2023 2024



Children by Choice Association

January 2023 – June 2024





About the artist

Name: "My Mother's country"

Artist: Christy McKinless-Currie

Created by Brisbane/Townsville based Aboriginal Artist.

Christy began painting when she was around 10 years old and has developed extensively over the past 18 years in between raising a family. She is a mother of five children. Over her career she has worked as an assisting 'apprentice' with her mother, painter Joanne Currie Nalingu. Her stories relate to the Maranoa region near Mitchell (her Mother's Country), including Maranoa shield designs and river lines patterning. Christy continues to develop her own styles and formats and grow as a professional artist.

In her own words, this design incorporates modern elements to symbolise our progress towards reconciliation.

It is called "My Mother's Country" and symbolises the foundations of sharing knowledge from my Mother to me, which I will continue with my five children.

The outer pattern (black & white) represents waterways – a pathway coming together. My Mother's Country is on Gunggari Land which she grew up on the banks of the Maranoa River. This is called the Yumba. This is where the old people come together. The inner circles are the people, strong female representation. When I think of this, it's the definition of Reconciliation to me. This is about First Nations people and non-Indigenous people acknowledging, understanding, and embracing culture by coming together.

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Message from Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Australia welcomes Children by Choice Association to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

Children by Choice joins a network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types — Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate — allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables Children by Choice to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.



Congratulations Children by Choice, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia

ALWAYS WAS, ALWAYS WILL BE ABORIGINAL LAND



Children by Choice acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

In particular, we acknowledge the country north and south of the Brisbane River, as the home of both the Turrbul and Jagera nations. We pay our respect to them, their culture, and to their Elders both past and present.



Our Business

Children by Choice is an independent Meanjiin (Brisbane) based non-profit organisation, committed to providing unbiased information on all pregnancy options – abortion, adoption and parenting. We have progressed this mission by providing non-directive pregnancy options counselling, information, material aid and referral to people needing to discuss their pregnancy options or seek abortion care through our Queensland wide, free counselling service.

We also work to empower individuals and groups to exercise their reproductive health choices through education, training and evidence-based information and resources. We work to address the social, legal, clinical, and policy barriers that women and pregnant people may face when seeking access to accurate information, support, and services for their reproductive choices.

Our Education Team deliver workshops, lectures, and training to health care professionals across Australia, sharing our expertise on pregnancy options counselling, reproductive coercion, and post abortion counselling and applied practice. We deliver a biennial Reproductive Rights and Abortion conference to allow the sector to come together to learn, share and grow.

While we work across Queensland, our office is located in Toowong, on the lands of the Jagera and Turrbal peoples. Children by Choice operates across Queensland and does some work nationally. Our main focus is Queensland however due to the uniqueness of our service, we often contribute to the national landscape regarding reproductive health and abortion.

Children by Choice is a small team of committed professionals who are dedicated to the mission and vision of Children by Choice. We employ 11 staff with a full time equivalent of 7.3 people. Our Management Committee governs the organisation and is comprised of 8 voluntary members. Currently Children by Choice does not have any staff or Management Committee members who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, but are committed to creating a culturally safe and inviting workplace for First Nations peoples. We are funded by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

OUR VISION

People can freely and safely make their own reproductive and sexual health choices without barriers.

OUR MISSION

To be leaders in advancing reproductive autonomy and access to compassionate abortion.

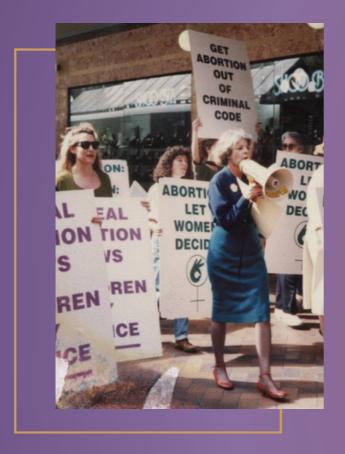
OUR VALUES

- Pro Choice
- Collaborative
- Compassionate
- Feminist
- Integrity





Our History



In the early 1970s Queensland women had very limited access to contraceptive and abortion services. At that time laws were in place which made abortion a crime in Qld and had remained unchanged since 1899 - predating women's right to vote which was gained in 1905. In response to this situation, the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA) was established in 1971 to provide education about family planning and advance Queensland women's rights to access safe and legal abortion.

On the 19th March 1972, ALRA formed an organisation to provide unplanned pregnancy counselling and assistance for women, to be known as Children by Choice.

For many years the organisation ran unfunded, supported by the work of many passionate volunteers. The volunteers were fierce advocates for legislative and systemic changes to recognise abortion as healthcare and to ensure it was accessible by all who needed it. They fought for abortion to be decriminalised and laws from 1899 to be updated. They faced so many challenges, including the raids on abortion clinics in the 80's under the Joh Bjelke-Peterson era, and the temporary defunding of the service in the 1990's.

Despite many challenges and barriers over the years, the organisation remains committed to the cause of reproductive justice for Queensland women and pregnant people. It was with great pleasure that we were able to celebrate with the remaining founders of Children by Choice when the Queensland parliament decriminalised abortion in October 2018.

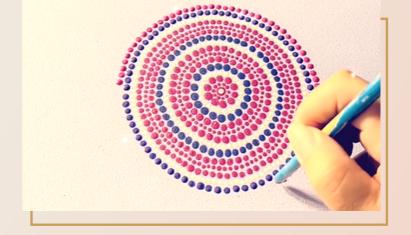
The strong move to treat abortion as healthcare and destigmatise abortion as a choice that should be available to all, has impacted the landscape of the work we do at Children by Choice, as we continue to plan for the future.

We acknowledge that Children by Choice has historically been a white organisation, founded and managed by predominately white middle class women, and providing counselling, referrals and information to women and pregnant people of colour, often from low socioeconomic and complex psychosocial backgrounds. The development of this RAP is key step in acknowledging the historical role Children by Choice has played in the ongoing structural violence against First Nations peoples.

We acknowledge the ongoing affect of <u>stolen</u> <u>generations</u> on First Nations people and reflect on any role our organisation or our people may have played in this.



Our RAP



Diversity and inclusion is important to the Management Committee and staff of Children by Choice. We recognise and acknowledge First Nations people as the owners of the land on which our service operates and on which we work and live.

We seek to work towards and from a reproductive justice framework, defined by the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective as, "the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities". We acknowledge that the concept of reproductive justice emerged from communities of colour and is centred on ensuring feminist and reproductive health work includes and addresses the needs of the most marginalised women, including trans and First Nations women, and women of colour – groups 'white feminism' has historically sidelined.

We are constantly seeking to understand the implications of our work for reproductive rights and justice and acknowledge the marginalised space we work in has been historically problematic and harmful to many First Nations people. We acknowledge that as a mostly white organisation over the years, Children by Choice may have contributed to creating or perpetuating harm or trauma for First Nations people.

In our counselling service our data tells us that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will need on average more contacts with our service for decision making counselling or financial assistance to access a termination of pregnancy. As we currently do not have any staff or Management Committee members who are First Nations people, we have identified this as an area our organisation would like to improve on and know we need to make steps forward in our reconciliation reflection and journey to ensure we create a culturally safe workplace and environment.

Children by Choice are proud to have been working in the community sector for 50 years, and pride ourselves on working from a feminist framework and working hard to create a more inclusive and culturally safe organisation for staff and clients, and are committed to building relationships with Community safely and respectfully.

In 2021, Children by Choice completed a 9 month project to plan to progress our first organisational RAP. Supported by WorkUp and utilising an Action Learning process, we built momentum for change across our organisation. We identified a shared desire and understand our explore organisational history and how we have worked with First Nations people over the past 50 years. Through the Action Learning process, we have also turned our attention outward, seeking opportunities to listen better to, and connect more with First Nations communities.

We have established a small internal RAP working group of staff, including the CEO, Daile Kelleher, who is our RAP Champion and the working group Chair, and a member Management Committee to ensure leadership involvement and resource commitment to the Reflect RAP. Additionally, we have an Inclusion Working Group that reviews and reflects on organisational activities, policies procedures, HR, data collection and training and resource development, with a focus on evidenced based reflection and practice who will also be feeding into this process.

We currently do not have a First Nations representative on the RAP Working Group (RWG) but will be engaging with a consultant in July 2023 to support this RAP. We engaged an external provider to deliver cultural awareness training to the entire staff team, to help create meaningful change within all aspects of the organisation, and to bring the team together in our commitment to the Reflect RAP process. These workshops were tailored to the work we do and delivered monthly over a 6-month period to all staff.

The RAP process requires strong leadership from the CEO and Management Committee, particularly with regards to stakeholder engagement building and meaningful partnerships, and we have reflected this in our organisational strategic plan and having the CEO the RAP Champion. Working mindfully towards our Reflect RAP has helped us to slow down and focus on building genuine relationships, which cannot be rushed. We have relished the opportunity to look closely at and reflect on where we have come from, where we are right now, andtoready ourselves to create the inclusive future that Children by Choice aspires to.





Here are some quotes from our staff team that have been involved in the Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan:

"This process has forced me to move slowly but with authenticity and real purpose. It has taught me that 'the relationship is the project'. I have so much more to learn and I thank all the First Nations people that have given time, knowledge and support to me on this journey so far."

"I'm proud of the work CbyC has committed to so far, it's been a whole of organisation journey, and one that I hope will never end! For me it has also been an incredibly personal process, causing me to reflect on place, belonging and home. I acknowledge and honour the strength, passion, resilience and generosity of the traditional custodians of these lands and waters. I am so lucky to be living and working on stolen lands, and to witness the ongoing wisdom of First Nations peoples."

"I feel privileged to be supported to do this work with my colleagues and by the incredible First Nations people who are guiding and walking along side us. Building an understanding of historical and current inequities at a personal level has been particularly poignant. I'm so looking forward to continuing learning and connecting." "Our RAP process is already very transformative for me individually and for our organisation. I'm very thoughtful and in our meetings, I feel really humbled by the warmth, generosity and sharing of knowledge by First Nations people given the ongoing impact of colonisation in their lives, families and communities."

"The process and the reflection have been the most valuable thing for me. While it can be easy to think of it as a 'tick box' exercise, it is so much more meaningful when it is a genuine commitment throughout the organisation to move toward real change."

"I've been reflecting on the stark contrasts between my own life and that of First Nations people every day, for example I've never had to doubt my connection with my children and my children have never feared someone might take them from their parents. Place names like 'murdering creek' have ongoing traumatic effect and are more than a curiosity when driving past - we need monuments and history lessons and I need to do more research to explain the meaning of these places to my children and anyone else who will listen. I wondered yesterday why millions attend ANZAC day ceremonies but only thousands attend Reconciliation Week ceremonies. Why do we have multimillion dollar monuments to unknown WW soldiers and schools."

Our Partnerships/ current activities

We work with various Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander services, including the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH), Community controlled health services and community services and WorkUp. We are a member of Reconciliation Queensland.

In late 2020 and early 2021, we engaged Health Consumers Queensland to run a series of 5 'Kitchen Table Discussions' to hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women about their experiences of pregnancy decision making, contraception and abortion. This consumer feedback will allow Children by Choice to consider the role we play in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reproductive health care, and how we can better support these clients. Based on this work we have co-developed grant applications with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and begun building relationships with First Nations research teams.

With financial support from Good Shepherd Microfinance, Children by Choice delivered a First Nations long acting reversible contraception (LARC) access program. This program supported financial stability for First Nations people by funding contraception to assist with family planning at a client's request.

We have also committed to and begun visiting First Nations services when we travel across Queensland for training and other events, and welcome opportunities to partner with First Nations organisations and individuals.

Relationships

	Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	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.	July 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
		Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	July 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
		Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff.	May 2023, 2024	 Lead: Education Team Leader Support: Education Team
	Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event.	May, June 2023, 2024	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
		Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW.	May, June 2023, 2024	 Lead: CEO Support: Leadership Team and MC



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
}	Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff.	July 2023	CEO
Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey.	July 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
	Identify RAP and other like- minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey.	July 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
Promote positive race relations through anti-	Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination.	December 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
discrimination strategies.	Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing antidiscrimination provisions, and future needs.	December 2023	 Lead: Policy & Governance sub committee Chair Support: Policy and Governance Working Group
Continue to strengthen our relationship with	Ensure at least one member of RAP WG or Leadership team attends a Reconciliation Queensland event, workshop and/or education event.	December 2023	CEO
Reconciliation Queensland through continued membership and participation in their events	Renew Reconciliation Queensland membership	July 2023	CEO

Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres	Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation.	September 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation	December 2023	 Lead: Education Team Leader Support: Education Team
Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and	Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area.	July 2023	CEO
Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols.	July 2023	CEO



	Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8	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.	June & July 2023	 Lead: Education Team Leader Support: Education Team
		Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area.	June & July 2023	 Lead: Education Team Leader Support: Education Team
		RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event.	June & July 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
		Identify First Nations organisations and individuals we would like to speak and build relationships with in the sexual and reproductive (SRH) health sector	July 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: Data and Research Subcommittee
	Develop a stronger understanding of the specific self-identified needs of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities re. Our area of work (abortion and contraceptive access, etc).	Begin the process of relationship building, engaging with Community activities in the space of SRH where appropriate, and documenting our understanding of the SRH needs (specific to our work) over time.	July 2023	 Lead: Counselling Team Leader Support: Counselling Team
		Engage a First Nations consultancy to deliver training on working within a cultural framework tailored to our work in reproductive health, pregnancy and abortion counselling, information and education to all team members	February 2023	CEO

Opportunities

	Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
outcomes increasing and Torred Islander re retention profession		Research effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategies to inform best practice for our organisation.	December 2023	Lead: CEO Support: Policy and Governance subcommittee + Equity and inclusion working group
	Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	Engage in networking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander training and employment organisations through Skilling Queenslanders for Work; and ensure these networks receive information on employment opportunities at Children by Choice	December 2023	Lead: CEO Support: Team Leaders when recruiting
		Provide sponsorship opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and students to attend Children by Choice training and professional education relevant to their work or study.	December 2023	Lead: Education Team Leader Support: Education Team
1	Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned businesses.	June 2023	Finance and Operations Coordinator
		Audit our current suppliers and increase procurement from First Nations businesses.	June 2023	Finance and Operations Coordinator
		Investigate Supply Nation membership.	March 2023	Finance and Operations Coordinator

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	Build relationships that facilitate research with and support for research in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with a focus on informing the development of our education material and autonomy/choice within community (internal and external facing)	December 2023	 Lead: Senior Research Assistant Support: Data and Research subcommittee
Increase our capacity to conduct participatory, decolonising research in areas of priority for CbyC and Community in Queensland	Identify and progress next steps from the Kitchen Table findings by: a) Continuing to seek organisational collaborations that might support Community to help us identify priorities from the data already received. b) Continue applying for our yarning and weaving circle grants with established partner	a) December 2023 b) December 2023	 a) Lead: Education Team Leader Support: Education Team b) Lead: Education Team Leader Support: Education Team
	Promote and build genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and academics before engaging in any research (including wider collaborations and grant applications) involving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individuals or communities, to support research safety and ensure research priorities are identified by and with Community	June 2024 Reviewed in June 2023, December 2023	Lead: Chair of Data and Research Sub- committee Support: Data and Research sub- committee members

Governance

	Action	Deliverable	Timeli ne	Responsibility
0	Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	Maintain a RAP Working Group (RWG) to govern RAP implementation.	August 2023	CEO
b		Review and update Terms of Reference for the RWG.	August 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
		Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG.	December 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
	Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	Define resource needs for RAP implementation.	July 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
		Continue to engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments.	July 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
		Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments.	January 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
		Add RAP to team meeting updates	January 2023	CEO
		Add RAP to Management Committee meeting updates	January 2023	CEO

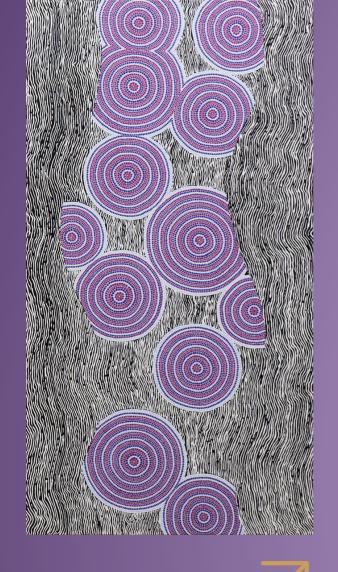
	Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
		Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia.	30 September, 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members
	Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	Contact Reconciliation Australia to ensure that our primary and secondary contacts are up to date to ensure we are receiving important correspondence	June 2023, 2024	CEO
		Follow up with Reconciliation Australia if we have not yet received our unique reporting link to participate in the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire	1 August 2023	CEO
C	Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	Register via <u>Reconciliation</u> <u>Australia's website</u> to begin developing our next RAP.	July 2023	 Lead: Chair for RAP working group Support: RAP working group members





Contact us

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Artist and proud First
Nations woman - Christy
McKinless-Currie beautifully inspires the
coming together of First
Nations and non-First
Nations Australians to
acknowledge, understand
and embrace culture.



ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

www.childrenbychoice.org.au