

**MATES4MATES**

Here for those  
impacted by service.



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN  
**REFLECT**

**REFLECT**

Reconciliation  
Action Plan

APRIL 2023 - OCTOBER 2024



## Acknowledgment of Country.

Mates4Mates acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters across Australia and on which our services are delivered.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Australians, and we acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise and respect their cultural and spiritual lore across history and their deep connection to the lands, waters and seas.

We would like to express our gratitude for the sharing of the land on which we live and work and express our sorrow for the suffering and loss incurred through the colonisation of the land.

We pay respect to the many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women who have fought for this country.

Mates4Mates hopes that together we can walk and learn in harmony and in the spirit of reconciliation.



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**Karen Mundine.**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Reconciliation Australia.

## Statement from CEO of Reconciliation Australia.

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Mates4Mates to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Mates4Mates joins a network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Mates4Mates to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Mates4Mates, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

*Karen*



**Stephen Day.**  
Board Chair,  
Mates4Mates.



**Emma Whitehead.**  
General Manager,  
Mates4Mates.

## Joint message from Mates4Mates Board Chair, Stephen Day and Mates4Mates General Manager, Emma Whitehead.

Mates4Mates will implement this Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to ensure that our services, operations, and workplace are welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans have been on the receiving end of some unjust decisions.

During WWI, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were classed as non-citizens, meaning they could not legally join the military, with some resorting to fake their nationality to be able to fight for their country.

In the early phase of WWII, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were paid one third of the standard wage rate and it was only after complaining that this was increased, to two thirds.

Sadly, after both World Wars, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans were denied the same entitlements as other veterans, with some resorting to charity to survive.

It is in the spirit of acknowledging past injustices and supporting reconciliation in Australia, that Mates4Mates commits to implementing our Reconciliation Action Plan.

At Mates4Mates, we want to ensure that our staff are trained and aware of the histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans, and that as an organisation we are active in respecting traditions and playing a positive role in reconciliation.

While we recognise that reconciliation is an ongoing journey, we look forward to working directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, our staff and clients, and the wider Defence and veteran community, to implement the actions outlined in our Reconciliation Action Plan.

*Stephen & Emma*



## Our RAP Working Group.

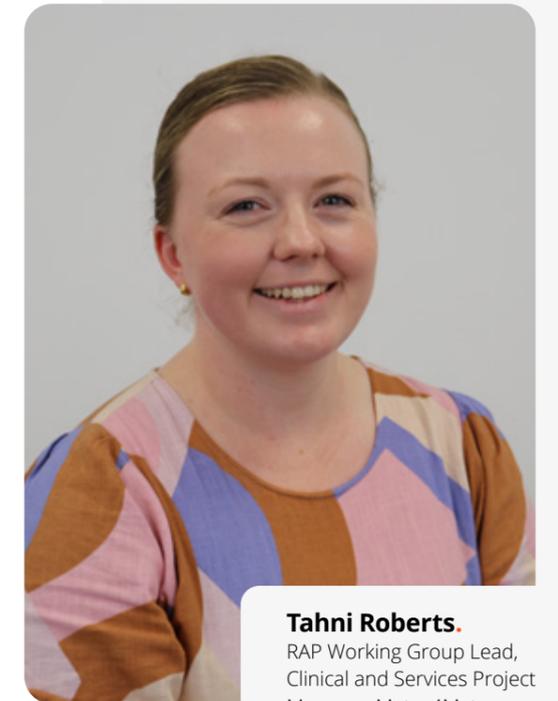
As the lead of the Mates4Mates RAP Working Group, it has been an honour and privilege to work with our staff, including senior and executive leaders, across all aspects of our reconciliation journey. When Mates4Mates decided to embark on a reconciliation journey, at the core was a real passion and purpose to work towards ensuring our organisations workplace, centres and services are inclusive and culturally safe environments.

As an organisation that supports veterans and their families impacted by service, it is important to pay respect and acknowledge the many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and women who have fought for this country, and their families. We hope to be a safe place where First Nations peoples can see their traditions, lores and culture not only being respected but embraced throughout our organisation's practices and services.

Throughout our reconciliation journey, we have developed a RAP Working Group, and within the group we have passionate and insightful staff members from across the nation sharing and honouring the culture and history of First Nations peoples. There is a genuine interest within the working group and wider organisation to ensure we are playing an active and positive role in reconciliation across the communities in which we live and work.

Our RAP and reconciliation efforts will continue with the same passion, care and genuine interest, and as an organisation we look forward to being able to further our reconciliation efforts and pay respect, tribute and acknowledge the lores, customs and histories of First Nations peoples.

*Tahni*



**Tahni Roberts.**  
RAP Working Group Lead,  
Clinical and Services Project  
Manager, Mates4Mates.



**Shakira Kitching.**  
Art By Woodulngul.

## Artwork Commission.

Hello I'm Shakira Kitching (Woodulngul). I am a proud Andajan Kija, Bardi, Gurindji and Larrakia woman. And my skin group/name is Nugada. I was born and raised in a small town called Derby in Western Australia.

The name Woodulngul was given to me from my uncle, Lindsay Malay. He went out fishing to this place called Rocky Bar and the Aboriginal name for this place is called Woodulngul. This is where he caught a freshwater bream. He noticed it was deformed and this was so significant to him that he said, "The next baby born into our family will have a birthmark on their ribs".

And that baby was me! Born with a fish shaped birthmark on the left side of my ribs. This means my dreaming animal (totem) is the freshwater black bream and this is where I got the name Woodulngul from.

I spent most of my life in Derby. Fishing, hunting and learning my culture. I would sit and watch my dad paint stories about our native fishes, native flowers, and animals. This is where I grew my passion for Aboriginal art. I was 14 years old when I did my first Aboriginal painting. It was a story about two turkey's dancing in the sunset.

Since moving to the Northern Territory, my art has reached so many people and businesses. I was given a great opportunity to paint a 1.5 metre x 2 metre painting on canvas for Mates4Mates. This was the biggest piece of art I have ever done!

The painting is titled 'Healing' and reflects the healing journey our heroes go on to reconnect with themselves and find peace again. I felt so honoured to do this painting as it represents healing, connection and family. Which all three resonate with me. I surrounded the painting with hills as it represents where my tribe is from.

If you would love to see more of my art, you can contact me on my email: [shakirakitching7@icloud.com](mailto:shakirakitching7@icloud.com) or go to Facebook and Instagram: Art By Woodulngul

*Shakira*



**His Honour Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie PSM,  
Administrator of the Northern Territory and Ms Ruth Jones.**



## Our work.

Mates4Mates is a wholly owned subsidiary of RSL Queensland and was established in 2013.

Mates4Mates support veterans, current-serving members and the families that stand by their side. We provide services from physical rehabilitation and mental health services to skills and wellbeing programs, and social connection activities. Our innovative and evidence-led services improve and rebuild lives.

Our vision is for an Australia where all members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) community are supported physically, psychologically and socially. We provide a way forward for current and ex-serving ADF members (and their families) experiencing service-related physical injuries, mental health impacts and social disconnection.

We are one of Australia's leading charities actively changing the lives of current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members, and their families, impacted by service.

# MATES 4 MATES

Here for those impacted by service.

**To make life better for the ADF community affected by injury and trauma.**



OUR PURPOSE

OUR VISION

**An Australia where all members of the ADF community are supported physically, psychologically and socially.**

OUR VALUES



**Integrity**

We are always true to our purpose and treat everyone with openness and honesty.



**Innovation**

We are problem solvers, innovating and adapting to ensure we provide holistic services that enhance lives.



**Compassion**

We provide a welcoming space for all; you will find empathy, understanding, care and respect.



**Collaboration**

We foster a collaborative culture and work collectively as a team with clients, stakeholders and partners to deliver positive outcomes.



# Our services.

**We deliver services that fall under four key areas: Mental Health & Wellbeing, Physical Rehabilitation & Wellbeing, Social Connection, and Skills for Recovery Programs.**

All services and programs are free for veterans and their families impacted by service. Our services are delivered through our centres located in South East Queensland, North Queensland, Northern Territory, Tasmania and online, as well as in outreach locations across Australia.



**Mental Health & Wellbeing.**

Our psychological team is made up of psychologists, counsellors and social workers who provide a safe, non-judgmental space for individuals and families to share and be heard. The team use a variety of evidence-based therapies that can make a real difference.



**Social Connection.**

At Mates4Mates, we hold regular social connection activities throughout the week and on weekends, to provide a safe place to build connections and find mateship. This includes but is not limited to; weekly barbecues, coffee catch ups, creative arts, cooking groups and school holiday programs.



**Physical Rehabilitation & Wellbeing.**

Targeting all aspects of health and wellbeing is important for recovery. Our team of exercise physiologists provide support through a range of services to improve health conditions, assist in injury rehabilitation and improve quality of life regardless of age, fitness level or health conditions. This includes physical rehabilitation, hydrotherapy, health education, pre- and post-surgery rehabilitation, group fitness activities, movement for mental health, and more, offered both in one-on-one appointments and in group class settings.



**Skills for Recovery.**

We understand that injuries come in many forms and there isn't a one-size-fits all approach to recovery, which is why we have a range of rehabilitation options available for those accessing our services. Our Skills for Recovery Programs are designed to provide veterans and family members with opportunities to develop relevant skills and strategies that will help them to manage their health and wellbeing now, and into the future. Our programs offer a variety of sessions and workshops designed to build resilience and assist with emotion-regulation and distress tolerance.



## Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Mates4Mates is undertaking a Reflect RAP to ensure that, as an organisation, the services, operations, and the workplace of Mates4Mates is reflective and representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

We want to ensure that we provide culturally safe and appropriate spaces, our staff are trained and aware of the histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that as an organisation we are active in respecting traditions and playing a positive role in reconciliation.

The implementation of a RAP began with Mates4Mates establishing a lead for the RAP, along with a working group and Terms of Reference. The RAP Working Group members come from each location where we have a physical footprint.

Senior leaders within the organisation have already expressed endorsement and fully support the RAP implementation. Furthermore, as an organisation we will be working towards achievable and meaningful changes.

The Reflect RAP process commenced in December 2021 with the formation of a working group and the engagement of Reconciliation Australia. One of the first initiatives Mates4Mates undertook was online training for all staff in 2022 and a Welcome to Country was commissioned for our All Staff forum in December 2022.

Mates4Mates is a wholly owned subsidiary of RSL Queensland and depends on RSL Queensland for support in Human Resources (HR), Information Technology and Assets management. Mates4Mates will work with RSL Queensland to make meaningful changes within existing processes and remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention by reviewing HR policies and onboarding procedures with RSL Queensland.

### Implementing a RAP.

Mates4Mates will implement the Reflect RAP and commence our reconciliation journey through a meaningful and steadied approach. With our national reach, there may be some activities that are commenced and imbedded in certain locations prior to others. There may be a number of reasons behind this, such as cultural appropriateness, staff understanding, ability to implement, and community engagement. The working group will be utilised to ensure readiness and appropriability in each location. Our RAP Champion will be the General Manager, Mates4Mates.

There are fundamental activities that we will commence across all locations:

- Cultural competence training for all staff
- Acknowledgement of Country at meetings and events
- Celebrate National Reconciliation Week
- Flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags in all centres
- Inclusive policies

The above activities have been discussed with the working group and appropriate action and understanding of each activity is occurring.

### Our partnerships/current activities.

A presentation was delivered to staff on the 9 November 2021 outlining the purpose of the Reflect RAP, how it relates to our services and what to expect as a result of Mates4Mates undertaking a Reconciliation Action Plan.

We have established a Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group within the organisation. Within the group we have worked to ensure there is a representative from each location where services are delivered. Terms of Reference have also been developed and endorsed by the working group.

Mates4Mates offer four service streams; one of which is Social Connection. The focus of social connection activities is to provide a safe place to build connections and find mateship. Mates4Mates has an opportunity to link in with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to better inform and connect the veteran community.

On Tuesday, 13 September 2022 our organisation acknowledged the anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Along with the acknowledgment, we launched our cultural awareness group training plan. The cultural awareness training was hosted online and rolled out organisation-wide as mandatory training. A group training format was selected to facilitate conversation and encourage curiosity.

Furthermore, the following activities have occurred:

- Acknowledgment of Country on our website and email signature blocks
- Embedding cultural awareness training into our induction package for new staff
- A Welcome to Country performance at our end of year All Staff
- Acknowledgment of Country guide for staff to incorporate through meetings and formal gatherings
- Acknowledgment of Country added to all plaques of any new centre locations
- Attended and acknowledged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans by laying a wreath at the Indigenous Veterans Ceremony
- Attended NAIDOC events in 2022



'Welcome to Country' by Jeanneen McLenna.



## Relationships.

	Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1	Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	May 2023	Project Coordinator
		Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	May 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
2	Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	27 May - 3 June 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
		RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May - 3 June 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
		Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May - 3 June 2023	General Manager, Mates4Mates
3	Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	May 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
		Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	June 2023	Senior Communications & Media Specialist
		Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey with a priority focus on ex-service organisations.	May 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
		Reach out to other ex-service organisations that are also working on their RAP journey.	July 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
4	Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Work with RSL Queensland on HR policies and onboarding procedures.	May 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
		Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	May 2023	Business and Service Performance Manager
		Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	August 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager



## Respect.

	Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5	Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	May 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
		Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	August 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager and Engagement and Projects Coordinator
6	Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	June 2023	Multimedia Creative Specialist
		Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	May 2023	Senior Communications & Media Specialist and Clinical and Services Project Manager
		Create procedures and protocols for staff when an Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country is appropriate.	May 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
7	Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2023	Senior Communications & Media Specialist
		Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June 2023	Senior Communications & Media Specialist
		RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event and take leadership in their respective areas of the organisation to promote NAIDOC week events across Mates4Mates locations.	First week in July 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager



## Opportunities.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8 Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation.	July 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	May 2023	Head of Health
	Remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention by reviewing HR policies, onboarding procedures with RSL Queensland.	October 2023	Head of Health
9 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	June 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	May 2023	Head of Health



## Governance.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10 Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	May 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
	Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG.	May 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
	Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	May 2023	Head of Health
11 Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	August 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
	Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	May 2023	Head of Health and Clinical and Services Project Manager
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	June 2023	Clinical and Services Project Manager
12 Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September 2023 and annually	Clinical and Services Project Manager
13 Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	February 2024	Clinical and Services Project Manager



## Our Locations

Brisbane	Hobart
Ipswich	Launceston
Townsville	Online
Cairns	
Darwin	

 1300 4 MATES

 [mates4mates.org](https://mates4mates.org)

## RAP Contact details.

**Name:** Tahni Roberts

**Position:** Clinical and Services Project Manager

**Email:** [tahni.roberts@mates4mates.org](mailto:tahni.roberts@mates4mates.org)

# MATES4MATES

Here for those  
impacted by service.

With mates behind you, there's  
power to move forward.

#### For information and support

 **1300 4 MATES**

 **mates4mates.org**

If you're looking for information  
and support offered in your area,  
call us on 1300 4 62837, or visit  
your local centre.

ABN: 54 160 646 999

