

Neuroscience Research Australia

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan

January 2021 - June 2022



Art by Mary-Jane Page



About the artist

Mary-Jane Page

Mary-Jane Page is a freelance-professional visual Aboriginal artist from the La Perouse community in the Eastern suburbs of Sydney, Australia.

She is a successful community arts worker, group facilitator and educator. Mary-Jane is a member of the Wodi Wodi tribe and a direct descendant of King Billy and Queen Emma of La Perouse. Having experienced domestic violence, she developed a method of art which provides therapeutic, healing and personal growth. Her artistic process is organic, and is created with humour, genuine sensitivity and deep respect.

She approaches her work with an attitude of telling the story in symbolic and deeply spiritual imagery, in visual art, theatrical performance, music, and dance; all of which she accomplishes with grace and intelligence.

She has worked in many parts of Australia, as well as the United States of America, where she not only performed, but she was also received as a respected Elder of the Wodi Wodi People as an Indigenous Australian delegate, fulfilling protocol duties for First Nation Tribes of America.

As well as being an accomplished artist, she is also passionate about social justice, human rights and Indigenous arts, advocating for the struggle to end violence in all communities.

Mary-Jane was commissioned by Neuroscience Research Australia for the Koori Dementia Care Project.



Image of the launch of Mary-Jane Page's painting (Trek of hope for a dementia cure 1), 2012. From left, Holly Mack, Gail Daylight, Tony Broe, Mary-Jane Page (artist), Uncle Les Davison, Sharon Wall.

About the artwork



Mary-Jane Page

Trek of hope for a dementia cure 1

2012

Acrylic on board

I wondered to myself, how do you paint dementia? So I sat in quiet time and thought and it and did it in an artistic way; best way I could do with heaps of feeling. In the centre of the brain is the Eye of the Mind. It's just part of our existence; the eye will always be there. The black spot is the dementia, red represents blood flow, the tracks symbolise memory leaving, gold brings sunlight and flowers represent hope. The black in the background symbolises loneliness and green acts like a calming.

Mary-Jane Page is an Aboriginal artist from the La Perouse community, a member of the Wodi Wodi tribe and a direct descendent of King Billy and Queen Emma. Her artistic process is organic and created with humour, sensitivity and deep respect. She approaches her work through *telling the story* in a symbolic and deeply spiritual imagery.



Mary-Jane Page

Trek of hope for a dementia cure 2

2012

Acrylic on board

The second painting is the same yarn, but a different story. The large black part is the dementia and the silver shapes are brain cells. The two serpents in our Aboriginal culture are the protectors and the healers; they also represent the medical profession. The circles embody the sadness that families feel; the purple is giving strength; the green is a healing mechanism. All my symbolisms are in colour reflecting my artistic view of dementia.

An Aboriginal artist from the La Perouse community, Mary-Jane Page has worked across Australia and in the USA as a respected Elder of the Wodi Wodi People fulfilling protocol duties for the First Nation Tribes of America. She is passionate about social justice advocating an end to violence in all communities. She has conducted arts and education workshops for the disadvantaged encouraging the painting of personal stories.

Message from our champions

NeuRA is committed to incorporating the principles of equity, dignity and inclusion of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

We recognise the historical and ongoing inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and we respect their diverse cultures and experiences. We identified the development and implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) as a priority activity, to formalise NeuRA's commitment to reconciliation and building a culturally safe, inclusive and respectful organisation.

Our RAP formalises existing efforts to incorporate the principles of equity, dignity and inclusion of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures by providing a strategic framework for action, and accountability.

NeuRA is dedicated to progressing national reconciliation efforts in Australia and upholding the vision of the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart.

This RAP represents NeuRA's commitment to improving cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples both within the organisation as well as in our interactions with the broader community.

For over 10 years, NeuRA has been engaged in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and ageing research with urban and regional communities and services across NSW and with other stakeholders nationally. Our work involves engagement, service outreach, formal partnerships and other collaborations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. NeuRA's current primary channel of partnership and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities occurs through our Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program.

Prof Tony Broe AM, who has had a long and distinguished career in geriatric medicine and has set up health services in Neurosciences, Aged Care, Community Health and Aboriginal Health.



Message from our champions

Tony established the Aboriginal Health and Ageing Research Group at NeuRA in 2008, and commenced the Koori Growing Old Well Study (KGOWS). This longitudinal study has examined the links between social and biomedical risks, lifespan and late-life health and cognitive outcomes with Aboriginal communities in NSW; with a focus on research translation into co-designed and culturally responsive healthy ageing and dementia care programs.

This important research and translational work continues today, through KGOWS and a range of other related projects, with a strong, committed and diverse leadership team at NeuRA, including Group Leader Dr Kylie Radford, Honorary Research Associate Gail Daylight and Senior Research Translation Coordinator Terry Donovan.

In particular, Terry, a Gumbayngirr/Biripi man and respected Elder, has provided valuable guidance to these projects and to NeuRA staff through providing cultural awareness training programs. Terry has challenged us all to deepen our own understanding of Aboriginal cultures and our commitment to reflecting on the past and present, and working towards enhancing respect and reconciliation within NeuRA as an organisation, and through the impact of our research and contributions to the wider community and society.

NeuRA has research activities which focus on the priorities of the Aboriginal communities with whom we collaborate, further working with local Aboriginal health workers, Elders and other community members to determine research priorities and support existing services or programs. Our goal in conducting these activities is to listen to the voices of Aboriginal community members, academics and organisations, reflect on their insights, and share the knowledge gained through our research and knowledge translation in various formats to a range of audiences.

We recognise that the development of our RAP will be an ongoing and evolving process that requires continued engagement and consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples wherever we undertake our research, as well as within the broader community.



Professor Peter R Schofield AO
Chief Executive Officer



Dr Kate Johnston
Chief Operating Officer

Our Business

Our Vision & Mission

“Our vision is to prevent and cure disease and disability of the brain and nervous system through leadership, excellence and innovation in neuroscience research.”

About Us

NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent centres of research on the brain and nervous system in Australia. Recognised as an international leader in research, NeuRA is changing the face of research into diseases and disorders of the brain and nervous system, not just in Australia, but around the world. Our eminent neuroscientists, clinicians and outstanding research leaders relate laboratory-based research to clinical research involving patients to ensure that our discoveries are translated into health benefits for people as soon as possible.

The institute staff comprise 300 people, including over 160 paid staff as well as research students and conjoint or honorary staff who work in 34 neuroscience research teams spread across five broad themes. NeuRA currently employs 7 staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander – this makes up 4.5% of the paid workforce.

NeuRA is an independent, not-for-profit, medical research institute. It is affiliated with the University of New South Wales and South Eastern Sydney Local Health District.

The Institute has a single location – on Barker Street, Randwick. In addition, there are also some individuals and small teams who work offsite at the following locations:

- Kempsey, NSW
- Coffs Harbour, NSW
- Airds, NSW
- Blackburn, VIC
- Canberra, ACT
- Adelaide, SA
- Hobart, TAS
- Paradise Point, QLD
- Joondalup, WA.

NeuRA has a national staff cohort employed within Australia however the reach of our research is international.

Our Business

Our Values

Excellence, Innovation, Human Impact, Respect, Integrity, Collaboration.

- We Aspire to **Excellence** in Research
- We Value Inquiring Minds and **Innovation**
- We Strive for Meaningful **Human Health Impacts** and Outcomes
- We **Respect**, Trust and Care for Each Other
- We Stand for **Integrity** and Accountability in All We Do
- We Build Long Lasting **Collaborative** Relationships



Image of the Aboriginal Health and Ageing Team at NeuRA – From back left: Stacey Donovan, Wendy Allan, Rebecca Mann, Madeleine Veinovic, Lauren Poulos, Ellen Finlay, Alison Timbery, Kylie Sullivan; Front: Kylie Radford, Terry Donovan, Margaret Anderson, Tony Broe.

Our Research

The focus of NeuRA's work has always been on neuroscience.

“ Our research portfolio includes both clinical and laboratory research into neurological, psychiatric and psychological disorders. ”

Our research activity is organised into five themes:

- **Ageing & Neurodegeneration:** Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal dementia and other dementias, Parkinson's disease, Motor Neuron Disease, ageing research in indigenous populations, stroke rehabilitation
- **Brain Structure & Function:** brain mapping for research and clinical use, biochemical and structural bases of brain function, development of MRI methods
- **Neural Injury:** spinal cord injury, assessment and prevention of road trauma in children
- **Mental Illness:** schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression and autism
- **Sensation, Movement, Balance & Falls:** human movement, fatigue, sleep apnoea, balance and vision, neural control of muscles, falls in older adults, chronic pain

NeuRA houses several specialist research facilities, including the Sydney Brain Bank. The institute also has an on-site 3T MRI imaging research facility.

Why

NeuRA is dedicated to progressing national reconciliation efforts in Australia and upholding the vision of the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart. This RAP represents NeuRA's commitment to improving cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples both within the organisation as well as in our interactions with the broader community.

Our RAP formalises existing efforts to incorporate the principles of equity, dignity and inclusion of all Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures by providing a strategic framework for action, and accountability. We intend that this RAP will be a living document, continually updated to address key areas requiring improvement into the future.



Image from left: Colleen Cawood and Tony Broe

How

We have established a RAP working group (see *page 11*) that will work in collaboration with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities in addition to our internal stakeholders to ensure the timely implementation of our RAP and its continued growth and development.

We aspire to implement our RAP in the spirit of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. In doing so, we recognise the historical and ongoing inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and we respect their diverse cultures and experiences.

We recognise that the development of our RAP will be an ongoing journey that requires continued engagement and consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as the broader community.

We acknowledge the impact of colonisation, and we aim to walk together to improve outcomes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through a broad range of strategies as part of our RAP.

This Reflect RAP is championed by Professor Peter Schofield AO, CEO, and Dr Kate Johnston, COO.

What

For over 10 years, NeuRA has been engaged in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and ageing research with urban and regional communities and services across NSW and with other stakeholders nationally. This has involved engagement, service outreach, formal partnerships and other collaborations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Through this research and community engagement, NeuRA has benefitted from increased opportunities for building cultural awareness and inclusiveness within the organisation, beginning a journey towards reconciliation. An Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee was formed in 2017, and in 2019, this committee identified the development and implementation of a RAP as a priority activity, to formalise NeuRA's commitment to reconciliation and building a culturally safe, inclusive and respectful organisation.



Image from left: Alison Timbery, Kylie Sullivan, Terry Donovan, Margaret Anderson

RAP Working Group Members

Dr Wendy Allan
Research Coordinator

Dr Kylie Radford (Chair)
Senior Research Scientist

Dr Sophie Carter
Postdoctoral Fellow

Dr Daina Sturnieks
Senior Research Scientist

Ms Nicole Ee
PhD Student

**The following representatives are
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait
Islander staff:**

Ms Ellen Finlay
PhD Student

Ms Belinda Ducker
Research Assistant

Ms Lauren Rooker
Human Resources Manager

Mr Terrence Donovan
**Senior Research Translation
Coordinator**

Dr Anna Hudson
Research Fellow

Mrs Lauren Poulos
Project Coordinator

Dr Louise Lavrencic
Postdoctoral Fellow

Ms Kylie Sullivan
Research Assistant

Ms Deborah McKay
**Administration and Compliance
Manager**



Our Partnerships

NeuRA's current primary channel of partnership and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities occurs through the NeuRA Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program. The Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program maintains a number of longstanding and respectful community partnerships with more than 10 years of collaboration with specific Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

Important collaborations with a number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) and Local Aboriginal Land Council in urban and regional locations across New South Wales (including La Perouse, Campbelltown, Coffs Harbour, Nambucca Heads, and Kempsey communities) are currently in place for both research and knowledge translation projects. Importantly, the Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program focuses on the priorities of the Aboriginal communities with whom we collaborate, further working with local Aboriginal health workers, Elders and other community members to determine research priorities and support existing services or programs.

In addition, the Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program is dedicated to fostering the capacity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff and collaborators, maintaining employment for research staff recruited through Aboriginal communities to help manage, guide and run all projects being carried out.

The Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program also engages an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee, which includes collaborators and investigators who are involved in the various projects; this Steering Committee is vital for governance and guidance of all the projects and activities of this program.



Image of a smoking ceremony outside of NeuRA, 2019.

The Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program at NeuRA has engaged in and led a number of activities to begin the journey to reconciliation. NeuRA has supported and encouraged Cultural Awareness and Inclusiveness training for all staff, inviting a respected Elder to lead an all-staff training seminar in 2018.

Importantly, this training addressed issues around colonisation, Australian history, and intergenerational trauma whilst emphasising the importance of respecting Aboriginal cultural traditions. In early 2019, NeuRA hosted a 2-day research translation event, 'The Growing Old Well Gathering' which was held for Aboriginal health workers, service providers, Elders and other community members, to share outcomes of research and ongoing translation activities, build capacity in research and aged care, strengthen partnerships, as well as consider priorities for future activities.

The Gathering commenced with a smoking ceremony and traditional Aboriginal dance performance, to which all NeuRA staff were invited and many participated in this opportunity. Feedback from Aboriginal community members and health workers in attendance was extremely positive.

The Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program is engaged in research co-mentorship and capacity building with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff. This includes participating in research networks and training seminars together, as well as attending academic and cultural events together. For example, in December 2018, an internal training program was organised for Aboriginal community-based researchers within the Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program, which included general research and specific project skills, as well as a guided tour from various relevant research groups/facilities across NeuRA (i.e. brain bank, brain mapping lab, MRI). Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program team members also regularly attend community events and NeuRA seminars, and present research at Indigenous and non-Indigenous health conferences.

At all of these events, the Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program team members strive to listen to the voices of Aboriginal community members, academics and organisations, reflect on their insights, and share the knowledge gained through our research (knowledge translation) in various formats to a range of audiences.

The team's commitment to disseminating research findings in ways that are culturally appropriate extends to hiring Aboriginal owned and operated design companies, Aboriginal content experts to shape our online platforms as well as employing local artists to help us incorporate artworks that illustrate the themes of our research findings and act as a further dimension of knowledge translation.

While the Aboriginal Health and Ageing Program has achieved significant strides towards reconciliation, we acknowledge much more can be accomplished at the broader organisational level. NeuRA's next goal is to use existing frameworks for success to enhance community engagement, collaboration, and workforce development with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations across all research groups.



Image from left: Uncle Les Davison and Uncle Athol Dixon, with the NeuRA team at Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation NAIDOC Week, 2011.



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.	Feb 2021	Team Leader, Aboriginal Health & Ageing Program <i>in partnership with the RAP Working Group</i>
	Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	Sep 2021	Team Leader, Aboriginal Health & Ageing Program <i>in partnership with the RAP Working Group</i>
	Develop a guide to engagement of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations, and best practice guidelines, to be made available internally.	Sep 2021	Team Leader, Aboriginal Health & Ageing Program <i>in partnership with the RAP Working Group</i>
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	April 2021	Internal Communications Officer
	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	27 May 3 Jun 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group
	Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	27 May 3 Jun 2021	Senior RAP Champions
	Plan and host an internal NRW event and/or seminar to recognise and celebrate NRW and register via Reconciliation Australia's NRW website.	27 May 3 Jun 2021	Chair, Seminar Committee <i>in partnership with the RAP Working Group</i>
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	Jan 2021	Internal Communications Officer
	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	March 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group <i>with support from other members of the RAP Working Group</i>
	Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	March 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	May 2021	HR Manager
	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs.	May 2021	HR Manager

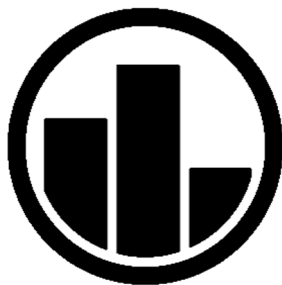


Respect			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	April 2021	HR Manager
	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation.	Jan 2022	HR Manager
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Collect resources from local community groups, within our organisation's operational area, that document histories and other shared cultural information of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	April 2021	Team Leader, Aboriginal Health & Ageing Program <i>in partnership with the RAP Working Group</i>
	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	May 2021	Team Leader, Aboriginal Health & Ageing Program <i>in partnership with the RAP Working Group</i>
	Increase staff members' understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	May 2021	HR Manager <i>with support from Internal Communications Officer</i>
	Include a summary of our organisation's values and recognition of the Traditional Owners of the Land on the organisation's website.	Feb 2021	Media & Communications 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.	July 2021	Administration & Compliance Manager <i>in partnership with the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee</i>
	Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	July 2021	Administration & Compliance Manager <i>in partnership with the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee</i>
	RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	First week in July 2021	All members of the RAP Working Group



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.	April 2021	HR Manager
	Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff experiences, skills, professional needs and goals to inform future employment and professional development opportunities.	April 2021	HR Manager
	Develop a strategic plan to enhance the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students.	Jun 2021	HR Manager
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, incorporated into the revision of the NeuRA Procurement Policy.	Jun 2021	Financial Controller <i>in partnership with the RAP Working Group</i>
	Investigate Supply Nation membership.	Jan 2021	Administration & Compliance Manager



Governance			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation.	Jan 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group <i>with support from the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee</i>
	Maintain a Terms of Reference for the RWG endorsed by NeuRA.	Jan 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group <i>with support from the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee</i>
	Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	Jan 2021	Team Leader, Aboriginal Health & Ageing Program
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	Jan 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group Administration & Compliance Manager
	Engage and maintain senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	Jan-2021	Senior RAP Champions
	Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	Jan-2021	Administration and Compliance Manager <i>with support from IT and members of the RAP Working Group</i>
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 Sep 2021-22	Administration & Compliance Manager <i>in partnership with the RAP Working Group</i>
	Report back internally, to management and all staff, on the outcomes of this Reflect RAP and seek feedback for the development and implementation of subsequent RAPs.	Nov 2021	Chair, RAP Working Group
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP.	March-2022	Chair, RAP Working Group

Contact details:

Deborah McKay
Administration & Compliance Manager
Phone: (02) 9399 1676
Email: d.mckay@neura.edu.au

