

INNOVATE 2023-2025 RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN





Acknowledging Country

Legal Aid WA affirms our commitment to reconciliation and acknowledges the First Peoples of the land upon which we gather and work across Western Australia.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs, and enduring connection to the land. We pay our respects to Elders, both past and present.



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Our vision for reconciliation



Our vision is to see equitable treatment and access to justice for First Nations people across Western Australia, where cultural and language considerations are prioritised and respected, and all stakeholders work collegiately with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to provide a fair and safe community for all.

Legal Aid WA's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) working group has reflected on our **Innovate 2023-2025 RAP** to measure what we have achieved, goals that were set but not realised, ongoing commitments, and how we can strive to do more. It has provided us with the opportunity to reflect on the important work we do with our First Nations clients, and to celebrate and support our proud and committed First Nations staff.

Through our commitment to reconciliation, Legal Aid WA aims to deliver improved justice outcomes and positively impact the lives of First Nations people in Western Australia.

Staff across Legal Aid WA have been, and will continue to be encouraged to take an active interest in our RAP and to make sincere commitments to realising the actions and goals in our vision for reconciliation.

Helen De Brito
Director, Legal Aid WA

Our staff

>95%

have received First Nations
Cultural Awareness training

8%

identify as First Nations

24

in the RAP Working Group,
including Director Legal Aid
WA, Coordinator - First
Nations Services, metropolitan
and regional staff

Our clients in 2024-25

>49,000

services provided to First
Nations Western Australians

30%

identify as First Nations

26%

increase in the number of calls
to our dedicated First Nations
information line, Legal Yarn

PILLAR 1 Relationships



This focus area targets strong and meaningful relationships with our staff and stakeholders. Legal Aid WA recognises the importance of relationships to First Nations people. We rely on our relationships to enable us to work together to develop culturally inclusive services and reconciliation.

The ability to develop partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities is paramount to ensuring that we can identify the legal issues and provide access to justice and legal assistance.

We are also strongly committed to the cultural safety of our First Nations Staff Network through relationship building with non-Aboriginal staff members.

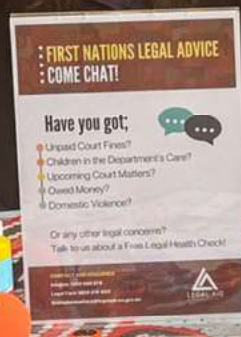




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Partnering with Wungening Aboriginal Corporation



Legal Aid WA has continued to grow the strength of our relationship with one of our key stakeholders, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. Wungening hosts us while we deliver our First Nations Advice Bureau (drop-in legal clinic) one day a week.

The First Nations Advice Bureau assists both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in a culturally healing and therapeutic space, ensuring clients feel safe and supported.

Our regular weekly attendance enables us to provide ongoing support and strengthen relationships with the community.

A Virtual Office was established at Wungening in 2024 at their head office and at Woree Miya Women's Refuge Centre. The number of clients assisted continues to increase.



First Nations Cultural Learning Framework



As a significant legal practice in Western Australia, Legal Aid WA has a responsibility to improve the accessibility and experience of our organisation and the legal system for First Nations people. To contribute meaningfully to social justice within these communities, we must be culturally responsive, aware of the impacts of colonisation, and respectful of the voices, skills, and experiences of First Nations staff, clients, and communities.

The First Nations Cultural Learning Framework underpins our commitment to offering comprehensive training and development opportunities to all staff and service partners, fostering a deeper understanding of First Nations cultures and people.

The Framework comprises a range of formal and informal learning activities, designed and delivered by First Nations people to cater to our specific operating environment and the diverse communities we serve throughout Western Australia.



PILLAR 2 **Respect**



Treating all people with dignity and respect is a core value of Legal Aid WA. We acknowledge a need to gain a greater understanding of the communities we serve, if we are to provide a quality service to those in need that is welcoming and culturally sensitive.

We strive to achieve our goals of improving justice outcomes by engaging in respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, educating our staff, demonstrating a proactive commitment to law reform, and providing a safe and comfortable environment for our First Nations staff, clients and stakeholders.



Celebrating Culture

During NAIDOC Week 2024, a number of staff in the Perth office unleashed their creative flair in a Deadly Demin workshop, upcycling denim clothing under the guidance of Ballardong Whadjuk woman Rebecca Rickard, transforming worn jackets into personalised fashion pieces.

There was also a guided tour of Aboriginal Artwork currently on display at the Art Gallery of WA and a movie screening.



Acknowledgement of Country





In early 2024, RAP committee member Samantha started sourcing wall plaques for regional offices and the Perth head office, each with a tailored Acknowledgement of Country appropriate for the lands on which the office is situated.

Samantha was diligent in her research to ensure the correct lands are acknowledged on each plaque.

The plaques were received and since August 2024 have been proudly displayed in all levels of the Perth office, at the Family Court Services, Children's Court Protection Services and the Children's Court in Perth, and in regional offices across Western Australia.

Summer Series

The Summer Series 2023 program included the workshops “Mabo - the 30th Anniversary of the Decision, and a Referendum to Amend the Constitution to Enable a First Nations Voice to Parliament”, and “Understanding context and culture when working with Aboriginal families in family law and child protection proceedings”.

Summer Series 2025 included a workshop “Working with First Nations clients: Understanding intergenerational trauma” and a panel session on “Cultural Considerations when providing services to First Nations Clients”.



At Summer Series 2024, Professor Victoria Hovane presented a workshop “Psychological Assessment in legal contexts with Aboriginal people”.

PILLAR 3 Opportunities



Legal Aid WA is committed to providing meaningful employment and retention opportunities for First Nations people, at all levels within the organisation.

As an employer, we strive to provide a working environment that is culturally sensitive to all our employees, and to be recognised within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as an employer of choice.

We have learned to take a flexible approach to First Nations recruitment, which reflects the genuine value of the unique skills our First Nations staff hold.



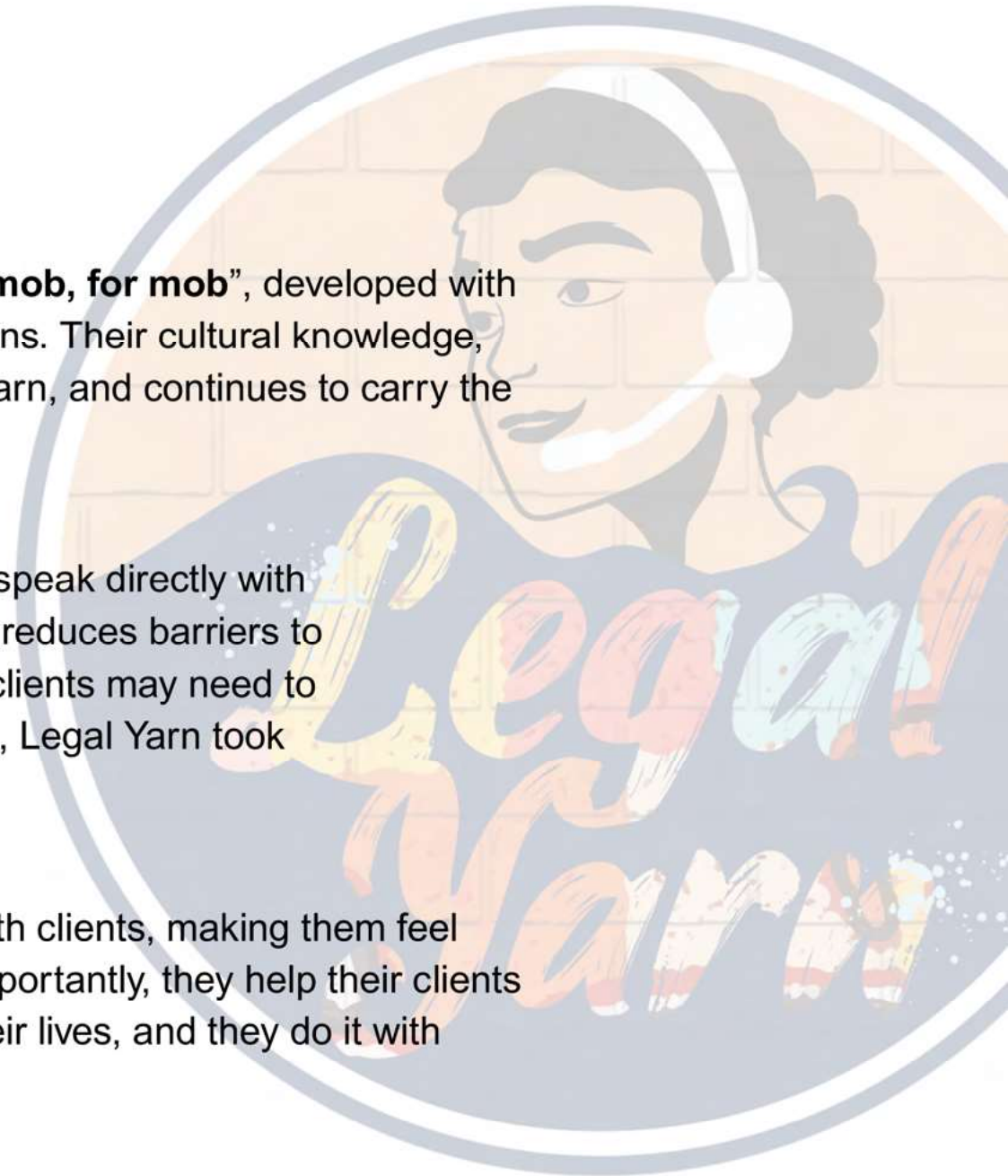


Legal Yarn

Legal Yarn was created and led by our staff – “**by mob, for mob**”, developed with our First Nations staff front and centre of discussions. Their cultural knowledge, drive and dedication was the foundation of Legal Yarn, and continues to carry the service forward today.

Legal Yarn is a service where First Nations clients speak directly with First Nations staff. This culturally safe environment reduces barriers to accessing the legal and wraparound services that clients may need to address their concerns. In its first year of operation, Legal Yarn took 2,488 calls.

Through Legal Yarn, our First Nations staff yarn with clients, making them feel heard at the start of their Legal Aid WA journey. Importantly, they help their clients navigate some of the most challenging times of their lives, and they do it with understanding, empathy and professionalism.






Legal Yarn

Staffed by mob for mob

1800 319 803



Her Knowledge, Friendly & Caring Attitude & Professionalism & Demeanour Are A Credit To Your Organisation.

If I Could I Would Nominate Her For Employee Of The Month.

Truly, From The Bottom Of My Heart - Thank You For Your Help During This Dark Time. You Are The Reason That Keeps Your Clients (Including Me) Hope Alive



CLEOs



Community Liaison and Education Officers (CLEOs) play an important role in our regional offices, providing legal education in response to the local community's needs and connecting with service provider networks in the community.



In June 2024, our four CLEOs participated in a two-day training and information sharing workshop in Broome to build their skill sets, discuss pressing issues and success stories from across their communities, and continue to grow their networks.





PILLAR 4 Governance



To drive governance of our RAP, a RAP Working Group (RWG) was established, meeting regularly to track progress against key commitments, implement, lead and evaluate RAP initiatives, and discuss topical issues impacting First Nations people.

Accountability and transparency are demonstrated through reporting RAP achievements, challenges, and learnings, both internally and externally.

At the end of this RAP, we have reflected on the commitments that have been achieved, those that are still progressing, and those that remain incomplete.

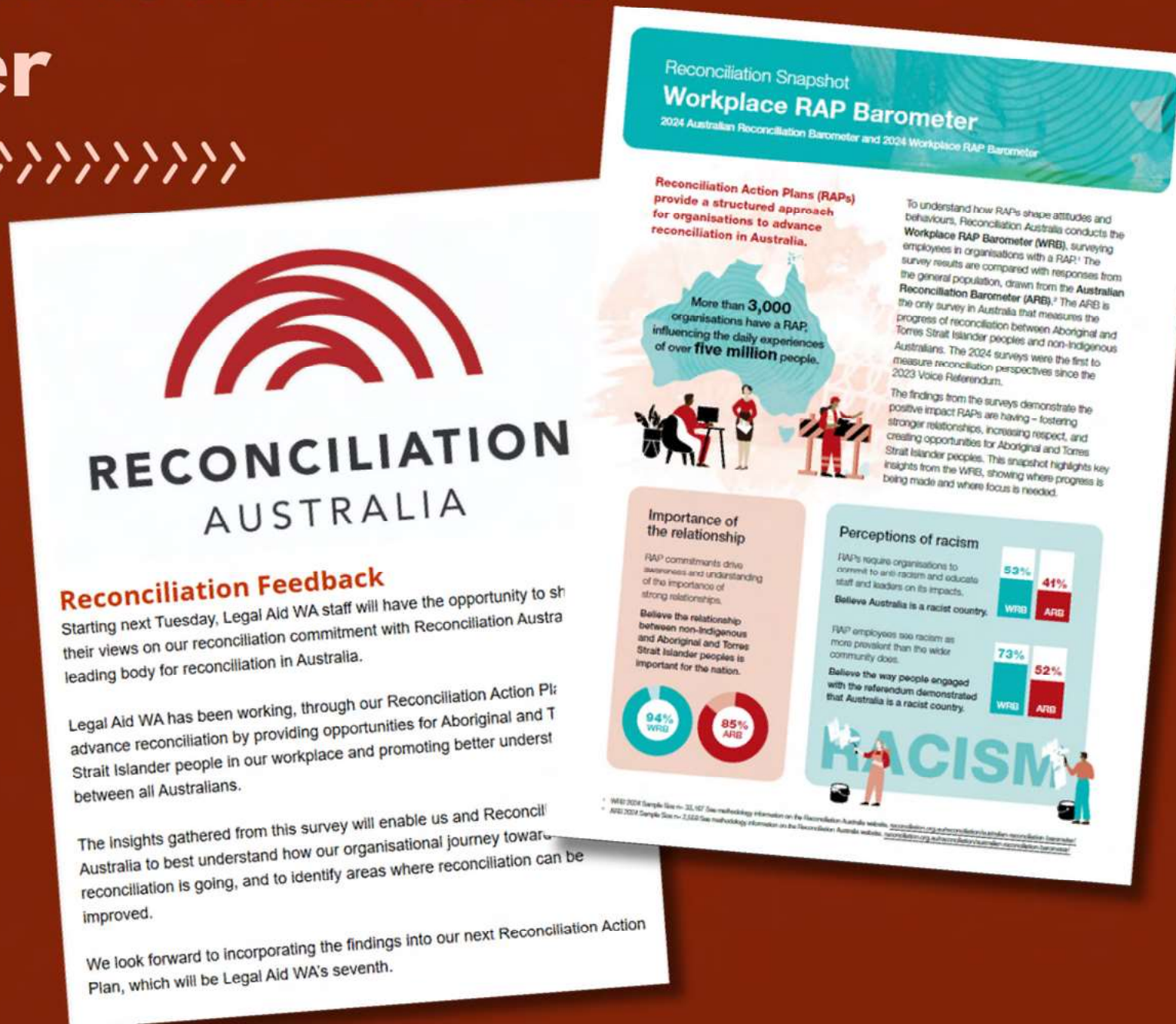
We are now looking forward to the next stage in our reconciliation journey by developing the next RAP for Legal Aid WA.

Australian Reconciliation Barometer



In 2024, Legal Aid WA staff participated in the bi-annual Australian Reconciliation Barometer.

In this survey our staff responses provided important data, helping to measure reconciliation perspectives post- 2023 Voice Referendum.



Financial Freedom Forum

This collaborative community education podcast is an empowering initiative brought to life by Legal Aid WA, Kimberley Community Legal Service, and Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation.





Our East Kimberley regional office's Community Liaison and Education Officer Tamara delivered weekly DARDY eggs modules at the Alta-1 College in Kununurra.

Staff from the West Kimberley regional office, along with Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service, Street Law Centre, Consumer Credit Legal Service and Circle Green Community Legal, visited a little-known watering hole where they introduced themselves to Country, on a regional Community Legal Education tour to the Fitzroy Crossing region.



The Artwork



This painting represents the meeting of Aboriginal Lore & Law with Western Law. It shows the colours of Western Australia, with each region and its people in our State represented. The centre circle is the metropolitan region, the far left circle is the Kimberley region and the next is the Pilbara region. From the centre up, the circle represents the Wheatbelt, Goldfields and south to Esperance. From the centre down represents the Gascoyne and Midwest. And the circle south represents the Peel, South West and Great Southern.

The kangaroo, kangaroo paw, swan foot print, and boomerang represents the WA Coat of Arms which symbolise the Western Law in our State. The other cultural symbols such as the spears, the Elders seated, the shields and other tools represent Aboriginal Lore & Law.

This symbolism highlights that when we understand the difference in our cultures, we can all come together respectfully. Pre-colonisation, First Nations people had, and still have, our own systems. We now must work within this new system. Understanding and respect is needed from both sides moving forward.

Artist Teejay (Thomas John) Cox Worrigal was born in Derby, Western Australia and raised on Gooniyandi Country. Gooniyandi Country is located in the central Kimberley region of Western Australia and includes the Fitzroy River to the west and runs almost to Halls Creek in the east. Teejay was taught to paint by many Elders in his family, but particularly Marjorie Cox (Yiyili) and Frank Gardiner (from Balgo and Billiluna).



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