

### **Our vision for reconciliation**

Optometry Western Australia envisions an Australia where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities experience equity in health outcomes, including in eye care. To realise this vision, we recognise our role as an organisation to embed and enable principles of cultural responsiveness, respect and self-determination across optometry, optometrists and community eye health.

We work within a federated system of State peak bodies and work to ensure the national Optometry Australia organisation, other State associations and all optometrists across Australia are encouraged to engage with reconciliation and the pursuit of equity in health outcomes for all Australians.

### **Our business**

Established in 1916, Optometry Australia's vision is excellence in eye and vision care. Our mission is to lead, engage and promote optometry, optometrists and community eye health.

As the State body representing over 90 per cent of registered optometrists in Western Australia. Optometry Western Australia is committed to providing maximum membership value through its advocacy within the eye-health, vision care and health sector. By providing ongoing education and support for its members to excel in providing safe and best practice eyecare to the communities in which they practice.

Optometry Western Australia is a state, not-for-profit organisation whose members are individual registered optometrists eligible to practice in WA. Some members work in traditional practices as independent practitioners whilst others work in partnerships and in various corporate entities as employees. Some optometrists work in Public Health settings including sessions at ACCHO's around the state.

The Optometry Western Australia team employs 2 people based in Perth (on Whadjuk -Noongar land) and has a voluntary board of 8 optometrists and a non-optometrist. Optometry Western Australia does not currently employ anyone who identifies as Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander.

In 2018, the Australian Health Professionals Regulation Agency (APHRA) and the Optometry Board of Australia indicated that approximately 13 optometrists across the country identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Only one of the thirteen is believed to practice in WA where we should aim for a minimum of 15 in WA. Recently University of WA has started an optometry course and they do not reserve places for people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, they do not actively engage with this community or advocate for people of Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Island heritage to enter this training scheme. We have begun negotiations with them to see this change.

A core component of Optometry Western Australia's reconciliation journey is increasing the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander optometrists amongst our membership and ensuring pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to contribute to both Optometry Western Australia and the optometry profession as employees and as members of our advisory groups and governance structures.

Optometry Western Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan outlines specific activity to be taken within our organisation, and we acknowledge the potential for further work in our spheres of influence. We commit to using the RAP framework to advance reconciliation within these spheres of influence, within the national Optometry Australia organisation and including through our membership and their businesses, and our eye care sector partners.

## **Our RAP**

As a vital part of the eye health and vision care pathway, it is imperative that the optometric profession adopts culturally responsive and safe ways of engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. Optometry Western Australia, as the body representing over 80 per cent of registered optometrists in Western Australia, has a recognised role in leading the profession towards reconciliation, with a strong commitment to eliminating avoidable blindness and vision impairment.

A Reconciliation Action Plan provides Optometry Western Australia (OWA) with a framework for advancing reconciliation through the establishment of actionable activities and strategic goals that are both achievable and measurable. An Innovate RAP will hold Optometry Western Australia accountable to both promoting staff and board member development and growth, through strengthening cultural competency and cultural safety in the organisation; and building on existing platforms of engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations.

Through this RAP, we seek to advocate for and promote reconciliation within our organisation, our membership, the eye and broader health sector, and the broader community by formally demonstrating reconciliation in our attitudes, structures, policies and OWA activities.

Together, we have the desire and capacity to turn good intentions into action.

OWA's RAP champion will be the Chair of the RAPWG committee -Gary Cerie, supported by the OWA Board. Our Reconciliation Action Plan Committee comprises of OWA optometrist board representatives- Andrew Nguyen, Sinead Denny, as a lay representative -Christine Baker and Bill Hayward an Aboriginal man of the Wagyl Kaip language group of the Noongar Nation from Katanning. Ken is a chiropractor and involved in promoting cultural safety and career pathways for indigenous people. The Chair is also a member of the National Optometry Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Advisory Group and various State and Federal Government health department advisory committees.

With eye health outcomes for First Nations people being worse than that for non-First Nations people we have engaged in programmes to deliver better services through our individual optometrist members. We have undertaken cultural safety training for a group of optometrists providing services through the Visiting Optometrists Scheme to all areas of WA and extended this by providing access to on-line resources to continue cultural safety training. We have provided cultural safety in practice and awareness through continuing professional development and also a week-long e-campaign for 2020 NAIDOC week.

OWA has amended its board documents and policies to require members to have undertaken cultural safety training, which is reported annually. Also, a requirement for staff to have undertaken cultural safety training.

## **Partnerships and current activities**

Optometry Western Australia's commitment to reconciliation has been demonstrated to date through mutually respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people, joint campaigns and problem solving on complex issues, and a deep respect for the unique contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Australia.

Optometry Western Australia RAPWG Chair has since 2009, contributed to (and was Chair from inception until 2020) an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Eye Health Advisory Group made up of member optometrists with expertise working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander eye care. The Advisory Group's purpose is to inform Optometry Australia's policy development and advocacy.

Optometry Western Australia has also established mutually respectful partnerships with the Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA) the local affiliate of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), with Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) and the Curtin University Centre for Aboriginal Studies. More recently we also have made relationships with Edith Cowan University (ECU) through Allied Health School (Contact Ken Hayward – allied therapy schools also a Noongar Man has attended one of our RAP meetings).

OWA is committed to building on these existing foundations and engaging with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations, to ensure these partnerships are embedded within our work.

Having already run specific Cultural Awareness training, campaign of education to all members during NAIDOC week, ongoing education and continuing professional development and recognising the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work in all our official media and procedures. We have supported and promoted the Uluru Statement from the Heart, truth telling and The Voice to parliament via public and member promotion and submissions. Currently we are promoting Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) cultural competency on -line training course.

A survey was conducted of general optometry members, OWA staff and board members to determine training completed, source, date of training and format delivered.

So far, our Reconciliation journey has brought changes to our board, staff and member awareness. We have changed our electronic and physical presence by inclusion of an acknowledgement of country in all forms of correspondence, board members have changed professional and personal emails to include footers recognising country. We have engaged in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC weeks by issuing emails to members covering issues of truth telling, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, language and culture, issues of unconscious racism, intergenerational trauma and legislative history.

<b>Relationships</b>			
<p>Awareness and knowledge and the sharing of stories brings understanding of the history of occupation and intergenerational trauma, unconscious bias, lack of opportunity and the mental and spiritual suppression that comes from not having control and self-determination.</p> <p>Openness can promote inclusion and healing and equity in partnerships and communities.</p> <p>Understanding and protecting culture and identity, control over health service delivery, education and employment can produce greater health outcomes.</p> <p>Equity in health, education, employment and shared enjoyment of the land and its natural resources – land, sea and air.</p> <p>Strong relationships will help us promote education and opportunities to become eye health professionals and contribute to improved visual outcomes for all Australians.</p> <p>Cultural Safety in practices opens the opportunity for ongoing health care. Through ready access to products and services.</p>			
<p><b>Focus area:</b> <i>Increasing awareness of and engagement between individual OWA members and their practices with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.</i></p> <p><i>Accessibility for First Nation's peoples to local optometrists in a culturally safe environment for prompt eye care and Closing the Gap for Vision and improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples</i></p>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	1.1. Review and update list of contact key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations at local level and nationally.	March 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
	1.2. Meet with identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.	April 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
	1.3. Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	June 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	2.1. Ensure the circulation of Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to all Optometry Western Australia staff, Board representatives and OWA members	May 2023 and 2024	OWA EO

	2.2 Organise at least one NRW event each year	May 2023 and 2024	Chair OWA RAPWG
	2.3 Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website	May 2023 and 2024	EO OWA
	2.4 Ensure RAP Working Group members participate in an external NRW event.	May-June 2023 and 2024	Chair OWA RAPWG
	2.5 Promote and encourage participation in external NRW events to all Optometry Western Australia staff, Board representatives and OWA members	May-June 2023 and 2024	President OWA
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	3.1. Monitor and update where necessary strategies to engage Optometry Western Australia staff in reconciliation	Review July 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
	3.2. Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly through the publication of RAP and establishment of a dedicated and up-to-date web presence.	April 2023	EO OWA
	3.3. Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes.	June 2023	EO OWA
	3.4. Collaborate with RA and other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation.	March 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	4.1. Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	March 2023	EO OWA
	4.2. Review and promote our Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination policy to all staff.	June 2023	EO OWA
	4.3. Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination policy.	March 2023	EO OWA
	4.4. Ensure Optometry Australia staff receive formal education on the impacts of racism	Review June 2023	EO OWA

Optometry Western Australia understands that colonisation, the systematic destruction of First Nations culture, language, connection to country and the removal of children from family and country has a significant bearing on the current and ongoing health and life outcomes for First Nations people, their ability to engage with our profession and be in control of better health and vision outcomes. That this history AND the lack of awareness about it provides barriers to understanding and access to education and health.

The ability of First Nations people to survive as the world's longest continuous culture in light of all historical attempts to eradicate their culture is a testament to their resilience.

OWA is committed to fostering respect, pride and increasing understanding around the strength and resilience of First Nations people. Evidence shows that outcomes for First Nations people are better when designed and delivered by First Nations people themselves. OWA is committed to working with local and national Aboriginal Controlled Health organisations providing services to their communities to facilitate self-determined and delivered positive health outcomes.

OWA will seek and promote examples of positive programmes, actions and initiatives by First Nations individuals and organisations.

OWA RAP committee has developed an ongoing cultural learning strategy in consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors involved in education and health fields.

Board policies require all staff and board members to have undertaken proscribed cultural safety training and for that training to be recorded and reported annually after each October board meeting or when new members /staff join the executive of the OWA.

Implemented and communicated a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country through updated policy and procedures manual and new board induction papers.

OWA continues to invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at all significant events. Our WAVE State conference had a welcome to country delivered by Mr Nigel Wilkes Snr Whadjuk Noongar man (Mungart Yongah Traditional owner of Swan River -Derbyl Yerrigen) to those in attendance and viewed by those logged into on-line course.

OWA includes an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of all meetings, on the website and all official correspondence.

OWA is working with Universities\_- to develop mentoring and screening at schools strategies with optometry students. To promote as a viable profession and enable screening of vision issues in schools.

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<b>Focus area: Our first and main strategy in dealing with this is to engage all optometrist members, their staff and the staff and directors of the organisation with education about the influence and atrocities of colonisation</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	5.1. Review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	March 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
	5.2. Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors on the currency of the cultural safety programmes.	Review September 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
	5.3. implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our staff.	Review March 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
	5.4. To increase and strengthen levels of cultural safety within our membership. OWA newsletters will promote the available training for optometrists and staff.	March 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
	5.5. Survey members annually about their cultural safety credentials- type and recency of training undertaken and how they involve their staff in their practices.	Feb 2024	EO on membership renewal annually
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	6.1. Increase understanding across all Optometry Australia staff and Board representatives of the purpose and significance behind all cultural protocols,	Feb 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
	6.2. Include an Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of all meetings, on the website and all official correspondence. Ongoing. Part of policy and convention now.	Ongoing – Review October 2023	OWA RAPWG Chair
	6.3. Encourage all board members and OWA members to implement an Acknowledgement of Country on all their correspondence. Done. Will implement a review of correspondence and encourage any who have not implemented to do so	March 2023	President OWA
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	7.1. RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2023 and 2024	OWA RAPWG
	7.2. Ensure Optometry Western Australia staff and Board participate in NAIDOC Week . July 2023 theme “FOR OUR ELDERS”	June 2023	EO/ President
	7.3. Ensure the circulation of NAIDOC week resources to all Optometry Australia staff, Board representatives and members	June 2023 and 2024	EO
	7.4. Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all Optometry Australia staff, Board representatives and members.	First week in July 2023 and 2024	OWA President

	7.5. Promote education about First Nations cultures/ NAIDOC themes and resources to all members	June 2023 / 2024	Chair OWA RAPWG
8. Demonstrate support for and educate our stakeholders about "The Voice" to parliament and acknowledgment and promotion of the Uluru Statement from The Heart	8.1. The OWA board to continue to promote and encourage individual members to do so also 8.2. Release public statements in support of the "Uluru Statement from the heart" and include statements of support on the OWA website home page and by use of footers in all board members' correspondence. 8.3. Promote the inclusion of statement in support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart as footer to members' emails. 8.4. Educate members about the voice and statement from the heart and provide links to appropriate websites and email banners that members can reference and use on their electronic media and correspondence	Review March 2023	Chair OWA RAP WG



<b>Opportunities</b>			
Optometry Western Australia believes health, strength and a sense of belonging in broader communities requires confidence, self-respect and self-belief which (in part) comes from self-determination. The more employment and business opportunities available to First Nations people the more achievable this is. OWA is committed to implementing practical strategies that identify opportunities to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to participate in our workforce, and also our procurement/supply chains.			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
9 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	9.1. Encourage all sectors of OWA influence (Association and OWA members) to advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	April 2023	EO OWA
	9.2. Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	June 2023	EO OWA
	9.3. Encourage and aid our members to advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.	June 2023	EO OWA
	9.4. Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace.	June 2023	EO
	9.5. Consult with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander members and other key stakeholders to develop a recruitment, retention and professional development strategy. Scoped need and options in July and September 2022.	July and September 2022 Now ongoing review June 2023	EO
	9.6. Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.		
	9.7. Develop and implement an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy.	March 2023	EO
	9.8. Explore communication approaches that will promote work opportunities to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	March 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG

10. Investigate initiatives to increase number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people trained as optometrists	10.1 Promote optometry as a profession and the optical industry (generally) to First Nations students at school with a view to awareness of employment opportunities and training required;	March 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
	10.2 Establish relationships between schools and OWA Members to increase the number of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander optometrists to at least 15 and also employment opportunities in other areas of optical industry (manufacturing/ practice staff)	Sept 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
11 Support equal and equitable education opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	11.0 Assist OWA members to promote and provide work experience opportunities for youth in all areas of optical industry to expose students to work opportunities.	June 2023	President OWA RAPWG
	11.1 Explore communication approaches that will promote work opportunities to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	June 2023	Chair OWA RAPWG
12, Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	12.0 Investigate Supply Nation membership for members and OWA	January 2023	Treasurer/EO
	12.1 Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy for members and OWA	July 2023	Treasurer/EO
	12.2 Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to members	January 2023	EO
	12.3 Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.	June 2023	EO
	12.4 Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses.	December 2023	EO

<b>Governance</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
13. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group to drive governance of the RAP.	13.1 Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RAPWG.	December 2023,2024,2025	Chair OWA RAPWG
	13.2 Maintain Terms of Reference for the RAPWG.	– review February 2023	EO
	13.3 Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation.	January /April/July September 2023, 2024	Chair OWA RAPWG
14 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	14.1 Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	January 2023	EO
	14.2 Engage our board members and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments.	March 2023	EO
	14.3 Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	March 2023	EO
	14.4 Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from board	February 2023	OWA Board
15 Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and lessons both internally and externally.	15.1 Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire.	August annually	EO
	15.2 Report RAP progress to all Optometry Western Australia staff, Board representatives and members quarterly.	May, August and November 2023	EO OWA
	15.3 Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and lessons, annually.	June 2023 and 2024, 2025	EO
16 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	16.1 Register via Reconciliation Australia’s website to begin developing our next RAP.	June 2025	OWA RAPWG

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