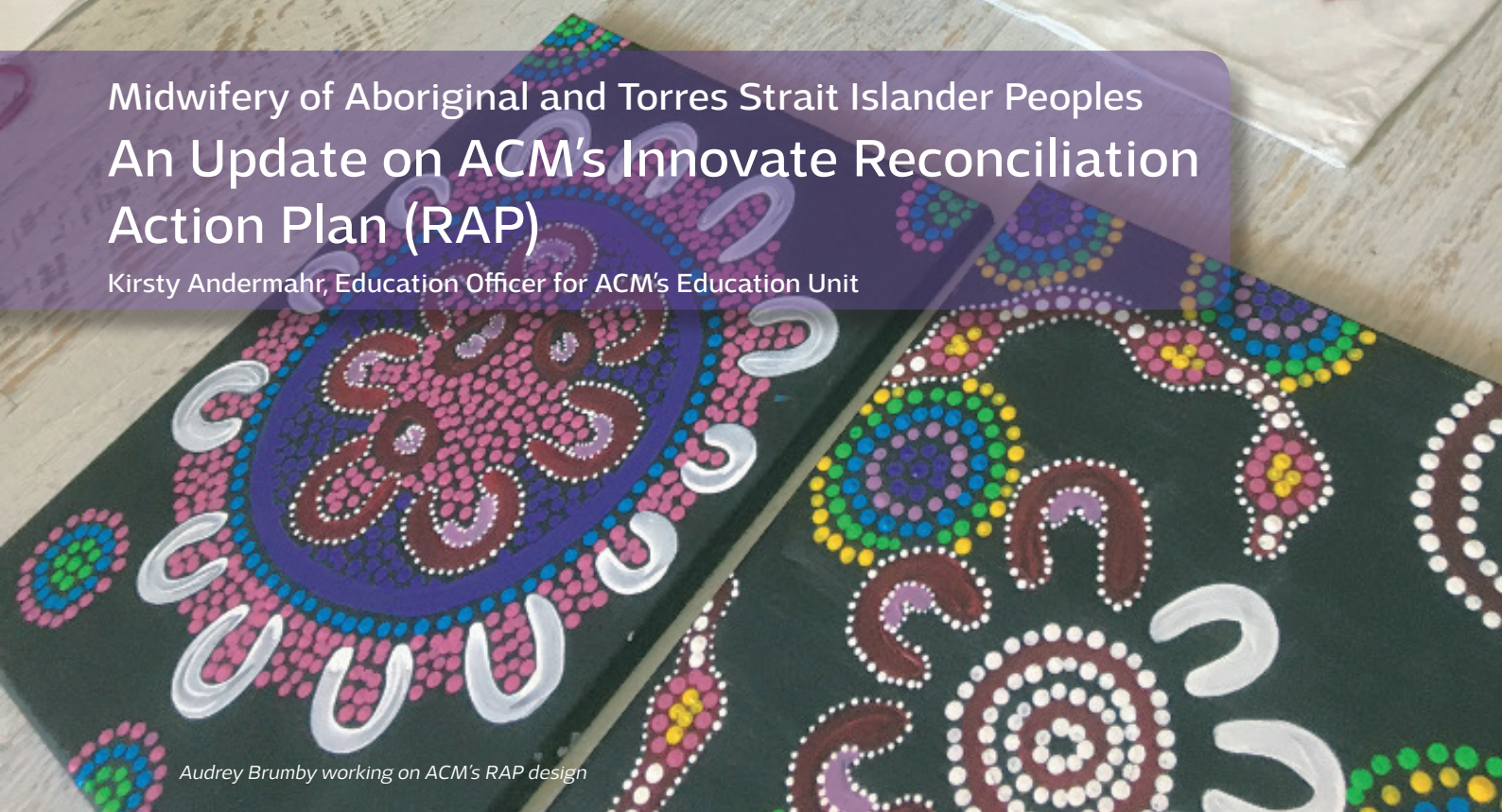




Midwifery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples An Update on ACM's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Kirsty Andermahr, Education Officer for ACM's Education Unit



Since September 2014, ACM have been working behind the scenes to identify a series of achievable actions that can lead the business on a pathway towards reconciliation. In addition to influencing the future of our business, as the peak professional body for midwives in Australia, we also intend for our RAP to have a nationwide impact. We hope that ACM's Plan influences hospitals and workplaces across the country to become a culturally safe, respectful and accepting environment for all midwives and women through the partnerships we build, the processes that we implement, and opportunities we help create.

You may be familiar with ACM's vision to build strong and confident midwives – it's our core message and what underpins everything we do/set out to achieve. But, you're probably unaware of our vision for reconciliation...

We believe that to achieve reconciliation we must work together in relationships that are built on respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions, histories and cultures, and through the acknowledgement of past iniquity, we can move forward creating resilient communities.

Over the years, ACM have adopted a number of practices with this vision in mind. From small actions that can have a big impact, to larger projects that are driving change and create real possibilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These practices include:

- We are leading the innovative Birthing on Country Project, implementing culturally safe maternity models of care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- ACM is a member of Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) and regularly consult with them on matters that affect Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women, midwives and families.
- We encourage and support staff attending Cultural Safety Workshops held by CATSINaM.
- The Terms of Reference for our RAPWG ensures that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders are represented at all times, and decisions must be supported and endorsed by at least one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander member.
- All of our National, Advisory Committee and ACM Team meetings commence with a Welcome to/Acknowledgement of Country. In the case of ACM Team meetings, a different staff member will acknowledge country and open the meeting each fortnight with the intention to encourage staff to feel confident performing an Acknowledgment of Country and ensuring that they are aware of the Traditional Owners of the land on which they meet.

Guiding ACM's RAP development are the dedicated members of our RAP Working Group (RAPWG), who are led by the recently appointed Chair and RAP Champion, Cherrisse Buzzacott.

Like most businesses on their RAP journey, we set out to develop a Respect RAP, which is first in the four Plan process. However, upon reviewing our existing initiatives and the goals that we wanted to set for the business, Reconciliation Australia acknowledged that we may be

further along in this process than we first thought. And so, our Innovate RAP was born.

For those of you who are new to the world of RAPs, the Innovate Plan is generally stage two. It 'focuses on developing and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, developing and piloting innovative strategies to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' (Reconciliation Australia, 2017).

ACM's RAP features an array of actions that intertwine across every aspect of our business, and are implemented by staff members in every department. Some of the most notable actions that we have set include:

- Engage staff in continuous cultural learning opportunities to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements.
- Ensure ACM uses culturally safe and culturally appropriate consultation processes.
- Investigate opportunities to improve and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes within our workplace.
- Raise awareness of midwifery issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander midwives, mothers and babies.
- Ensure ACM state and national conferences are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and showcase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.
- Investigate opportunities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander midwives (incl. midwifery students).
- Ensure the preservation of the Birthing on Country quilts.

Now, even though we mention that these are the 'most notable', we can't stress enough how vital every deliverable within our RAP is to us.

In October 2018, we shared our draft RAP with members for the first time. This saw over 450 individuals and key organisations engage with our plan during a four week public consultation. Our RAPWG were overwhelmed with the support and interest received from members, and we were particularly excited to hear comments such as "How can I get involved and develop a RAP for my workplace?" If you are also asking this question, we recommend visiting <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>.

So, what's next? The RAPWG are finalising the second draft of the Innovate RAP, which incorporates feedback from Reconciliation Australia, as well as member suggestions from the consultation. The RAPWG have also commissioned artwork for the RAP front cover and content pages, which has been created by Aboriginal artist Audrey Brumby through Dreamtime Creative.

Our aim is for the Innovate RAP to be endorsed by Reconciliation Australia and the ACM board by mid-2019 – just in time to celebrate with you all and launch the Plan at ACM's National Conference in Canberra. Stay tuned for more updates on ACM's Facebook page and in our fortnightly newsletters!

For further information about ACM's Innovate RAP, please visit <https://www.midwives.org.au/reconciliation-action-plan-rap>. ■