

Hi I'm Kristen Carroll and today we are going to take a look at Reconciliation Action Plans.

Firstly I would like to pay my respect to and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we meet today. And also pay my respect to Elders both past and present.

Many of you, our NGO listeners, have expressed a desire for more support and knowledge in relation to working with Aboriginal children, families and communities.

With this in mind I have invited Amber Roberts, RAP Manager for QLD and NSW here today to talk about the work Reconciliation Australia has been doing with organisations and the community to assist people in developing respect, trust and better relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We will be specifically examining today how Reconciliation Action Plans provide a practical framework to assist organisations to achieve positive change and innovative approaches towards Reconciliation.

Kristen: Hi Amber, could you tell me a little bit about your role and why you chose to work for Reconciliation Australia?

Amber: Sure, I'm the Manager of Reconciliation Action Plans for the New South Wales and Queensland portfolio. Within my team there are two RAP officers and as a team we're the main contact for organisations that have a Reconciliation Action Plan or are looking to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan within New South Wales and Queensland. I chose to work for Reconciliation Australia as I believe in an Australia that recognises and respects the special place, culture and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Kristen: How did Reconciliation Australia come about and what are the aims of the organisation?

Amber: Reconciliation Australia was established in 2000 by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation as a non government, not for profit foundation. It was established to continue the national focus for Reconciliation by promoting Reconciliation between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Kristen: How does Reconciliation Australia support organisations to achieve these aims?

Amber: Reconciliation Australia supports organisations through Reconciliation Action Plans. The concept of Reconciliation Action Plans or RAP's were introduced by Reconciliation Australia in 2006. Broadly, the RAP sets out the practical actions organisations will take to build strong relationships and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. In 2013 Reconciliation Australia introduced a new RAP framework. A new RAP framework known as RISE stands for four different types of RAP's that organisations can develop during their Reconciliation journey. Each RAP still has the minimum elements under our three areas of focus which is relationships, respect and opportunities. And RISE stands for reflect RAP innovate RAP stretch RAP and elevate RAP.

Kristen: Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Amber: Sure, the reflect RAP is for organisations just starting out their journey and are new to the concept of Reconciliation. And it's about laying the foundations for building respectful relationships. The innovate RAP is for organisations that have already laid those foundations and are looking to try new approaches. The stretch RAP is about setting measurable targets for the organisation that they are accountable for. For example, around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. The elevate RAP is for organisations that are considered leaders in Reconciliation and are really focused on advancing Reconciliation in the broader Australian community.

Kristen: Do you have any statistics relating to the impact organisations with RAP's are having?

Amber: Yeah, the RAP program has significantly grown over the last few years. Now there are actually over 500 organisations who have a Reconciliation Action Plan. Our 2013 RAP impact measurement report indicates that the RAP program really is making a difference and the impact is substantial. There has been over 25 000 jobs filled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; 81 million dollars worth of goods and services have been purchased from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and 37 million dollars worth of education scholarships have been awarded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It is really encouraging to know also that there have been 544 reported partnerships between RAP organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities and that over 2.1 million Australians work or study in an organisation that has a RAP.

Kristen: That's fantastic. Reconciliation Australia has methods in place to measure the effectiveness and value of RAP's. Could you provide a bit of detail about that?

Amber: Sure, Reconciliation Australia measures the effectiveness and value of RAP's as well as the broader social landscape on how we as a nation are tracking to achieve true Reconciliation between the broader Australian population and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Through the Australian Reconciliation barometer we release the Australian Reconciliation barometer every two years in partnership with Auspoll and it measures the attitudes and perceptions between the broader Australian population and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It has shown that employees in RAP organisations are more likely to trust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with 71 percent of RAP employees believing that trust is high in their organisation compared to 13 percent of people in the broader Australian community. And employees in RAP organisations are less prejudiced. Only 9 percent of RAP employees believe that prejudice is high between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians as opposed to 70 percent in the broader Australian community. So these are the two statistics that we draw upon because the differences between the Australian broader community and RAP organisations is quite large.

Kristen: How do you help organisations ensure that all their staff are engaged in the RAP?

Amber: Yeah, we've found that staff engagement is one of the big challenges facing RAP organisations, which is to activate staff, build their awareness and knowledge and understanding. We will soon be releasing an online self service staff engagement toolkit which will be packed with ideas to inspire RAP organisations, help them to bring their RAP to life and engage all employees in the organisation. Within the toolkit there are a range of initiatives to suit everyone no matter their experience ranging from a basic morning tea to a more involved type of an event like a flash mob. Each initiative is categorised by ease of implementation and effort, supported by a business reason, a

how to guide and where possible RA resources which include links to our existing websites, guides on writing email requests and questions that could be used for hosting a trivia night.

Kristen: That sounds like a great range of very practical and engaging initiatives. But what is a flash mob?

Amber: Sure, a flash mob is where a group of people will learn a particular dance and on a particular day they'll mingle in a public place and on cue perform the dance. RA did a flash mob on National Reconciliation Week in Cairns last year and it can be viewed on YouTube

Kristen: Ah that sounds great we might have to provide a link on our site

Amber: Sure

Kristen: Why do you think RAP's have been so successful?

Amber: With more than 500 RAP organisations across various sectors and industries, RAP's have been successful because they are a practical and relatively simple way for organisations to build strong relationships and enhance respect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities. In particular RAP's provide a framework to assist non government organisations and their staff to work together with and be guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. To develop meaningful and achievable strategies. This in turn enables them to provide culturally safe and assessable services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and community representatives plays an important role in developing a RAP and guiding its implementation. The most successful RAP organisations are those who have a RAP working group which is essentially the RAP governance body. The group takes responsibility for the RAP, makes sure the RAP is a priority and supports implementation of RAP goals across their organisation.

Kristen: And finally Amber, can you tell me where organisations can go to access more information?

Amber: Yeah, for more information about Reconciliation Action Plans, resources for RAP organisations and how to develop a RAP, please go to our RAP online hub at [www.raphub.reconciliation.org.au](http://www.raphub.reconciliation.org.au)

Kristen: OK, thank you very much for your time today.

Amber: Oh, thank you.

