



Reflections on reconciliation

As we draw to a close on our second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan – amidst broader conversations about reconciliation, truth telling, justice and a First Nations Voice – it feels like a fitting time to pause and reflect.

A moment to look back and consider what we have achieved. To be honest with ourselves, to take stock of what we've learnt and to re-commit to conduct ourselves by the values by which we pride ourselves.

For several years now Beyond Blue has reported on our actions towards reconciliation. It's important that we're open with this journey.

Our RAP is a significant part of how we contribute to reconciliation, but it is only a part of our story.

Although this year marks the end of our second RAP, Beyond Blue has been working to improve social and emotional wellbeing for First Nations Peoples and communities for much of its history.

In the early days of Beyond Blue – over a decade before we would undertake our first RAP – we made what would be our first contribution to First Nations-led research.

In 2002, Beyond Blue provided over \$1.1 million to support the evaluation of an Aboriginal Mental Health Worker program based in five remote health centres across the Northern Territory. Since this time, Beyond Blue has continued to support research in First Nations social and emotional wellbeing. We believe there is a continuing role for us to play in this space, and our current Research Strategy focuses this investment on First Nations-led research through funding specific research grants.

Advocating for positive change is something that has been central to our purpose as an organisation since the beginning. We support many people through our areas of work, and there are many people who are familiar with us as a result. For much of our history, we have used our platform to advocate for First Nations social and emotional wellbeing. As a member of the Close the Gap Campaign Alliance for more than a decade, we have walked alongside and learned from First Nations leadership in calling for focus on pressing areas of policy reform, while using our influence to support and amplify the campaign's messages.

The strong, genuine and respectful relationships we have developed with First Nations organisations – from our longstanding partnership with Hitnet, helping our supports reach regional and remote communities, to our work alongside the Burbangana Group, which is strengthening our everyday practice, to the work we are doing with Visual Dreaming to promote help-seeking and increase understanding of social and emotional wellbeing – demonstrate the way in which we have built much of our work towards reconciliation.

Walking with communities and community-controlled organisations in the Pilbara and Kimberley to deliver Be You – supporting educators to develop positive, inclusive and resilient schools – provided invaluable learnings, that without doubt will continue to shape our ongoing approach to diversity, inclusion and cultural sensitivity.

Beyond Blue has provided support for wellbeing in numerous ways across the years, and storytelling is something that has always been at the heart of our work, whatever form it takes. Sharing our stories is something that allows us to connect with one another. We know how important that is for our wellbeing. We have leveraged our skills in this space to ensure the community can access **strength-based stories** from First Nations communities. We have shared stories through video, through written content, and through our podcast, ***Not Alone***.

In 2023, we are excited to be partnering with Visual Dreaming to support the development of community-driven video content. With a focus on wellbeing and help-seeking, we look forward to sharing this content across our channels.

As a mainstream service, it's important that people right across the community find our services inclusive and accessible. We have learned that to provide inclusive services, we need to constantly listen and reflect, and to walk together in friendship with people and organisations we can learn from. The voices of community members, and the advice of First Nations organisations, have provided insights and helped us to improve our programs and services, so that more people can get the support they need. We recognise that we still have much to learn, and we are committed to this ongoing learning.

Working with Cox Inall Ridgeway, a specialist First Nations social change agency, we explored ways to improve the cultural safety of two of our online community platforms – Blue Voices, a space for engagement and consultation, and our online peer forums, where people can connect anonymously to provide support to one another.

The BeyondNow app was developed to help people put together a safety plan to manage suicidal behaviours. We spent time working with First Nations users to understand what enhancements would

improve the cultural inclusiveness and suitability of the app. As a result, amendments were made to ensure the strength of culture is embedded throughout the app.

First Nations-led mental health support is critical within the digital service landscape. 13YARN is providing an important service and our collaboration with 13YARN and Lifeline aims to ensure that everyone seeking support receives the culturally safe care they need, while we commit to reducing duplication of services and friction for those seeking help.

As we embark on developing our third RAP, we are looking for ways to further embed this work into our everyday business and governance, and to build and strengthen relationships to do this work in partnership.

There has never been a more critical time to be courageous and strong in our allyship with First Nations Peoples and communities and their social and emotional wellbeing. Our Board and staff made a public commitment of support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full, and we support the Yes23 campaign to realise a Voice to Parliament as the first step.