



BETTER PLACE AUSTRALIA
Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan
October 2023 - September 2025



Acknowledgement

Better Place Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We pay respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate their continuing connection to Country.

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A message from the Chairperson of Better Place Australia

I am delighted that Better Place Australia's commitment to working with First Nations peoples towards reconciliation has been acknowledged and endorsed. On behalf of our Board and Better Place Australia I am proud to present our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for 2023–2025.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our RAP working group for their passion and commitment. Not only have they worked tirelessly in developing this RAP, they have also ensured that the actions detailed in this plan become part of the DNA of our organisation.

I would also like to thank Aboriginal Elder Uncle Shane Charles, a proud Yorta Yorta, Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung man, for his guidance in developing this RAP. And finally, thanks to Reconciliation Australia for their advice and oversight through this process.

The process of developing our RAP has been a powerful learning experience for Better Place Australia. It has enabled us to better understand and empathise with the experiences of First Nations Peoples. This has strengthened our resolve to contribute, wherever we can, to creating culturally safe environments, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel acknowledged, valued and empowered.

We now have a great readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

We are excited about the prospect of working more closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, to listen to and learn from them, and to walk together as allies along the path to Reconciliation. We are proud of this endorsement which demonstrates our sincere commitment to making a meaningful impact towards Australia's reconciliation journey.

Rachel Holthouse
Chair of the Board
Better Place Australia



A message from CEO of Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia commends Better Place Australia on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Commencing an Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build strong foundations and relationships, ensuring sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for Better Place Australia to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff, and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, Better Place Australia will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process, as well.

With close to 3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Better Place Australia is part of a strong network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Better Place Australia's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Better Place Australia on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia



Our vision for reconciliation

Better Place Australia envisions an Australia where all people experience positive relationships, truly value each other and live safer, more confident lives. This means a reconciled Australia, where First Nations people feel safe, respected, valued and empowered. As an organisation, we aspire to be a true ally to First Nations people, to learn from their ways and to provide a workplace and range of services that feel welcoming, safe and supportive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Further, we see reconciliation as a journey for all Australians and hope to work collectively with our stakeholders and the broader community in this space moving forward.

Our business

Better Place Australia is a not-for-profit community organisation, providing family and individual support services since 1986. We aim to strengthen individual wellbeing, support family relationships and contribute to safer, more inclusive communities.

Better Place Australia operates from six main offices, including our head office in Cheltenham, and a further 22 co-locations across Victoria. We provide services from our locations, over video and phone, and via outreach. We employ around 150 staff including psychologists, social workers, support workers, family consultants, financial counsellors and family dispute resolution practitioners. Currently none of our staff identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

Our core services include family mediation, family therapy, adult and child counselling, individual and family support services, care coordination, financial counselling, elder abuse prevention, suicide prevention and postvention, and psychoeducational group programs. In addition, we perform community engagement, primary prevention, research and advocacy work. In 2022, BPA provided services to over 10,000 clients and delivered over 48,000 sessions of support, including for some of the most vulnerable communities across Victoria.

Better Place Australia engages with a broad range of stakeholders, including Federal, State and Local Government, Primary Health Networks, community and allied health care providers, family and relationship services, family violence services, legal services, schools and youth services, and the community. These relationships provide valuable opportunities for mutual learning and influence, and through our RAP we look forward to developing existing and new collaborations to extend our reach and impact in relation to Reconciliation.

Our RAP

Better Place Australia recognised the opportunity to actively contribute to reconciliation in Australia in 2019, when we created our first plan for reconciliation and established a working group. The working group has continued to meet regularly to reflect on and learn about reconciliation. The group have led the implementation of Acknowledgement of Country, and coordinated events for National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. The group have also coordinated cultural safety training (in the form of online learning modules for all staff) and regularly shares information and resources related to reconciliation internally via our 'Loop'. We are now excited to align ourselves with Reconciliation Australia through the creation of our first Innovate RAP.

Our RAP Working Group is endorsed by our CEO and Board and supported by Aboriginal Elder Uncle Shane Charles, a proud Yorta Yorta, Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung man. The RAP group is comprised of the following members:

- Education and Community Engagement Lead (RAP Chair)
- Executive Manager Human Resources (Senior RAP Champion)
- Social Media and Communications Coordinator
- Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner and Team Leader
- Hospital Outreach Post-Suicidal Engagement (HOPE) Support Coordinator
- Care Finder Practitioner and Support Officer
- Children's Counsellor

The strength of our current RAP working group is its inclusion of members from across various levels and services of the organisation. Since we do not have any internal staff members who can provide First Nations representation, we reached out to engage with Uncle Shane Charles and are very grateful for his guidance and wisdom in the development of this RAP. Moving forward, we are committed to building and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and to ensuring the work we do is guided by First Nations voices.



Relationships

Better Place Australia was established to strengthen and support relationships, and this continues to be at the heart of all we do. We recognise the special place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land, and of the important connection between relationships and reconciliation. In alignment with our organisational commitment to making a difference, we seek to build genuine relationships with First Nations people, particularly those in the regions where we work, to learn from and with them, and to be an ally in reconciliation.

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement. Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	<p>June 2024</p> <p>December 2024</p>	<p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p> <p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p>
<p>2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. Organise at least one NRW event each year. Register all our NRW events on Reconciliation Australia's NRW website. 	<p>May 2024 & 2025</p> <p>27 May - 3 June 2024 & 2025</p> <p>27 May - 3 June 2024 & 2025</p> <p>27 May - 3 June 2024 & 2025</p> <p>May 2024 & 2025</p>	<p>Social Media and Communications Coordinator</p>

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and implement a staff engagement strategy to raise awareness of reconciliation across our workforce. Communicate our commitment to reconciliation publicly. Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes. Collaborate with RAP organisations and other like-minded organisations to develop innovative approaches to advance reconciliation. Follow and demonstrate support for The Uluru Statement from the Heart and Victoria’s Treaty process. 	Review May 2024 & 2025 Review April 2024 & 2025 Review April 2024 & 2025 Review April 2024 & 2025 Review April 2024 & 2025	Education and Community Engagement Lead Education and Community Engagement Lead Education and Community Engagement Lead Education and Community Engagement Lead Education and Community Engagement Lead
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-discrimination policy for our organisation. Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy. Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism. 	June 2024 December 2024 December 2024 December 2024	Executive Manager Human Resources Executive Manager Human Resources Executive Manager Human Resources Executive Manager Human Resources



Respect

Better Place Australia acknowledges and respects the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their ongoing connection to country and culture, and their right to self-determination. In alignment with our commitment to making a difference, we seek to enhance and demonstrate our respect for First Nations peoples and culture through authentic engagement in cultural learning and cultural celebrations.

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. • Consult local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to inform our cultural learning strategy. • Develop, implement, and communicate a cultural learning strategy document for our staff. • Provide opportunities for RAP Working Group members, HR managers and other key leadership staff to participate in formal and structured cultural learning. • Explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Models, considering opportunities for staff learning and service implementation. 	<p>Review June 2024 & 2025</p>	<p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p>
<p>6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. • Develop, implement and communicate a cultural protocol document, including protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. • Invite a local Traditional Owner or Custodian to provide a Welcome to Country or other appropriate cultural protocol at significant events each year. • Continue with Acknowledgement of Country or other appropriate protocols at the commencement of important meetings. 	<p>November 2023 & 2024</p> <p>November 2024</p> <p>Review November 2024 & 2025</p> <p>Review November 2024 & 2025</p>	<p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p>

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. • Review HR policies and procedures to remove barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week. • Promote and encourage participation in external NAIDOC events to all staff. 	<p>First week in July 2024 & 2025</p> <p>June 2024</p> <p>First week in July 2024 & 2025</p>	<p>Social Media and Communications Coordinator</p> <p>Executive Manager Human Resources</p> <p>Social Media and Communications Coordinator</p>



Opportunities

Better Place Australia is guided by the principle that all people matter and is committed to continuous improvement. We believe that employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led businesses would bring great value to our organisation. In alignment with our commitment to being enterprising, we seek to strengthen our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples, communities and business, and to ensure our organisation is safe and welcoming for all.

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. • Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on our recruitment, retention and professional development strategy. • Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy. • Advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. • Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace. 	<p>September 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>November 2024</p> <p>November 2024</p> <p>November 2024</p>	<p>Executive Manager Human Resources</p>
<p>9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy. • Investigate Supply Nation membership. • Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff. • Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. • Develop commercial relationships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses. 	<p>December 2024</p> <p>January 2024</p> <p>Review December 2024 & 2025</p> <p>Review December 2024 & 2025</p> <p>Review December 2024 & 2025</p>	<p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p>



Governance

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG. • Review and Maintain Terms of Reference for the RWG. • Meet at least four times per year to drive and monitor RAP implementation. 	Review February 2024 & 2025 February 2024 Review December 2023 & 2024	Education and Community Engagement Lead Education and Community Engagement Lead Education and Community Engagement Lead
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define resource needs for RAP implementation. • Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments. • Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. • Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management. 	Review February 2024 & 2025 Review February 2024 & 2025 Review February 2024 & 2025 Review February 2024 & 2025	Executive Manager Human Resources Executive Manager Human Resources Executive Manager Human Resources Executive Manager Human Resources Education and Community Engagement Lead

ACTIONS	DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence. • Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire. • Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. • Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly. • Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually. • Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia’s biennial Workplace RAP Barometer. 	<p>June annually</p> <p>1 August annually</p> <p>30 September, annually</p> <p>February, May, August & November, 2023, 2024 & 2025</p> <p>May 2024 & 2025</p> <p>March 2024</p>	<p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p> <p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p> <p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p> <p>Executive Manager Human Resources</p> <p>Social Media and Communications Coordinator</p> <p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p>
<p>13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register via Reconciliation Australia’s website to begin developing our next RAP. • Submit a traffic light report to Reconciliation Australia to help build and inform our next RAP. 	<p>August 2024</p> <p>August 2024</p>	<p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p> <p>Education and Community Engagement Lead</p>

About the art

This art honours the commitment of Better Place Australia and their dedication to a better society.

When we: 'heal the self, we heal the collective'. First Nations principles remind us to share, listen and connect. We can be better problem solvers when we have access to the right resources.

Australia has a lot to reconcile and our most vulnerable need support in having their voice heard and platforms that promote healing.

The individual in the centre is receiving holistic support; they feel empowered and are able to navigate their life's journey with resilience.

Their healing can have a profound influence on their circles; family, friends, teammates, co-workers and community. The ripples acknowledge this good energy radiating out to others.

About the artist

Bitja (Dixon Patten) is a proud Gunnai, Gunditjmara, Dhudhuroa and Yorta Yorta man with blood connection to Wiradjuri, Yuin, Wemba Wemba, Wadi Wadi, Monaro and Djab Wurrung.

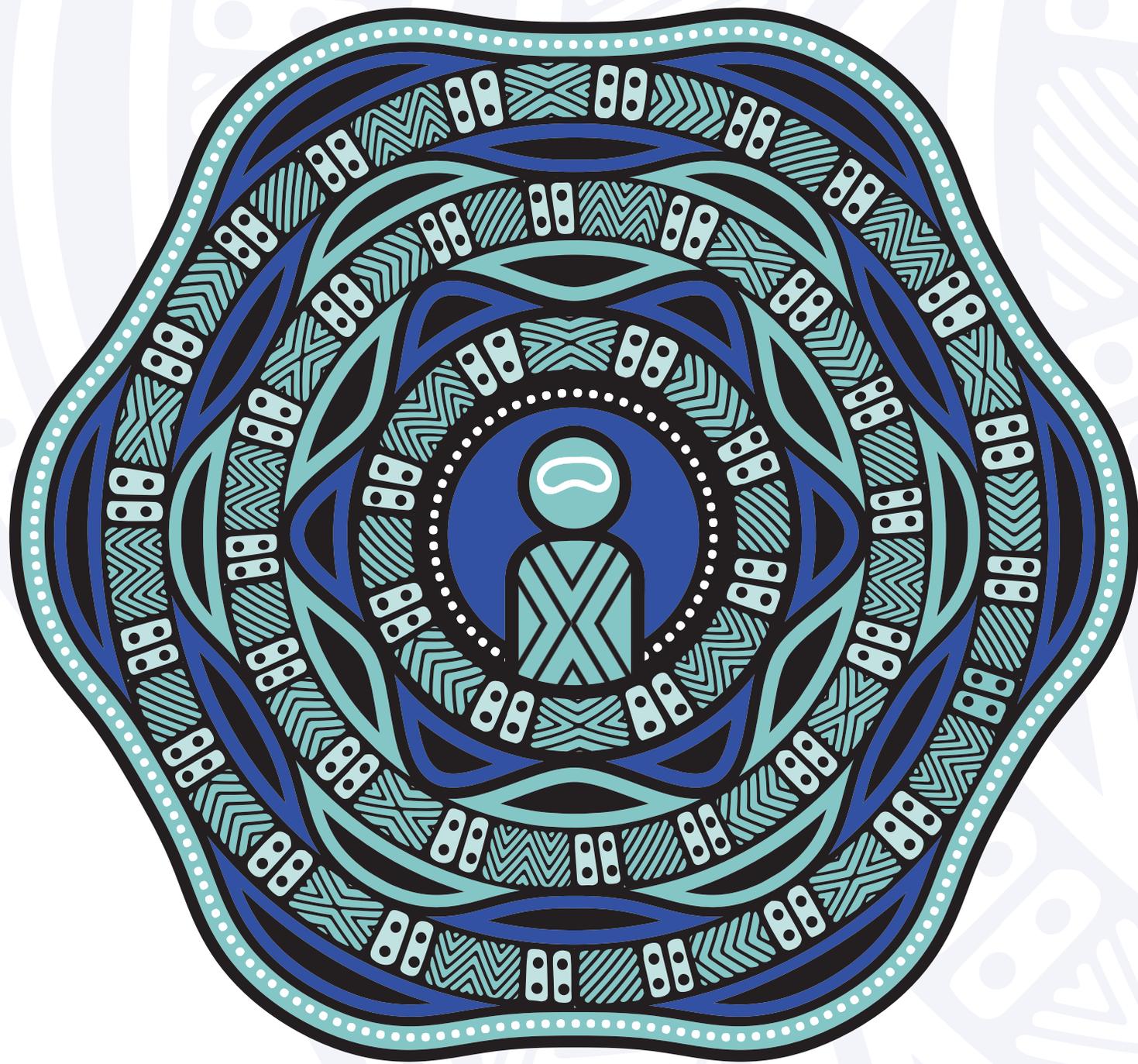
He is an artist, designer, mentor, influencer and a strong community advocate.

Bitja's artistic practice is informed through a strong cultural value that his family and community have imprinted into his mind, heart, and spirit and the narratives often delve deep into familial history, often in celebration but also in search of healing.

Bitja's exploration of culture and connection and his willingness to share and learn are informed by the art of Deep Listening, or in his native Yorta Yorta language 'Gulpa Ngawul'.

This practice has guided many of Bitja's expressions by uncovering the layers, exploring trauma, exploring grief, reclaiming culture, bridging gaps, being accountable, learning to understand and also challenge systems, influencing spaces and learning to celebrate self.

He takes his role as a storyteller seriously and feels humbled to continue this strong aspect of Aboriginal culture.





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