

Activating Shared Leadership for Reconciliation

Background

A health sector charity providing developmental health services to children from remote and rural communities faced significant challenges in operationalising its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The organisation worked with children from highly adverse backgrounds, including those in out-of-home care, with 30% of the client population identifying as Indigenous.

The charity demonstrated a deep commitment to culturally appropriate care, yet the pressures of competing priorities and a predominantly Anglo-Saxon workforce hindered the practical implementation of its reconciliation goals. I partnered with the organisation to deepen their impact in this area.



I

The Challenge

From my initial analysis I realised the organisation needed to:

Translate its high-level reconciliation commitments into actionable, everyday practices.

Help staff recognise and address unconscious biases stemming from a colonised perspective.

Create an organisational culture where culturally responsive care was deeply embedded into all facets of operations

The Response

I designed a multifaceted approach, leveraging adaptive leadership, organisational development, and regenerative frameworks to catalyse change.

Underpinning all activities was a commitment to co-created and shared leadership across the organisation – success would rest on the capacity to facilitate this shift, rather than taking a hierarchical top-down approach. The strategy consisted of the following elements:

- 1. Building Engagement and Shared Vision**
- 2. Identifying and Empowering Champions**
- 3. Engaging Through Storytelling and Learning**

4. Embedding Reconciliation into Organisational DNA

- Organisational structure redesign was shifted to support reconciliation by creating cross-functional working groups, each with executive sponsorship:

5. Linking Everyday Work to Reconciliation Goals

Outcomes

Enhanced staff engagement: Participation in reconciliation activities soared, with the speaker programme drawing the highest levels of staff involvement across the organisation.

Shifted mindsets: Staff gained greater awareness of how colonised cultural perspectives had shaped organisational practices and actively worked to adopt more inclusive approaches.

Cultural responsiveness embedded: The restructured organisational approach and working groups made culturally responsive care a core element of operations.

Sustained impact: Exit interviews revealed that staff valued their involvement in the reconciliation initiative, often citing it as a highlight of their work.

Tangible community outcomes: Teams reported greater success in engaging First Nations children & families