



# Reflect

Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle  
Reconciliation Action Plan





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## Acknowledgement of Country and Traditional Owners

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Australia's First Peoples and the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work to build a stronger, more equitable, kinder society, that values children, young people, families and individuals.

We honour the wisdom of and pay respect to, Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the spiritual culture of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is located on the traditional lands of the Awabakal, Biripi, Darkinjung, Kamilaroi, Wiradjuri, Wonnarua and Worimi people.

This Diocese acknowledges the important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander occupation and care of the land by our Traditional Custodians that we live on and their continual spiritual and cultural connection to Country. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as having been on this land for over 60,000 years.

### Disclaimer

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are respectfully advised that this publication may contain the words, voices, names, images and/or descriptions of people who have passed away.



St Joseph's Primary School, Dungog

# A message from the Administrator of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

All Australians have much to learn from the cultures, spirituality and knowledge of country of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people." This sentence forms the opening line of 'Part 1' of the Statements and Motions of the second session of the Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia held July 2022, in Sydney.

Titled '*Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts*' this statement acknowledges the unique relationship that our First Nation's peoples have played in the unfolding of culture and life here in Australia from the beginning, as well as the unique relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have as members of Australian society in this modern era. To have a voice and to be heard is a wonderful gift that this Reconciliation Action Plan will assist us all, to offer and receive.

Australia's peoples are as diverse as her environment and landscape; was, is and will always be. I believe we are truly blessed when we embrace and learn from the diversity around us and can acknowledge respectfully the first Australians and

their traditions under whom this land flourished.

There is much synergy between the spirituality of the traditional custodians of Australia and our own Catholic spirituality. Their symbols, stories, and use of language in ritual has much in common with our own. Our own Catholic ancestors learnt to adapt from those around them as our own traditions developed.

This *Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan* is an important step for the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle and will shape our ongoing journey as a Catholic community. I pray it will empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have a voice that is heard, helping all to see their gifts, to share their spirituality and culture for the benefit of all.



F G Ba  
Diocesan Administrator - Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

## Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

The Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle joins a network of more than 1,100 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 the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle 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 Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine  
Chief Executive Officer  
Reconciliation Australia

## Our Diocese

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle represents the Catholic Church in a region extending from Lake Macquarie to Taree and inland to Merriwa and Murrurundi. A diocese is a community of Christ's faithful – it represents a portion of the people of God in a particular area, which is entrusted to a bishop.

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle serves the people of the Newcastle, Hunter and Manning regions which have a population of some 160,000 Catholics. Through its parishes, pastoral groups, and agencies of Catholic Schools Office, CatholicCare Social Services, St Nicholas and others the Diocese provides services of faith, spiritual, pastoral, educational, social welfare, and community development.

The Diocese strives to meet the dynamic needs of our employees and prides itself as a service provider of choice in the early learning, education and social

services sectors of the Hunter and Manning regions. The Diocese has two Diocesan Offices, 38 parishes, 58 Catholic schools, eight CatholicCare Social Services offices, and within St Nicholas; 11 Early Education Centres, 35 OOSH services, and five Pathways programs.

The Diocese employs approximately 4,000 staff across its parishes and agencies. There are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed across the Diocese and its agencies. The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is developing a plan to be able to accurately collect information on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in all our agencies.

Under the care of the Bishop, the Diocese is divided into 38 parish communities, many of which comprise several smaller communities with their own churches. These communities, served by the clergy, have their own activities, finances and ministries such as visiting the sick, organising youth activities and more.

The official social services agency of the Catholic Church in the Diocese, CatholicCare offers support and empowerment to those in need regardless of their religion, age, gender, physical and intellectual capacity, or ethnicity.

The Catholic Development Fund exists to further the pastoral mission of the Catholic Church. By harnessing the financial resources of the Catholic community we are able to provide cost-effective financial arrangements for capital works and other essential pastoral programs.

The Catholic Schools Office (CSO) is responsible for the leadership, operation and management of 58 schools that educate more than 20,000 students in the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

## Office of Safeguarding

The Office of Safeguarding is responsible for overseeing the safeguarding of all children of the Diocese as well as the communities in parishes, schools, and other Diocesan ministries. The Office of Safeguarding works in partnership with the Catholic Schools Office, CatholicCare, and other Diocesan ministries to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and young people in the Diocese. The Office of Safeguarding also provides support and guidance to parishes and schools in implementing safeguarding policies and procedures. The Office of Safeguarding is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for all children and young people in the Diocese.

# Our Reconciliation Action Plan - Reflect

Our vision for reconciliation is to follow the principles of Catholic Social Justice Teaching; to promote a vision of a just society that is grounded in biblical revelations, and principles to end poverty, promote justice, uphold dignity, love of God, and love of neighbour.

We acknowledge in the past, wrongful policies and practices by the Australian Government and Churches, including the Catholic Church, resulted in discrimination and disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This has caused many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to experience discrimination and disadvantage at a level that causes great sorrow and shame to many Australians.

We acknowledge Human Rights policies and statements that recognise and protect the rights of indigenous people across the world and within Australia. In the Australian context, these declarations and documents relate to the rights of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We must show special care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within the context of trauma-informed care.

We believe in the value of human dignity, which provides people with the capacity to develop fully. We hope that the Reflect RAP and future RAPs, will help the Diocese deliver reconciliation actions aimed at closing social and economic gaps to ensure the human dignity of all First Nations Peoples we engage with, employ, educate or assist.

In our first step in our reconciliation journey, we are committed to:

- Establishing and strengthening mutually beneficial relationships.
- Including and listening to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in decision making and leadership.
- Raising internal and external awareness of our RAP.
- Promoting reconciliation across our Diocesan parishes, schools, and agencies.

Aboriginal Catholic Ministry began in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle in the 1980s with the support of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, the bishop, clergy and laity in parishes and agencies.

In 2021 the leadership of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Ministry Group, approved a proposal for a RAP and a Reconciliation Action Plan Reference Group (RRG) was established to develop the first RAP for submission to Reconciliation Australia. Membership of the RAPWG, is comprised of eleven people, five of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The RRG will consult to gain feedback and cultural guidance on the Reflect RAP deliverables, from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and key stakeholders.

The implementation of the RAP is primarily the responsibility of Director Pastoral Ministries as the RAP Project Manager. Pastoral Ministries works closely with Catholic parishes, schools and diocesan agencies across the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. Collectively we seek to raise internal and external awareness of the Reflect RAP so as to promote reconciliation across our Diocesan parishes, schools and agencies, with the support of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle Administrator, CEO and Directors, to embed its implementation.





## Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) representatives

An internal RAP Reference Group, in consultation with other diocesan agencies, convened to develop the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle Reconciliation Action Plan and will regularly monitor its achievements, address challenges, and report to the Diocesan Leadership Group on the achievements, challenges and deliverables of the RAP.

A Terms of Reference document will be developed to support the goals of the RAP Reference Group. The RAP Reference Group will launch, promote and develop a reporting and monitoring system. Members will engage and consult with key stakeholders on the implementation of the Diocesan Reconciliation Action Plan into their parishes, schools, and agencies.

- R G Ba** Diocesan Administrator  
**T a B** Director Pastoral Ministries  
**Ga C** Director CatholicCare Social Services Hunter-Manning  
**Da H a** Executive Director St Nicholas  
**G a M b a** Director of Schools  
**R Ma M** Chancellor and Canonical Advisor  
**S a Sca** Chief Executive Officer  
**L a T** Chief Operating Officer  
**S a T a** Director of Safeguarding
- T a B** Director Pastoral Ministries, Chair  
**E ab Ba** Communications Project Adviser  
**L Ca b** Gumbaynggirr Woman, Aboriginal Education Officer, Catholic Schools Office  
**V c C** Ministry Coordinator, St Joseph's High School, Aberdeen  
**Da D** Life Story and Cultural Planner, CatholicCare Social Services Hunter-Manning  
**Rac Ja** Head of Communications and Marketing  
**Da McG** Diocesan Director Catholic Missions  
**K a M a** Gomerai Woman, Business Development Officer, School to Work Program, National Rugby League  
**B a R** Teacher (IESIP), San Clemente High School, Mayfield  
**J R b** Kamilaroi Woman, PhD Candidate  
**A S** Project Coordinator, Pastoral Ministries



## Priority areas

## Relationships

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	1.1. Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence.	Nov 2022	Pastoral Ministries - Mission and Outreach Manager
	1.2. Research best practices and principles that support partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Nov 2022	Pastoral Ministries - Mission and Outreach Manager
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	2.1. Plan for each parish, school and diocesan agencies to organise at least one NRW activity each year.	Dec 2022	Director of Pastoral Ministries and CEO
	2.2. Register the NRW events on the NRW website.	April 2023	Pastoral Ministries - Mission and Outreach Manager
	2.3. Identify and participate in an externally organised NRW event.	May 2023	Pastoral Ministries - Mission and Outreach Manager
	2.4. Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May 2023	CEO
	2.5. RAP Reference Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May to 3 June 2023	Director Pastoral Ministries
	2.6. Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation material to our staff.	27 May to 3 June 2023	Head of Communications
	2.7. Extend an invitation to anyone to share their reconciliation experiences or stories and publish, with their permission, on our news channels (MN News, Dio update, Parish bulletins and school newsletters).	27 May to 3 June 2023	Head of Communications
3. Raise internal and external awareness of our RAP to promote reconciliation across our Diocesan parishes, schools, and agencies.	3.1. Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff and the Diocesan community.	May 2023	Head of Communications
	3.2. Identify external bodies that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	May 2023	Pastoral Ministries - Mission and Outreach Manager
	3.3. Identify RAP and like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with in our reconciliation		

# Respect



ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
5. Provide cultural learning opportunities to increase our understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural, spirituality, histories, and achievements.	5.1. 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	Director Pastoral Ministries
	5.2. Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	June 2023	Director Pastoral Ministries
	5.3. Provide opportunities for senior leaders, staff and members of the community to participate in cultural awareness training.	March 2023	Pastoral Ministries - Mission and Outreach Manager
6. Promote an understanding of the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols, such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country, to ensure there is a shared meaning.	6.1. Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the land and waters within our organisation's operational area.	March 2023	Pastoral Ministries - Mission and Outreach Manager
	6.2. Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocol.	December 2022	Director Pastoral Ministries
	6.3. Engage Elders to provide a Welcome to Country at our significant events and liturgies.	August 2022	Director Pastoral Ministries
	6.4. Develop, implement and communicate a Cultural Protocols document for Acknowledgement of Country.	November 2022	Director Pastoral Ministries
	6.5. Develop a video Acknowledgement of Country.	November 2022	Director of Catholic Schools
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	7.1. Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week.	June 2023	Head of Communications
	7.2. Introduce staff and the Diocesan Community to NAIDOC week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2023	Pastoral Ministries - Mission and Outreach Manager
	7.3. Review Human Resources policies and procedures to provide opportunities to participate in cultural opportunities, celebrations, activities and ceremonies e.g. NAIDOC Week.	June 2023	Head of Human Resources
	7.4. RAP Reference Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	3 July to 10 July 2023	Director Pastoral Ministries
	7.5. Provide opportunities for all staff to participate in cultural opportunities, celebrations and ceremonies e.g. NAIDOC Week.	3 July to 10 July 2023	Pastoral Ministries - Mission and Outreach Manager

## Opportunities

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
8. Investigate opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and engagement outcomes through the Diocese.	8.1. Build diversity data forms within mnpeople to collect relevant data on our employees and volunteers who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	October 2022	Head of Human Resources
	8.2. Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employees and volunteers to understand barriers to employment and opportunities for pathways to employment and volunteering across the Diocese.	June 2023	Head of Human Resources
	8.3. Develop a proposed list of opportunities to increase the participation of Indigenous people across DoMN to the DLG for consideration and resourcing.	January 2023	Head of Human Resources
	8.4. Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned business.	July 2023	Head of Finance
9. Provide opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers and services diversity within our Diocese.	9.1. Investigate Supply National Membership.	August 2023	Head of Finance

## Governance

ACTION	DELIVERABLE	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Reference Group (RRG) to drive			

# Glossary Terms

ANTaR - Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation

CFM – Council for Mission

CSO – Catholic Schools Office

CCSS – CatholicCare Social Services Hunter-Manning

DLG – Diocesan Leadership Group

RAP – Reconciliation Action Plan

RRG – RAP Reference Group

NAIDOC – National Aboriginal and Islanders Day  
Observance Committee

NATSICC - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Catholic Council

NRW – National Reconciliation Week

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