

# Reconciliation Action Plan 'Innovate'

July 2018 - July 2020



**RUAH**  
COMMUNITY SERVICES  
*Open Hearts. Bold Strides.*

Ruah Community Services acknowledges and respects the Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Custodians/Owners of the land on which we work, live and build our lives, families, and communities. We pay our respects to the First Peoples of this country, their cultures and Elders past, present and emerging.





## **Vision:**

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Flourishing communities through active participation and wellbeing of people with complex needs.

## **Mission:**

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Empowering vulnerable and disadvantaged people to create meaningful change in their lives through the provision of quality support services.

## **Values:**

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Respect, Grassroots, Partnerships, Integrity, Creativity

## **Guiding Principles:**

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Collaboration, Environmental Sustainability, Aboriginal Recognition & Reconciliation, Welcoming Diversity, Client Focus, Enhancing Civil Society

## Ruah Community Services Manifesto:

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“We are all better off, as a community, as a society, if we are all connected. We need the disconnected, the homeless, the vulnerable as they need us. They are us. We, but for advantages of birth or circumstance, are them – human hearts, in need of human connection and meaning in their lives. There is more that unites us than divides us, yet the most disadvantaged are stigmatised, without a voice for change.

Change does not come easily. We take our legacy and inspiration from the bold, courageous individuals from as far back as the 17th century doing what nobody else dared. Not because it was asked of them but because it was right and it was needed. Today Ruah will not meander in our pursuit of measurably transforming lives. We go boldly toward not just helping homeless people, but ending homelessness. Ending domestic violence. Changing the lives and creating opportunities for those experiencing mental health issues. We choose to work with the most vulnerable, the most challenged – because it’s difficult, because this makes a difference.

What we fulfil in our clients, we nourish in ourselves. By wrapping around our clients, we navigate the system or change it, based on what they need, on their terms. We keep moving, we overcome the complex, change the rules, challenge the systems. Ruah delivers not just what clients expect, but what clients deserve. And they deserve what you deserve.”

Open your heart. Embolden your stride.





## Our History with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples:

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Our business is a community service organisation providing a range of professional support services to people in the Perth metropolitan area and beyond. Ruah intentionally directs its services towards a socially just, compassionate, participative and sustainable community. This includes a position of solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and a commitment to contribute to the vision and aspirations they have for an improved quality of life, honouring spirituality, and proactively collaborating to continue to enhance positive life outcomes in an increasingly diverse Australian society.

Ruah has engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over many years and in various ways; Employing Aboriginal workers, training workers in cultural awareness and security, establishing relationships with local Elders and as service users. We acknowledge the First People's place in Australia by participating in and celebrating significant celebration and commemoration days.

In 2016/17 Ruah engaged local communities in awareness of Noongar culture, facilitating workshops and creating a fridge magnet with Noongar artwork representing the six seasons. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultant was also engaged to work with staff and the Leadership team in a review process relating to; RAP, training, Acknowledgement of Country protocols, and slideshows of local Aboriginal stories for each site. Ruah is looking at further opportunities to improve Aboriginal participation, engagement and leadership and to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

Ruah has determined, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, management and employees, to enhance their response to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community by: providing access to culturally secure services and programs, building a culturally competent workforce and constructing a Reconciliation Action Plan that provides opportunities for the organisation to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, achievements and contributions and to consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

Ruah has 316 employees, 13 employees identify as Aboriginal (as at May 2018). Ruah is Western Australia based and focused, with 11 Offices.

## Our Artwork:

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Rod Collard is an Aboriginal artist from Western Australia. His award-winning paintings are a reflection of his childhood experiences depicting nature, community, family and his homeland. His paintings come from the heart and are an inspiration to many viewers.

The artwork in this document was commissioned by Ruah Community Services to raise awareness of Noongar culture among our clients, stakeholders and the wider community. The Artwork depicts the six seasons of South Western Australia – Birak, Bunuru, Djeran, Makuru, Djilba and Kambarang.

These seasons were not bound to the monthly calendar, but were determined by the prevailing weather conditions and the emergence of various plants and animals. This meant that the length of each season changed according to what was observed in the environment.

The 'Seasons of South Western Australia' artwork by Rod Collard has become a special part of our organisation that we are proud to share with our community.



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## Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Vision:

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Ruah endeavours to engage all staff and associates through 'Open Hearts and Bold Strides' in the journey of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, contributing to the realisation of a shared humanity and future. This is done by incorporating reconciliation in relationships and opportunities as suggested by Reconciliation Australia and through practicing the Ruah values of respect, integrity, creativity, partnership and grassroots. In doing this we are able to recognise and value the inherent skills, knowledge and capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Our allocated RAP Champion is our Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Debra Zanella. Debra has been a key driver in the development of reconciliation within Ruah and is committed to raising the profile of reconciliation as a priority for the organisation. Debra strongly endorses the RAP and is a key decision maker committing the organisation to actions included in the RAP. Debra will continue to lead by example by addressing all actions against her name and commit to her own ongoing self-development on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs and cultural learning.

Our RAP Working Group (RWG) is our governing body of the RAP. We have a diverse range of staff and community representatives involved including Executive Managers, Managers and Coordinators, Community Workers and Corporate employees. We have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees who form part of the working group including our Aboriginal Engagement Officer (AEO). Ruah has a relationship with three local Elders from whom we seek regular and ongoing guidance and counsel in relation to our operations, staff and the community.

There is a detailed list of all employees and advisers included in the appendix.



## Key Progress and Learnings:

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Ruah has a strong commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, wellbeing and reconciliation. Numbers of Aboriginal employees are increasing, and staff now receive Aboriginal Cultural Security training. Networks have been built with many appropriate agencies. Ruah's learning is that the essence of reconciliation is respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their cultures, histories, experience and spirituality and the realisation that we have much to learn from them. Building and maintaining relationships depends on our willingness to listen, learn and truly partner in finding a common way forward in trust. Examples of the progress we have made are:

- Established the need for an Aboriginal Engagement Officer and role clarity.
- Designed and delivered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Security training.
- Aboriginal Cultural Security training made part of Orientation for all new employees from August 2017.
- Proactively built relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in places Ruah is seeking to recruit and deliver culturally appropriate services.
- Held our first Aboriginal recruitment event in July 2017.
- Refreshed the Code of Conduct explicitly naming a commitment to diversity.
- Re-established a working group to develop the Innovate RAP.
- Refreshed the recruitment approach allowing flexibility in advertising, interviewing and types of experience sought.
- Mentored staff in delivering culturally secure services in mental health and wellness.
- Recruited Aboriginal Student to assist in the development of RAP.
- Initiated Aboriginal Internship pilot.



## Relationships:



Strong relationships are key to Ruah's success. We want to build an organisational culture committed to reconciliation that celebrates, supports, and promotes diversity. We will continue to encourage workers and program areas to develop and enhance partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
Establish and formalise RAP Working Group (RWG)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invite existing members and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to join the Innovate RWG.</li> <li>2. Plan meetings and events to advance RAP agenda.</li> <li>3. Establish Terms of Reference for the RWG.</li> <li>4. Invite Aboriginal placement student to participate in RAP agenda planning; visit Ruah sites, meet staff and research ideas and input to Innovate RAP.</li> <li>5. Introduce RAP to Managers &amp; Coordinators via workshop.</li> <li>6. Invite current service users and Elders to contribute to the RWG.</li> <li>7. Share RAP design and progress with Board on CEO's request.</li> </ol>	AEO and People Development (Human Resources) Manager	July 2018
RWG actively monitors progress, including implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appoint RAP Champion as per guidance from Reconciliation Australia.</li> <li>2. Meet six times in alignment with Noongar Seasons to monitor and report on RAP implementation.</li> <li>3. Plan specific 'Launch' for RAP as per guidance from Reconciliation Australia</li> <li>4. Plan annual review of RAP.</li> <li>5. RWG oversees the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP.</li> <li>6. Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented on RWG.</li> </ol>	RWG Chair	July 2018
Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations to support positive outcomes for Ruah and the community we serve.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with existing and new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.</li> <li>2. Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement.</li> <li>3. Develop joint ventures, partnerships, secondments and community capacity opportunities as appropriate.</li> </ol>	AEO and CEO	December 2018

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
	4. Continue ongoing partnership with Curtin University on the 'Moving Forward' Research Project by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing helpful internal information upon request and in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Continually reviewing internal protocols to ensure they complement the findings and direction coming from the project .</li> <li>• Implement accordingly any suggestions via the research and be open to constructive feedback throughout the study.</li> </ul>		
Develop relationships with Elders to enable cultural understanding and growth	1. Ensure CEO regularly meets Ruah's supporting Elders. 2. Invite Elders to appropriate events. 3. Invite Elders to meet management and employees to yarn. 4. Discuss RAP with Elders. 5. Seek appropriate opportunities to engage with Elders from the locations in which we operate.	CEO	July 2018
Build internal and external awareness of RAP to increase the understanding of staff and clients to Ruah's commitment to reconciliation.	1. Ensure RAP update is shared through internal communication tools. 2. Provide calendar of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events and significant dates to all teams. 3. Ensure relevant activities are mentioned at team meetings. 4. Ensure Innovate RAP is made available on Ruah and Reconciliation Australia website. 5. Develop and implement a strategy to communicate our RAP to all internal and external stakeholders. 6. Promote reconciliation through ongoing active engagement with all stakeholders. 7. Review and amend staff satisfaction survey to include RAP and reconciliation specific questions.	AEO	May 2019
Celebrate and participate in National Reconciliation Week (NRW) by providing opportunities to build and maintain relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.	1. Organise at least one internal event for NRW each year. 2. Register all NRW events via Reconciliation Australia's NRW website. 3. Support an external NRW event. 4. Ensure our RWG participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. 5. Invite internal and external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to share their reconciliation experiences, stories and journeys. 6. Encourage staff to participate in external events to recognise and celebrate NRW. 7. Host NRW events across the areas in which we operate. 8. Download Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and distribute to staff.	RWG Chair/s	May 2019, 2020

## Respect:



We are building staff competence in respectful, culturally secure interaction, evidenced by client feedback on service delivery and seeking Aboriginal employee feedback. We will provide opportunities for staff development through training and opportunities for involvement in NAIDOC Week and other significant Aboriginal community events.

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
Provide opportunities for staff to develop understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements and build an ethos of continuous cultural learning.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training strategy for our staff which defines cultural learning needs of employees in all areas of our business and considers various ways cultural learning can be provided (online, face to face or cultural immersion).</li> <li>2. Introduce culturally secure practise at orientation as mandatory for all staff.</li> <li>3. Review training content for cultural awareness and security.</li> <li>4. Cover a form of cultural security training at each staff day.</li> <li>5. Define training calendar for ongoing cultural security training.</li> <li>6. Investigate opportunities to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants to develop cultural awareness training.</li> <li>7. Provide opportunities for RWG members, People Development (HR), RAP Champion and other key leadership staff to participate in cultural training and cultural immersion.</li> <li>8. Ensure AEO participates in local team meetings to determine the type of training required for existing staff and then submit a proposal to CEO.</li> <li>9. Investigate local cultural experiences and immersion opportunities depending on office locations and seek input from our Elders.</li> </ol>	AEO	September 2019
Embed established cultural protocols around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country as part of Ruah meetings and functions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review, maintain and communicate cultural protocol document for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country and meetings.</li> <li>2. Ensure Acknowledgement of Country is included at all team meetings and events and is a standing agenda item.</li> <li>3. Create Welcome to Country video with well-respected Noongar Elder for all orientation .</li> <li>4. Ensure Welcome to Country is done at all major events/ opening ceremonies.</li> <li>5. Develop list of key contacts to perform Welcome to Country.</li> <li>6. Standardise Acknowledgement of Country on all official documentation.</li> <li>7. Incorporate an Acknowledgement of Country at all interviews.</li> </ol>	Communications Advisor	July 2019

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Encourage staff to include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of all meetings.</li> <li>9. Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country at significant events and staff days.</li> <li>10. Organise and display an Acknowledgment of Country plaque in our offices.</li> <li>11. Invite Traditional Owners into our offices to explain the significance of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.</li> </ol>		
Celebrate and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff engaging with their culture and community during NAIDOC Week and other special events	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide opportunities for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate with their cultures and communities during NAIDOC Week.</li> <li>2. Actively encourage and support all staff to attend NAIDOC Week events.</li> <li>3. Obtain information on NAIDOC Week events, share among Ruah staff and promote through Ruah communication channels.</li> <li>4. Research holding an event or sponsoring an event.</li> <li>5. Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week.</li> </ol>	Communications Advisor	July 2019
Enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client service delivery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review internal risk matrix to ensure suitability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and subsequent review on appropriateness of our internal practices and documentation.</li> <li>2. Attend and participate in annual 'One Day in Fremantle' event to raise awareness of services and build relationships with Elders and Aboriginal networks in that geographic area.</li> <li>3. Yarn with clients to assess needs and wishes.</li> <li>4. Ensure AEO acts as consultant regarding working relationships with clients.</li> <li>5. Ensure all front-line staff to be trained in culturally secure practice.</li> <li>6. Ensure all new employees trained in cultural security.</li> <li>7. Ensure all staff annual refresher training in cultural security.</li> <li>8. Organise Aboriginal student to 'shadow' workers in Kambarang refuge to assess service delivery.</li> <li>9. Recommend modifications to work spaces to be more inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and clients based on feedback from clients and Elders.</li> <li>10. Look for opportunities to create culturally appropriate spaces for client use e.g. art space in Kambarang .</li> <li>11. Look for opportunities to develop culturally appropriate training and resources to support clients.</li> <li>12. Identify any specific training and development needs for staff e.g. Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Trauma Informed Practice.</li> </ol>	AEO	July 2019



## Opportunities:



We aim to develop a culturally competent workforce in order to become a service provider of choice to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community. We will continue to explore ways to increase employment and staff development opportunities. We will partner with relevant stakeholders to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we serve through the provision of culturally secure services.

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
Investigate opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our workplace	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Keep record of live vacancies and review regularly.</li> <li>2. Seek advice from Elders as appropriate.</li> <li>3. Ensure AEO available for screening and interviewing as appropriate.</li> <li>4. Weekly reviews with People Development Team and AEO at Recruitment meetings.</li> <li>5. Include in all job advertisements, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are strongly encouraged to apply'.</li> <li>6. Collect information on our current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to inform future employment opportunities.</li> <li>7. Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention strategy.</li> <li>8. Engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, appropriate external organisations and consultants to consult on employment and retention strategies, including professional development.</li> <li>9. Advertise all vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media.</li> <li>10. 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.</li> <li>11. Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on recruitment and selection panels where appropriate.</li> <li>12. Develop and implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander development programs i.e. apprenticeship program.</li> <li>13. Ensure AEO identifies and attends recruitment fairs and other recruitment opportunities.</li> </ol>	People Development (HR) Manager	October 2018

Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
Explore and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander retention and experience of working within Ruah	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure 'buddy' for all new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within first week and provide a 3 monthly check in.</li> <li>2. Co-produce and co-create Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee network group.</li> <li>3. Organise regular yarning sessions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff for feedback and consider inviting Elders.</li> <li>4. Review Ruah Constitution. Propose amendments as appropriate.</li> </ol>	AEO	July 2019
Pilot an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Apprenticeship Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advertise for applicants and select two potential apprentices/ trainees per intake.</li> <li>2. Ensure AEO provides culturally appropriate support.</li> <li>3. Seek appropriate and supportive training opportunities such as Block Release Mental Health Courses at Marr Moorditj Training.</li> <li>4. Promote program through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media and careers fairs and make contact with Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre.</li> <li>5. Forecast ongoing need and review each intake in depth, consider building into corporate strategy.</li> </ol>	Learning and Development Specialist	February 2020
Ensure managers are aware of leave that may be required due to cultural commitments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture which require staff absence from work.</li> <li>2. Determine whether further guidelines need to be developed or modified e.g. hand over workload before going on leave.</li> </ol>	RWG Chair/s	February 2019
Create culturally safe office environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review and assess our offices including reception areas and meeting rooms by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessing existing set ups</li> <li>- Identifying potential adjustments based on providing cultural safety</li> <li>- Implementing any changes accordingly with the Property and Asset team</li> <li>- Continually facilitate feedback</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	Property and Asset Advisor	August 2018
Investigate opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity within our organisation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review and update procurement policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers for procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.</li> <li>2. Develop and communicate to staff a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to procure goods and services.</li> <li>3. Develop at least one commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned business.</li> <li>4. Investigate Supply Nation membership.</li> </ol>	Chief Financial Officer	June 2019

## Tracking Progress and Reporting:



Action	Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeline
Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually.</li> <li>2. Investigate participating in the RAP Barometer.</li> <li>3. Develop and implement systems and capability needs, to track, measure and report on RAP activities.</li> </ol>	RWG Chair/s	September 2018/ 2019
Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings internally and externally	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings through internal channels and appropriate external networks.</li> </ol>	CEO	September 2018/ 2019
Review, refresh and update RAP for transition into Stretch RAP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements.</li> <li>2. Send draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review and feedback.</li> <li>3. Submit draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal endorsement.</li> </ol>	Projects, Executive Manager	January 2020

Contact details for any RAP enquiries:

Name: Debra Zanella

Position: Chief Executive Officer

Phone: 13 78 24

Email: [debra.zanella@ruah.org.au](mailto:debra.zanella@ruah.org.au)

# Appendix:

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## RAP Working Group

### Name

Debra Zanella  
Amy Matthews   
Daniel Lawrance  
David Buckingham  
Ellie Tighe  
Elena Petrici  
Ethan Gallagher  
Helen Skoog  
Jane Garratt  
Laura Watterson  
Lee Lombardi  
Lisa Breukelman  
Luke Rowe  
Margaret Potangaroa  
Marie Davies   
Molly Daws  
Sammy Moore  
Samson Knight

### Position

Chief Executive Officer  
Support Worker  
Project Administration Worker  
Nightingale Administrator  
Evaluation Advisor  
Choices Coordinator  
Communications Officer  
Kambarang Coordinator  
Risk and Quality Business Partner  
People Development Business Partner  
Comorbidity Project Manager  
People Development Business Partner  
Integrated Services Manager  
Senior Community Worker  
Community Worker  
Corporate Services Administrator  
Project Worker  
Executive Manager

### Team

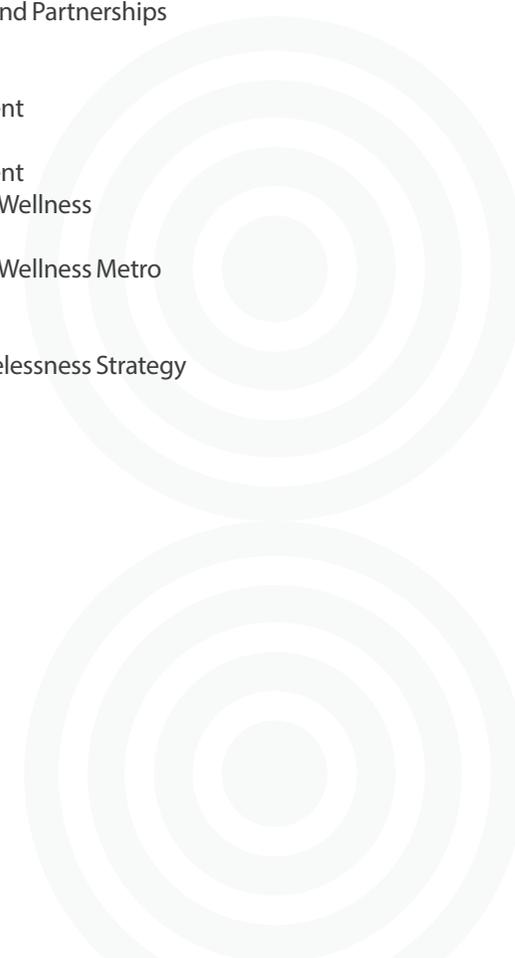
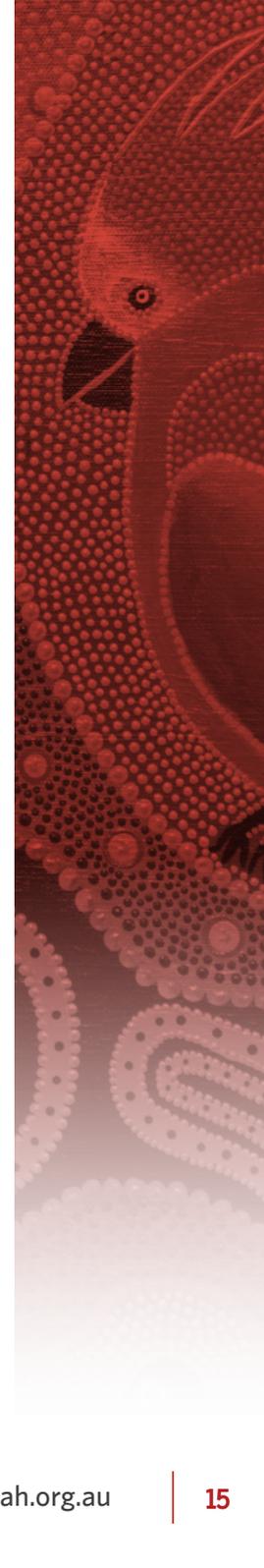
Kambarang  
People Development  
Corporate Services  
Research, Design and Innovation  
Choices  
Communications and Partnerships  
Kambarang  
Risk and Quality  
People Development  
Operations  
People Development  
Mental Health and Wellness  
Wongee Mia  
Mental Health and Wellness Metro  
Corporate Services  
50 Lives 50 Homes  
Housing and Homelessness Strategy

### Community representative:

Lucy Van Kessel – Preswa

### With special thanks to:

Ruah's supporting Elders,  
• Percy Hansen  
• Louise Hansen  
• Joanne Kearing





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