

# The Fred Hollows Foundation Reconciliation Action Plan

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December 2008



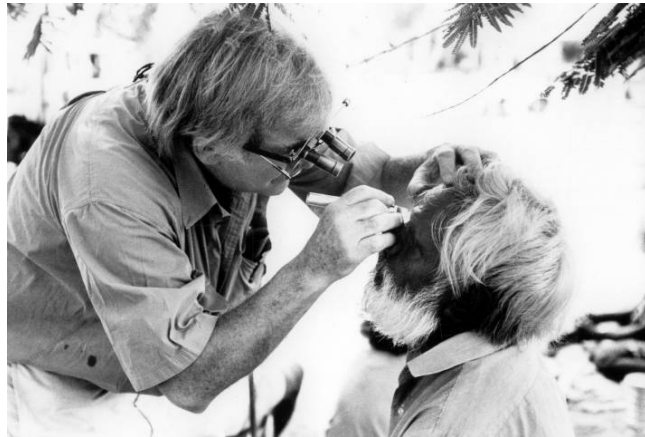
Ghumarn Cultural Centre. Photo: Claude Ho

# Our Vision for Reconciliation

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The late Professor Fred Hollows enjoyed a genuine and cherished bond with many Indigenous Australians and strongly supported the rights and aspirations of the First Peoples of this land.

Working as an ophthalmologist in the 1970s and 80s, Fred was outraged by the high rates of eye disease and poor health in Indigenous communities. He believed passionately that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were entitled to the same health and life opportunities that other Australians took for granted.



Fred was a man of action and used his skills as a doctor and advocate to mobilise eye health campaigns and to support the establishment of Aboriginal-controlled health services that were then in their infancy. In the mid 1970s and early 1980s, Fred directed the National Trachoma and Eye Health Project which visited over 465 rural and remote communities to treat eye health problems. Fred and a group of friends and colleagues, including his wife Gabi, launched The Fred Hollows Foundation in September 1992 just months before his death in February 1993.

Keeping true to Fred's vision, The Foundation works to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous Australians. We believe that the disturbing 17 year gap between the life expectancy of Indigenous Australians and other Australians must be closed before true reconciliation can be achieved.

As a development organisation, we act on our beliefs everyday through our projects and programs in partnership with Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and western New South Wales. We are guided by our Indigenous partners to identify the social determinants that affect the health of people in their region and then support them to develop programs and projects to address these issues.

We also believe that our commitment to reconciliation must be reflected throughout all parts of The Foundation not just in our specific Indigenous Program work. It must permeate all our workplaces, our governance and management style and staffing decisions, our internal and external relationships and communications, and the plans we make as an organisation.

We understand that we are privileged by our history and special relationship with Indigenous communities and we welcome opportunities to continue to learn and share experiences along the path to reconciliation.

## This Reconciliation Action Plan:

- **Reaffirms** The Foundation's commitment to work in respectful, two-way partnerships with Indigenous Australians to close the gap in health status and life expectancy between Indigenous Australians and other Australians through initiatives determined and supported by Indigenous people themselves and their representative organisations
- **Confirms** our support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- **Identifies** the ways in which we will celebrate, respect and promote Indigenous Australian culture, rights and perspectives throughout our organisation
- **Values** the opportunity to share learning and support new and respectful relationships between Indigenous Australian communities and Australian governments, non-government organisations and the Australian community as a whole.

# Our Business

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The Fred Hollows Foundation is an independent, non-profit and secular development agency that works both internationally and in Australia.

Our vision is for a world where no one is needlessly blind and where Indigenous Australians enjoy the same health and life expectancy as other Australians.

The Foundation strives to achieve four key goals:

1. End avoidable blindness in the communities and countries where we work
2. Improve the life chances and choices of Indigenous Australians through improving their health
3. Work through strong partnerships and cross sector collaborations – at local, national and global levels
4. Build a strong and dynamic organisation, capable of facilitating effective eye health and Indigenous health programs, and having a positive impact on public opinion, policies and practices.

Our development work is underpinned by the principles of partnerships, capacity building, sustainability and respect for fundamental human rights. Our role is to support our partner organisations to achieve the goals that they set for themselves. We do this through programs focused on skills development, building sustainable systems and infrastructure and developing local networks for advocacy, collaboration and support.

While The Foundation is renowned internationally for our work to treat cataract and other forms of avoidable blindness, our Indigenous Program in Australia has always acknowledged the full range of health priorities in Indigenous communities and placed emphasis on addressing the social determinants of health as well as the specific area of eye health.

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## **Social determinants of health addressed in The Foundation's partnerships with Indigenous Australians:**

- Access to health care services, including eye health services
  - Access to healthy food supply and food security
  - Education and literacy
  - Early health and childhood development
  - Income and employment
  - Gender
  - Stress
  - Environment, including housing and transport
  - Cultural engagement and support
  - Race and social status
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As a result The Foundation currently supports a wide range of programs and projects in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and western New South Wales that cover areas such as nutrition, women's health and development, aural health, literacy, advocacy, training, community engagement and eye health.

These programs have been and continue to be developed in collaboration with Indigenous partners including Traditional Owners' organisations, Aboriginal-controlled health services, women's centres, store committees and local government structures.

# Our Reconciliation Action Plan

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This Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) represents The Fred Hollows Foundation's ongoing commitment to embrace, respect and promote Australian Indigenous culture, rights and perspectives.

The plan was initially developed from the meetings and discussions of The Foundation's RAP Working Group, a group of staff from all divisions in the organisation and most of the Australian offices (Sydney, Brisbane, Darwin and Katherine) who expressed interest in contributing to the development of the RAP.

The initial self-reflections identified an important principle for further development of The Foundation's RAP, namely that our progress toward reconciliation should not be seen only or even primarily as the responsibility of Indigenous Program staff already working to close the gap, but as an organisation-wide responsibility. This ensured that our minds were focused on all areas of The Foundation's operations when considering how we can do more to promote equality between Indigenous Australians and other Australians.

This RAP is based on the thoughts of the Working Group and the members of The Foundation's Strategic Management Group (comprised of the CEO, the Deputy CEO, the Director of Public Affairs and the Director of International Programs).

The draft was discussed and refined in consultation with Reconciliation Australia and our Indigenous partners:

- Sunrise Health Service
- Jawoyn Association
- Roper Gulf Shire
- Katherine West Health Board
- Maari Ma Health Service.

In December 2008 the Board considered and formally adopted this document as the Reconciliation Action Plan of The Fred Hollows Foundation, and committed itself and Management to its implementation.

# Key Aspects of The Foundation's RAP

## 1. Relationships

Partnerships, and the ongoing relationships that sustain them, are fundamental to The Foundation's approach to development both in Australia and in other countries. We aim to build relationships based on mutual trust and respect, across the broad spectrum of communities, decision makers, influencers, and constituencies with whom we are involved.

We believe that partnerships work "two-way" and so The Foundation is always guided by our partners' knowledge, expertise and experience. We value continuous communication and feedback, and know that openness, respect and trust are central to achieving better understanding, collaboration and outcomes.

Our Indigenous Program based in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and western New South Wales works in close partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations, Traditional Owners' organisations, local women's centres and other Indigenous controlled organisations. The Foundation's role is to provide support, funding and advocacy for priority projects and programs as identified by our local partners. Our locally based staff work side-by-side with local people and some are employed from within the communities.

We recognise that our organisational structure, decision-making processes and corporate culture will differ from those of our partners and other Indigenous Australian organisations. We are open to learning new ways to do business and value Indigenous Australian perspectives throughout our organisation.

### Relationships

#### Focus Area 1

Ensure that Indigenous Australian perspectives and experiences are acknowledged and valued throughout all levels of the organisation.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
Ensure that the Board and relevant Board Committees have access to, and are influenced by Indigenous perspectives in a framework of "two-way" learning.	Board members Senior executives	On-going, with annual review in February (Board) and June (Committees)	The Board and the Program Advisory Committee have Indigenous representatives, and their perspectives influence strategic directions and decision-making.
Continue to strengthen "two-way" communication with local Indigenous partners by ensuring that formal Partnership Agreements are regularly reviewed and updated.	Indigenous Program staff Senior executives	On-going, with annual review each September	Clear communication pathways and respective responsibilities are agreed, documented and functional.
Identify Traditional Owners in places where The Foundation holds public events and functions and ensure that appropriate acknowledgment is given to their rights and custodianship.	All Foundation representatives Event managers in each office	On-going	The Foundation includes acknowledgements and expresses respect at all of its events, by all of its representatives.

## Focus Area 2

Continue to build and strengthen relationships with national Indigenous organisations, local Indigenous partners and other Indigenous Australians, as well as with national organisations with a focus on Indigenous rights and reconciliation.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
Be aware of and, where appropriate, support the campaigns and policy positions of national Indigenous organisations, local Indigenous organisations in the areas where we work, and other national organisations (such as Reconciliation Australia, AnTAR and the Australian Human Rights Commission).	Senior executives Community education staff Indigenous Program staff Public Affairs staff	On-going with annual review in Sep-Oct during the development of work plans and budgets	The Foundation is seen as a valuable and reliably by Indigenous and other relevant organisations and people. Participation in such campaigns forms part of divisional and individual work plans in The Foundation.
Offer invitations to Indigenous leaders/representatives to attend The Foundation's events, and ensure Foundation staff/representatives attend events organised by Indigenous and other relevant organisations.	Senior executives Board members Staff in all divisions and offices	On-going, with annual review in Sep-Oct during the development of work plans and budgets	Foundation events are enriched by the presence of Indigenous representatives. Attendance at relevant events is an integral part of staff work plans.
Provide access to extra training and other support for its own Indigenous staff as well as staff from other Indigenous partner organisations to enhance their capacities in management and advocacy.	Indigenous Program	On-going, with annual review in Sep-Oct during the development of work plans and budgets	The Foundation funds appropriate training activities. Other informal opportunities are offered and documented.

## 2. Respect

Respect is fundamental and inherent to the core mission and values of The Fred Hollows Foundation. In all of our programs, within Australia and in other countries, we build relationships with local partners based on the principles of mutual respect, trust, self-determination and capacity building.

In particular, we respect:

- the ancient and contemporary history and culture of the Indigenous peoples of Australia
- their rights to land and self-determination as the First Peoples
- their place in, and valuable contribution to our society
- the unique perspectives they offer in the continuing task of nation-building.

As a development agency, we strongly support the rights of Indigenous Australians to enjoy the same health, education, political, social and economic opportunities enjoyed by all other Australians.

We recognise that understanding Indigenous culture and protocols is central to respectful relationships with our Indigenous colleagues and partners and all Indigenous people.

### Respect

#### Focus Area 1

Celebrate and respect Indigenous Australian culture and promote cultural awareness.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
Celebrate Indigenous Australian culture and promote cultural awareness	Various staff responsible for newsletters, website, and information.  Speakers and event managers in each state.	On-going, with annual review in September	Indigenous leaders are profiled in The Foundation's publications and invited to play prominent roles at Foundation events.  The Foundation's communications with its supporters and the public highlight Indigenous rights and reconciliation messages.
Continue to support local Indigenous cultural events and activities.	Indigenous Program staff and relevant staff in other divisions	On-going, with annual review in Sep-Oct during the development of work plans and budgets	Work plans and budgets include sponsorship and/or training and development support for various Indigenous events.
Commemorate significant Indigenous events and festivals (such as Sorry Day and NAIDOC Week) and encourage staff participation in all offices.	Indigenous Program manager Deputy CEO  Information, Knowledge and Education Manager	On-going, with annual review in September	All staff are informed of Indigenous events and encouraged to participate.  Representatives from all offices attend Indigenous events as appropriate.  Indigenous and other relevant staff are given paid-time to prepare for and attend agreed events.

## Focus Area 2

Develop a culturally supportive work place

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
Conduct cultural awareness training for staff, and provide a basic introduction to the topic to all new staff as part of their induction process.	Human Resources Manager Divisional managers	By Sep 2009, and thereafter annually or as required	From 2009, all staff have access to awareness training within at least a year of joining The Foundation.
Provide guest speakers to address staff in Sydney, Darwin and regional offices to promote understanding of Indigenous culture, history and experiences and learn more about the social determinants of Indigenous health.	Human Resources Manager Indigenous Program Manager	By Sep 2009, and thereafter annually	Two seminars a year are held – one in the Darwin office and the other in the Sydney office.
Ensure correct protocols are followed concerning permissions for staff entering Aboriginal land, and in the production and use of photos and video .	Indigenous Program Manager Divisional managers for travelling staff Information, Knowledge and Education Manager Public Affairs Manager	Ongoing	No representative of The Foundation enters Aboriginal land without the requisite permission.  The Foundation has and follows clear guidelines for the production and use of photographs and videos that relate to Indigenous Australians.

### 3. Opportunities

Fred Hollows is well remembered for his willingness to take risks, his innovative programs and his drive to find ways to improve Indigenous health and wellbeing. This approach to life and work imbues The Fred Hollows Foundation which has been charged with continuing Fred's vision.

In our organisational values we are committed to:

- a willingness to be innovative in the search for new solutions to complex problems and to take risks to achieve real gains
- a willingness to invest in partners and people who have the passion to make a difference.

Across our Indigenous Program, we collaborate with local Indigenous partners to identify and grasp opportunities that address the many social determinants of health. We recognise that together we have a greater capacity to lobby for and achieve real change. The Foundation also supports our Indigenous partner organisations to develop skills in self-advocacy to create their own opportunities for change.

We also believe that The Foundation has a unique opportunity to build networks between Indigenous Australians and other Australians beyond the local communities with whom we work. This position flows partly from the legacy bestowed on us by Fred's own work, and partly from The Foundation's good standing with the Australian community.

We know that our networks, relationships, knowledge and experience provide many opportunities to advance Aboriginal rights and reconciliation, and are committed to sharing these opportunities.

## Opportunities

### Focus Area 1

Indigenous recruitment and retention.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
Encourage applications from Indigenous Australians when recruiting for positions across the whole organisation.	Human Resources Manager Divisional managers	On-going, with annual review in September	Recruitment practices include specific encouragement for Indigenous applicants, including through establishing relationships with Indigenous employment and recruitment agencies.
Provide enhanced professional development and training opportunities for Indigenous staff.	Human Resources Manager Divisional managers	Annually in Sep-Oct during the development of work plans and budgets	Annual budgets provide for a training allowance for all staff. Where appropriate opportunities can be identified for Indigenous staff, an additional amount can be made available.
Provide traineeship opportunities to Indigenous Australians within The Foundation.	Human Resources Manager Indigenous Program Manager	By Dec 2009	At least 2 traineeships are established.

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## Focus Area 2

Professional skills mentoring and training for Indigenous partner organisations

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
Continue formal and informal skills mentoring and training program to build the capacity of our Indigenous partner organisations in areas identified as priorities for them.	Indigenous Program	On-going, with annual review in Sep-Oct during the development of work plans and budgets	The Indigenous Program's work plan and budget provides time and resources for mentoring and training support which has been agreed with Indigenous partners.

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## Focus Area 3

Share The Foundation's networks, relationships, knowledge and experience to promote Indigenous rights and reconciliation with governments, organisations and Australian communities.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
Join other non-government organisations to form alliances to respond to Indigenous issues and advocate for policy changes that empower Indigenous Australians and improve their life chances and choices.	Senior executives Community education staff Indigenous Program Manager	Ongoing	The Foundation makes a significant contribution to national, regional and local campaigns as appropriate e.g. <i>Close the Gap</i>
Use The Foundation's promotional materials and the media to raise public awareness of the health inequities experienced by Indigenous Australians and to promote reconciliation.	Senior executives Staff of relevant divisions	On-going	Reconciliation issues are regularly included in The Foundation's publications and media work.

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## 4. Tracking Progress and Reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Target
2008 Reconciliation Action Plan	RAP working group Senior Executives Board	Finalised December 2008	The Plan is submitted to Reconciliation Australia, published on The Foundation's website, noted in the Annual Report and reported in one of the 2009 Quarterly Reports to supporters.
Progress review of actions	Information, Knowledge and Education Manager to report to RAP Working Group.	July 2009, and January 2010, and annually thereafter	The goal is to ensure that at least half of all commitments are being reached by June 2009 and fully reached by December 2009.
Annual review and update as necessary	Information, Knowledge and Education Manager to report to RAP Working Group  Senior executives Board	October - November each year	An annual report is circulated in the organisation, submitted to Reconciliation Australia and placed on website.



**The Fred Hollows  
Foundation**



Photo: Wayne Quilliam.

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