming together after a struggle.

We work with a diverse range of people who have experienced struggles in one way or another. SSI draws on its expertise and experience to advocate for the people and communities it serves. Through the work we do, we help empower people to change their lives.

Through our advocacy and representation, we influence ideas and policy. We want it known through our RAP that we are committed to walk together after struggle, to promote reconciliation in 'VOICE, TREATY, TRUTH' (Uluru Statement of the Heart 2017).

The SSI Group believes it has a role to play in shaping a pathway where everyone has an opportunity to prosper, contributing to an Australia that redefines difference and steps out in courage to build a unified, equal, and respectful nation.

Our Reconciliation Journey so far

A Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) provides a framework to directly improve relationships and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians. RAPs must be developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and be measurable, action-oriented, and accountable. Reconciliation Australia states that reconciliation is based and measured on five dimensions: historical acceptance; race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity and unity.

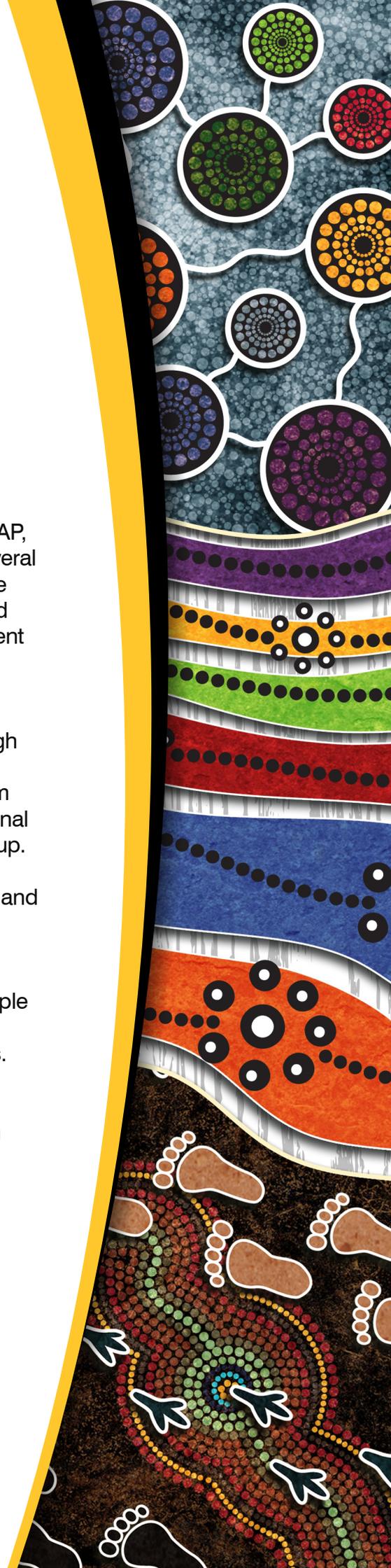
Through reconciliation we aim to strengthen relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for the benefit of all Australians; where these identities embrace all and exclude none. Working in partnership is our approach.

Although we are just beginning our journey through our Innovate RAP, our journey with reconciliation has been an ongoing journey for several years. A lot of our programs and executives including our CEO have engaged with, and consulted with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Elders about policy changes, community engagement and program development.

In 2017 Access Community Services (part of the SSI Group) joined the Logan community to celebrate NAIDOC at Woodridge State High School. The event celebrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures with a video performance of the Australian National Anthem sung in two languages by the Yugambah Youth Choir and a traditional Torres Strait Islander dance, performed by the Tana Fire dance group. We formed a strong meaningful relationship with the 'Logan First Nations Peoples Community Coalition' and we continue to engage and strengthen that relationship.

SSI Group have held yarning circles with our clients and Aboriginal Elders of the Dharuk nation to discuss issues facing Aboriginal people and communities and to build the relationships and knowledge between our other multicultural clients and local Traditional Owners. We celebrate NAIDOC Week with cultural dancing performances and education and held events for National Reconciliation Week (NRW) that include hearing from Elders and members of the Stolen Generation.

Our team in Armidale attend the NRW Bridge Walk and clients from our Humanitarian Settlement Program and staff attended the 'Surviving New England: Our Koori Matriarchs' Exhibition by Anaiwan woman Gabi Briggs and hosted by the Armidale Aboriginal Community Garden and the University of New England. SSI Group has since been building on these relationships and developing further connections with local Elders and Aboriginal community organisations, and supporting local Aboriginal entrepreneurs to build their own business through SSI Group's Ignite Small Business Start Up program.





In 2018 the SSI Group hosted the International Metropolis Conference in partnership with the Australian Multicultural Foundation and Multicultural NSW. The conference was a unique platform to debate, discuss and critique policy approaches, practice, and research in relation to migration. We showcased art from First Nations Peoples with a dance group from the NAISDA Dance Collage and Stanley Gawurra Gaykamangu (a song writer from Milingimbi North East Arnhem Land) performing.

Earlier this year (2021) SSI Group introduced Cultural Leave across our organisation, giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff five days of Cultural and Wellbeing leave per year. Although only a small gesture, we hope this change is an indication of the SSI Group's eagerness to put our words into action in walking with First Nations Communities. This is just one part of the action we are taking to help achieve reconciliation in Australia.

Our reconciliation journey won't stop with our Innovate RAP, we will continue the journey for reconciliation for as long as it takes.



National Aboriginal Islander Dance College (NAISDA) performance at the 2018 Metropolis Conference – Photo by Josephine Ki.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan

The SSI Group has developed this Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in recognition that our organisation is in the 'formative stages' of our reconciliation journey. This is the first RAP developed by our organisation.

"Our RAP provides a platform for us to establish meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and build on existing relationships, to advocate and walk together for critical changes in policy and to empower self-determination. This will help lay strong foundations for the development of future SSI Group's RAP, recognising that our journey with reconciliation and our RAP will continue to evolve and adapt."

The SSI Group believes it is critical to commit the time and resources needed to adequately assess the internal cultural capabilities of our organisation and to progress our journey of building respectful relationships and acceptance and trust of each other.

We recognise that a RAP is a formal statement of commitment to reconciliation underpinned by three key pillars: Relationships, Respect and Opportunities. This RAP assists the SSI Group to foster and embed a safe environment which promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' voices, dialogue, and discussions.

By making this commitment SSI Group aims to enrich the lives of our staff, supporters, volunteers and community through a deeper understanding and connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and our local culturally and linguistically diverse communities.



The Tana Fire dance group perform as Access Community Services and the Logan Community Celebrate NAIDOC Week together at Woodridge State High School – Photo by Jimboomba Times.

First Nations Voices Are Important

The SSI Group recognises the importance of First Nations voices.

We are a signatory to the **Uluru Statement of the Heart** and made a submission to the **Voice to Parliament** co-design process supporting that **First Nations Voices to Parliament** be enshrined in the constitution. Aligned with this, we aim to ensure that decisions will be made through consultation and with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' cultural protocol, cultural confidentiality, and cultural knowledge.

We will do this by regular consultations with our Aboriginal staff, our ambassador, and Elders of our communities. Every decision that will affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples needs to be made with them, not for them. Self-determination only comes when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are in control of their own policies and procedures. **No policy or procedure designed or updated at SSI that affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples will be made without prior consultation.**

Dr Dianne Roberts - Thungutti Elder

Clients from the SSI Humanitarian Settlement Program with Thungutti Elder Dr Dianne Roberts at the "Surviving New England: Our Koori Matriarchs" Exhibition at the Armidale Aboriginal Community Garden.



Credit: Lisa Steward

"Dr Dianne Roberts is one of the most revered Elders of the Thungutti people from Bellbrook up to Walcha, and a staunch supporter of education for our young people. Dr Roberts was the creator of the first all Aboriginal School in Armidale. The name of the School is "Minimbah" and it still exists today, but now also caters to refugees and migrant children."
– Rose Lovelock

Sadly, Dr Roberts passed away in August 2021. SSI would like to pay tribute to such an amazing lady who made a profound impact on all who knew her.

Uncle Charles (Chicka) Madden - Gadigal Elder

Uncle Chicka is a respected Sydney Elder who lived in and around the Redfern and inner city area for most of his life. He has served the Aboriginal community as Director of the Aboriginal Medical Service, Secretary of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, Director of the Aboriginal Hostels NSW and is a life member of the Redfern All Blacks. Along with being an active community leader, Uncle Chicka is also an important artist creating several ceramic sculptures and paintings inspired by his Gadigal country.

“It was important to talk about and acknowledge the poor treatment of Aboriginal People in the past, and only once it is acknowledged and spoken about, can we move on to reconciliation. We need to communicate the truth of what happened in the past in order to move forward in the future.”
– Uncle Chicka Madden



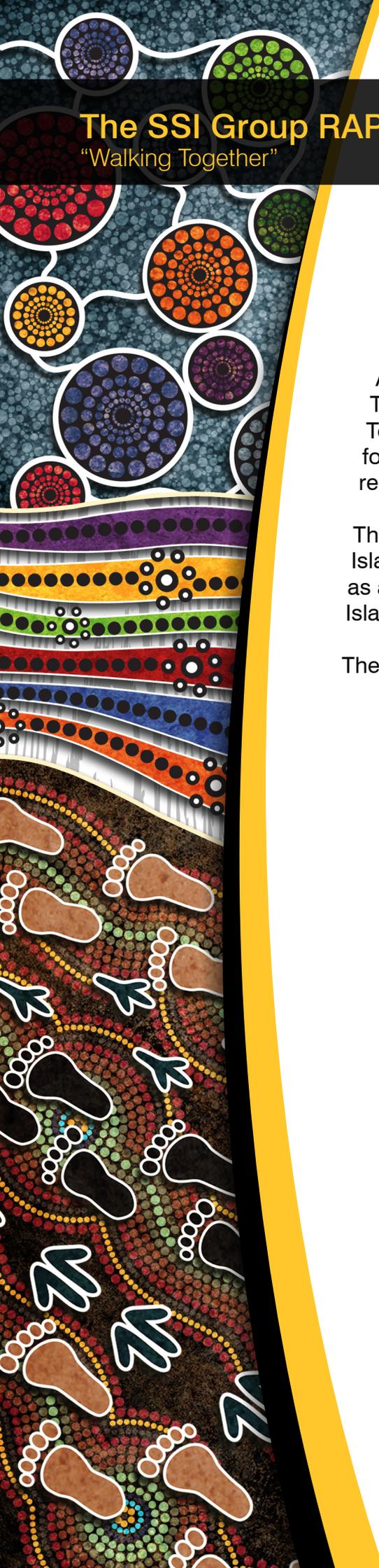
Aunty Nada Shareef - Dunghutti Elder

This is Aunty Nada speaking to some of our staff at our SSI Reconciliation Week Event 2021 about what it was like being a part of the Stolen Generation, and the effects it has had on her life.

Aunty Nada was born in Kempsey and has links to the Dunghutti People of that area. She was taken from her family and placed in the Bomaderry Aboriginal Childrens Home by the then governments 'Aborigines Protection Board' who had powers to remove Aboriginal people from their home.



Her son, David, also commented on how hard it has been to reconnect as they do not know who their mob is. They now live in Maroubra, Sydney.



The SSI Group RAP Working Group

“Walking Together”

Despite this being the SSI Group’s first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), we decided, in collaboration with Reconciliation Australia, to progress directly to ‘Innovate’ for our inaugural RAP. The SSI Group established a RAP Working Group called “Walking Together” to gather input from staff, clients, and community and to focus attention on the RAP. The “Walking Together” committee has representation cross all departments within SSI.

The members of the group include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and non-Aboriginal and Torres Islander staff, as well as an Aboriginal Elder or authorised Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community advocate.

The roles which make up our ‘Walking Together’ group are:

- Aboriginal Advocate / Elder representative
- Aboriginal Planners, Local Area Coordination
- Aboriginal Access Officer, Local Area Coordination
- Chief Executive Officer (RAP Champion)
- Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead (Chairperson)
- Head of Disability Services
- Health Services Operations Team Leader
- Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
- Community Hubs Coordinator
- Head of Humanitarian Services
- Humanitarian Settlement Program representatives
- Group Head of Advocacy, Research & Communication
- Head of Multicultural Child and Family Program
- Leadership Learning and Development Senior Manager
- Head of Community Engagement and Volunteer Program Manager
- Employment Services Facilitator – Opportunity Pathways Program
- Head of Facilities and Operations, Corporate Services

The **Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead** will lead the application of the RAP across the whole of the SSI Group and co-chairs the 'Walking Together' RAP working group with our RAP Champion. The role was created so that SSI had someone who can lead the engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders respectfully and appropriately and is also experienced in change management, stakeholder engagement and policy development.

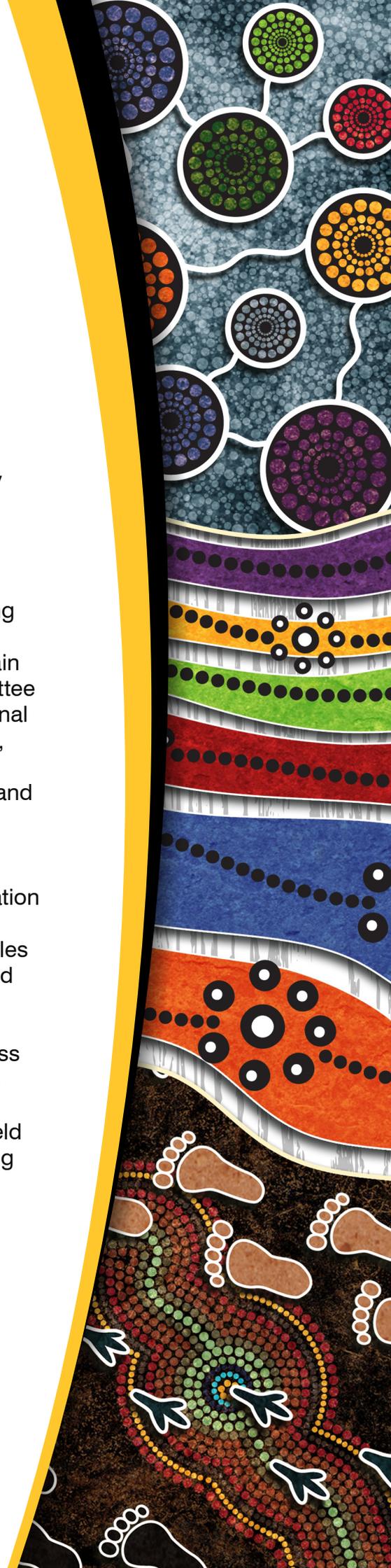
The SSI Group recognises we have a lot to learn and do. This role was created to ensure we had someone who could challenge our way of doing things and can help us make the changes needed and implement them appropriately.

Our **Chief Executive Officer** is our **RAP Champion**. This role helps to build awareness of and engagement with our RAP. They attend the Walking Together Working Group and coordinate reporting to the SSI Group Executive and Board.

We recognise that while people in our organisation might come and go from time to time, and those that contribute to our working group might change, our commitment to Reconciliation and our RAP will not. The Terms of Reference of our working group explain that the "Walking Together" Working Group is a standing committee focused on strengthening the SSI Group's connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and businesses, building, retaining and reporting an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, and improving how we deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The purpose of the committee is to consult and contribute to the development, implementation and review of SSI's first Reconciliation Action Plan ('RAP') that provides activities that build stronger relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the CALD community to relate to a person's Past Present and Future.

The '**Walking Together**' Working Group will oversee the progress and reporting on the plan's actions and meets at least four times a year. During the implementation phase of the RAP, each member has key deliverables (listed below) which they will be held accountable for. Each member of the 'Walking Together' Working Group also acts as role models to support the organisation's commitment to reconciliation.





Nicole Beaver - Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead / Walking Together RAP Working Group Chairperson

Nicole grew up and has lived most of her life on Wiradjuri Country in Condobolin NSW. Growing up in a small community with a proud Aboriginal population that shares and celebrates their culture often, as well as living among Aboriginal families and friends, Nicole recognised the need to acknowledge past and present system failures, and the need for real and meaningful change. It was there she developed a passion for reconciliation and self-determination.

When Nicole was 27 she was offered a position working in community support in the Tiwi Islands, an experience she claims changed her life.

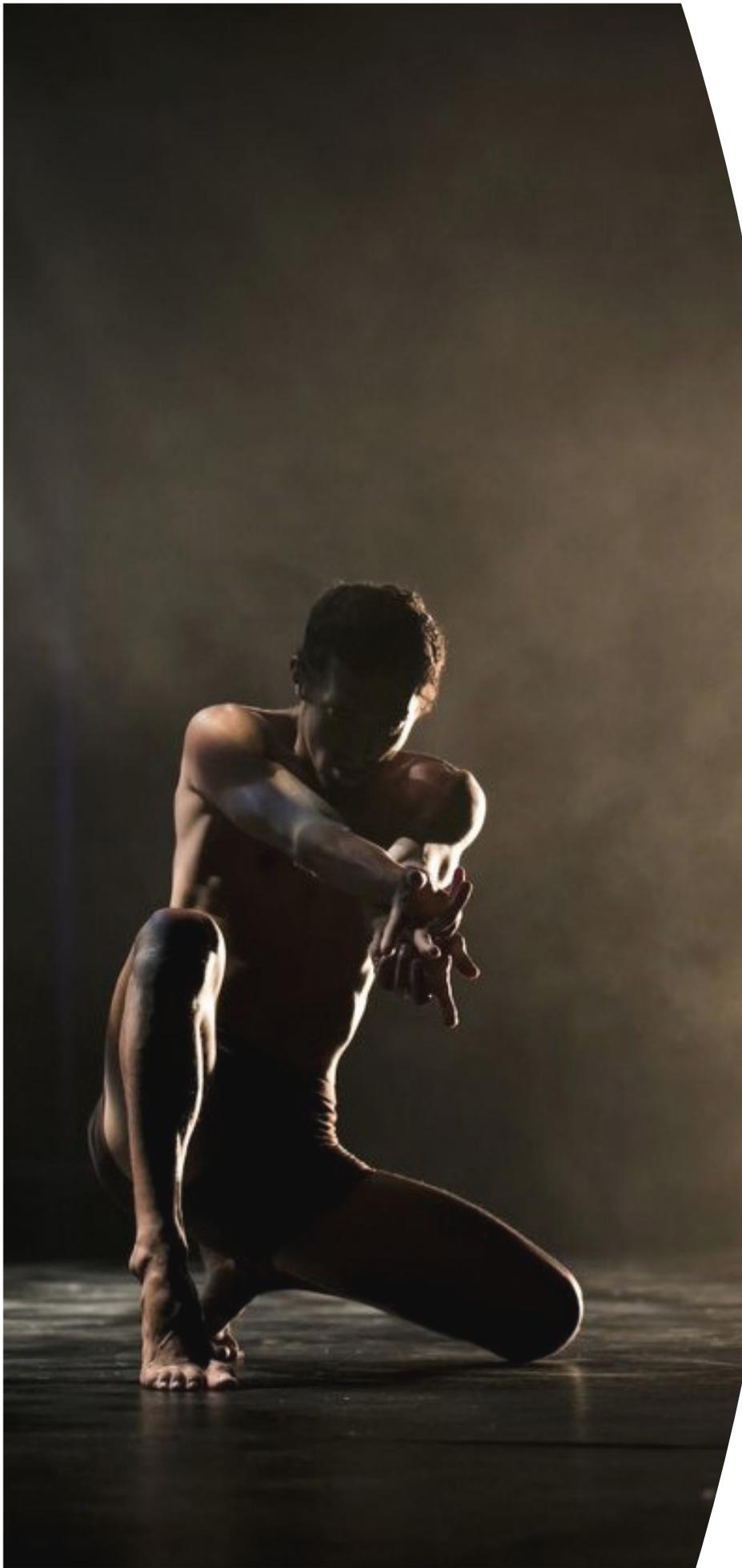


“I spent 12 months caring for and supporting the Elders in the local aged care facility and in the community. Being able to connect and learn from the Elders in the Wurrumiyanga community, hearing their stories and being emersed in their culture was amazing. I learned their language and experienced their strength and determination to preserve their customs and way of life so that it can be passed on for the generations to come.”

– Nicole Beaver

With over 15 years of experience in Business and Change Management, HR and NGO Project Management, an Associate Degree of Law and a Diploma of Community Services, Nicole comes to us with the ability to engage, and challenge us on the way we think and act and speak. Nicole has already begun to implement change throughout the organisation, leading and assisting in the development of programs, policies and frameworks that ensure we consult with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and stakeholders internally and externally before any decisions are made.

Nicole continuously advocates for consultation and believes no rulings can be made in organisational change, business or government policy without suitable consultation that involves listening to and allowing First Nations Peoples the opportunity to discuss and make decisions on issues that affect them, something that is echoed throughout our RAP.



A dancer from NAISDA Dance Collage performing at the SSI Metropolis Conference in 2018
– Photo by Josephine Ki.



Relationships



Three past SSI staff members who were integral to the development of this RAP. From left to right: Nicole Laupepa, Lisa Gabo, and Julie Ruttley – Photo by SSI Group team.

We are focused on building relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, whether as individuals, collectively or across organisations

At the SSI Group, we acknowledge everyone has unique experiences. We value meeting people where they are listening to and learning from one another and speaking truthfully, so that we can walk together.

We look to the wisdom and knowledge of such an ancient peoples as to how to build and sustain relationships with our land, our community, and one another.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations	Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	December 2021	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations, including:	July 2022	Volunteer Program Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement strategy, to be built into the Local Area Coordination (LAC) program. 	August 2022	Head of Disability Services
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteer, student, and intern engagement plan for the organisation. 	October 2022	Head of Community Engagement
	Establish formal partnerships with at least two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.	July 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Establish a formal partnership to build capacity to provide permanency support program (out of home care) services to Aboriginal children, young people and families.	July 2023	Head of Multicultural Child and Family Program
	Ensure SSI Group staff, clients and participants participate in local community events to develop relationships with local Traditional Owners/Custodians.	July 2022	Head of Community Engagement
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to share their knowledge of arts and cultures at public events, including New Beginnings Festival.	July 2023	Arts and Culture Program Manager

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW)	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2022 & May 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	May 2022 & May 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Encourage and support staff and leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May 2022 & May 2023	RAP Champion: GM Client Operations and Insights
	Organise at least one activity targeted to staff which promotes the importance and objectives of National Reconciliation Week.	May 2022 & May 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	May 2022 & May 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence	Implement strategies to engage our staff in reconciliation, including raising staff awareness of our RAP commitments.	December 2021	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Create a network of Reconciliation Champions, beyond the Walking Together Working Group, across Settlement Services International programs, services, and locations.	July 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly, including:	December 2021	Head of Advocacy, Research & Communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all marketing images reflect broader cultural diversity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. 	February 2022	Head of Advocacy, Research & Communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes, including sharing the experience of developing a RAP with Multicultural Community sector organisations and encouraging them to start their own reconciliation journeys. 	July 2022	RAP Champion
	Collaborate with Reconciliation Australia and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation and our own reconciliation journey.	July 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	SSI Group acknowledges and communicates all social media channels that we recognises that the 26th of January holds different meanings and importance to different people.	January 2022 & 2023	Head of Advocacy, Research & Communication
	CEO to acknowledge importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events in organisational communications each year.	July 2022 & 2023	CEO

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Promote positive community relations through anti-discrimination strategies	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	February 2022	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	April 2022	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation.	May 2022	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy.	June 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism.	December 2022	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
Build effective relationships with regional, rural, and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities	Identify and establish linkages with trusted Aboriginal people, groups, or Aboriginal controlled organisations to build greater cultural connection, where there are no existing connections. Priority areas are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armidale • Coffs Harbour • Western Sydney • South West Sydney • Logan 	July 2022	Head of Community Engagement
	Continually consult with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the resettlement of refugees and people seeking asylum in regional areas and in line with SSI's Regional Resettlement plan.	July 2022	Head of Community Engagement
	Consult with relevant Aboriginal peak organisations in NSW to guide an approach to improve capacity to meet Aboriginal placement principles and the over representation of Aboriginal children and young people in care.	May 2022	Head of Multicultural Child and Family Program Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead

Respect



Respectful relationships are essential.

The SSI Group will continue to build the foundations of genuine reconciliation through acknowledging and respecting the Traditional Custodians who care for and protect these lands.

As a community we welcome and respect relationships built on truth, care and understanding. We value the individuality, cultural heritage, and experiences of those who journey here to make Australia home. With being the oldest living culture comes immense knowledge and wisdom that may never fully be understood, and that non-Indigenous people may never be able to know.

Mutual respect is critical to the success of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Respect underpins strong relationships which are central to our goals to:

- Better engagement with individuals and communities
- Improve how we deliver our services
- Build trusted and respectful partnerships



A young woman from the Aboriginal dance group “Dreamtime Warriors, Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation”, during a performance at SSI’s New Beginnings Festival, Sydney, November 2019 – Photo by Danish Ravi.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements among SSI staff and volunteers including foster carers	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	April 2022	Leadership Learning and Development Senior Manager
	Consult local and Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the development and implementation of cultural learning strategy.	May 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our staff and foster carers, including researching and consulting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders on the development of a strengths-based culture and history focused on-line learning module for staff and volunteers.	May 2022	Leadership Learning and Development Senior Manager
	Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, People and Culture and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning.	February 2022	Leadership Learning and Development Senior Manager

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by observing cultural protocols	Increase staffs understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	December 2021	Head of Advocacy, Research & Communication
	Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. This includes maintaining a list of key contacts for organising a Welcome to Country in each local area.	July 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Encourage staff to conduct an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all important events and meetings.	December 2021	RAP Champion
	Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate protocols as part of SSI Group events each year.	September 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Include an Acknowledgement of Country on our website(s) and important marketing collateral.	September 2023	Head of Advocacy, Research & Communication
	Maintain and grow relationships with artists, art centres and copyright agencies to ensure the appropriate use of images and protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists' legal and moral rights in line with the Indigenous Art Code.	March 2022	Arts and Culture Program Manager
Celebrate and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates of significance such as NAIDOC Week	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	July 2022 & 2023	Head of Advocacy, Research & Communication
	Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.	May 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff, and raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	July 2022 & 2023	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
	Hold a significant NAIDOC week celebration aimed at increasing community participation with our clients from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities – ensure consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, and explore opportunities to partner with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisation.	July 2022 & 2023	Head of Community Engagement
	Explore other opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, volunteers, foster carers, and clients to engage with cultures and community.	July 2022 & 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Develop opportunities within the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) to enhance the two-way relationship between new arrivals to Australia and First Nations Peoples focusing on cultures, respect, truth, and acceptance	Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander component in the HSP orientation workshops for newly arrived newcomers that reflects and promotes the two-way relationship between CALD and First Nation Peoples focusing on cultures, respect, truth, and acceptance.	September 2023	Head of Humanitarian Services
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to create an Acknowledgement of Country placard.	August 2023	Head of Humanitarian Services
Investigate opportunities to improve cultural safety in our workplace	Review SSI's Culturally Responsive Framework document and update if necessary, to ensure it incorporates cultural safety from the lens of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to create a welcoming and culturally safe workplace.	May 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Conduct an audit of all sites to determine which do not yet have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on display, and scope opportunities to purchase and display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in those remaining sites.	December 2021	Head of Facilities and Operations
	Create and promote an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network with culturally appropriate support and identity within the organisation.	July 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Explore options on how SSI Group could offer cultural supervision sessions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, who require support through the lens of cultural and holistic wellbeing.	March 2022	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
	Establish an approach for feedback from staff about their cultural experience across the employment lifecycle.	February 2022	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing

Opportunities



SSI Staff members Lowana Mundine, Cassandra Best, Denille McKellar and Nicole Beaver with Local Gadigal Elder Uncle Charles (Chicka) Madden and Aunty Nada Shareef and her son David Shareef at our National Reconciliation Week event in 2021 – Photo by Aaliyah Khan.

Opportunities can only be born from respectful relationships and sustained through mutual storytelling and connections.

The SSI Group is committed to creating opportunities and developing long-term relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities through genuine respect and understanding.

SSI Group as an employer, aims to create meaningful pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to engage and build upon a respectful foundation that allows for mutual decision making through employment pathways, social enterprise, economic participation, business, procurement and community engagement opportunities.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	September 2022	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
	Ensure our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network holds semi-regular meetings, and that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and volunteers are encouraged and supported to join.	December 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	March 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development strategy.	July 2022	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
	Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	June 2022	Head of Business Partnering and Talent Acquisition
	Advertise volunteer and student/ intern opportunities to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, recognising these can be pathways to employment.	June 2022	Volunteer Program Manager
	Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	July 2023	Head of Business Partnering and Talent Acquisition

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, and professional development (continued)	Review and amend key SSI Group policies and procedures to ensure they provide the support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to thrive:	July 2023	Head of Culture, Inclusion and Wellbeing
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Policy 2. Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Employment Policy 3. Respect at Work Policy 4. Grievance Resolution Policy 5. Code of Conduct Policy 		
	Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce:	July 2023	Head of Disability Services
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining current state within SSI's Local Area Coordination (LAC) Services workforce, where 3% identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples, in part by embedding at least 5 Identified positions across SSI's LAC Services program in South West Sydney and Sydney Districts. 	July 2022	General Manager People and Culture
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing the proportion of the SSI Group workforce who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples from <2% toward 3%. • Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified position within the Multicultural Child and Family Program to assist cultural responsiveness in addressing SSI's capacity to case manage care needs for Aboriginal children, young people and their families. 	July 2022	Head of Multicultural Child and Family Program
	Investigate creating an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identified Directorship on SSI Board of Directors.	December 2022	CEO Chair of SSI Group

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure SSI program-specific considerations to empower and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and children's lives	SSI Employment Services and Social Enterprise programs such as Parents Next and Disability Employment Services (DES), must work in conjunction with other providers to investigate and maximise employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in local jobs.	December 2022	Head of Employment Services
	SSI Multicultural Child and Family Program (MCFP) must provide culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in our care; MCFP will maintain cultural practice guidance to support and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's Aboriginal identity, and encourage their connection to their Aboriginal culture and community people.	December 2022	Head of Multicultural Child and Family Program
	Develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities and actively recruit authorised care giver's case workers and applicable staff from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.	July 2022	Head of Multicultural Child, and Family Program
	Provide opportunities for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate in consultation on any new programs being designed that may include services that will be accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples or communities.	July 2022	Manager Bids and Tenders
	Invite and encourage our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff (or community members where relevant) to participate in consultation on changes to services which are accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples or communities.	June 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Develop a framework to audit our current practice tools, processes, deliverables, and projects to identify where cultural considerations need to be included to address any issues identified.	December 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes	Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff.	December 2021	General Manager Corporate Services
	Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	December 2021	General Manager Corporate Services
	Develop commercial relationships and a procurement strategy with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	August 2022	General Manager Corporate Services
	Develop a business case and framework for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses to reach a target of one percent of our annual supply chain spend	July 2022	General Manager Corporate Services
	Investigate a membership with Supply Nation	December 2022	General Manager Corporate Services

Governance and Tracking



Governance and Tracking is a critical component to our Reconciliation Action Plan journey.

The SSI Group is committed to structured, transparent, and supportive governance, that incorporates an accountability for the commitment made to the actions and deliverables of the RAP, underpins the integrity of the commitment and is in line with our values.



Smoking Ceremony by Uncle Barry Hoskins and Troy Robinson at the SSI Cultural Exchange and Harmony festival event held at the Coffs Harbour Local Community Garden – Photo by Lisa Stewart SSI Community Engagement Coordinator.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Lead
Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (Walking Together Working Group) to drive governance of the RAP	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on Walking Together.	September 2023	RAP Champion
	Establish and apply a Terms of Reference for the RAP Working Group.	September 2021	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Meet at least four times a year to monitor, track and report the progress of the RAP implementation across all areas of the organisation to the SSI Group Executive.	February, May, June, October 2021, 2022, 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments	Define resource needs for Innovate RAP implementation.	December 2021	General Manager Client Operations and Insights
	Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	December 2021	RAP Champion
	Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	September 2021	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management.	September 2021	General Manager Client Operations and Insights
	Develop an Annual Reconciliation Action Plan report and update staff and Board.	September 2022	RAP Champion

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Lead
Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings both internally and externally	Complete the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire and submit to Reconciliation Australia.	September 2022 & 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly.	September, December, March, June 2021 - 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings annually, within SSI's Annual Report.	November 2021 & 2022	RAP Champion
	Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer.	February 2022	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	January 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead
	Work with RAP Champion and Walking Together Working Group to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements and submit to Reconciliation Australia.	June 2023	Indigenous Inclusion and Reconciliation Lead

“I found the SSI RAP document clearly met the themes of Reconciliation Australia, being the three R’s of Respect, Relationships and Reconciliation. The document was easy to read, visually pleasing and most importantly provided a clear direction and action plan for the organisations’ reconciliation process.”

- Rose Lovelock





Recognition of the Contributors

A special thank you to the following for their invaluable contribution:

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Gadigal Elder from the Eora Nation

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Anaiwan woman from Armidale, NSW/RAP Ambassador

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