



Reconciliation Action Plan

Oxfam Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan is a statement of commitment and intent that outlines Oxfam's organisational commitment to work towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and a better future for us all. This plan is a work in progress, which will be added to and refined in the development of Oxfam Australia's Strategic Plan and Operational Plans 2007-2011.

A detailed chart of actions, outcomes, responsibilities, accountabilities and measures to be undertaken across the organisation will be published by June 2007 as an appendix to this document.

1. OUR VISION AND POLICIES

Oxfam Australia's vision is

A fair world in which people control their own lives, their basic rights are achieved and the environment is sustained.

In recognition of the disadvantage faced by Indigenous peoples globally and within Australia, the Governing Board of Oxfam Australia has adopted specific position policies on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Australians. These policies are annexed to this Action Plan and affirm the special place and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Australians, recognise their culture, history and diversity, and support all Australians to achieve their potential on a basis of equity and respect.

2. OUR BUSINESS

Oxfam Australia is a leading international aid and development organisation which supports communities overseas and in Indigenous Australia to become more self-sufficient. Our focus is on self-help and long-term solutions through working in partnership with local communities - helping people to help themselves.

We work from a rights-based approach, supporting marginalized, poor and disadvantaged communities to achieve the five basic rights of:

- Right to a sustainable livelihood
- Right to life and security
- Right to basic services
- Right to be heard
- Right to an identity

Issues concerning reconciliation and Indigenous peoples impact across a spectrum of Oxfam Australia's work. Initiatives in support of reconciliation are also the special responsibility of the Indigenous Australia Program.

Across the organisation, our work is based on three key approaches:

Long-term community development projects

Oxfam Australia works in partnership with community organisations to develop long-term partnerships and projects that build local skills and capacities and help communities to create their own solutions to poverty.

Emergency aid

We work closely with other Oxfams around the world to provide urgent humanitarian assistance including food and clean water. We also help communities to rebuild their lives and become better equipped to face disasters in the future, to rebuild their homes and livelihoods and to develop disaster preparedness strategies.

Advocacy and campaigning

Aid is one means to combat poverty but if we want to address the root causes of injustice, we also need to influence governments, corporations and other decision-makers to build a fairer world. While our long-term projects can help fight poverty, it is only by combining these projects with advocacy work for justice and equity that we can effect lasting change.

Oxfam Australia is part of Oxfam International, a global network of 12 Oxfams working together to fight poverty and injustice in more than 100 countries. By being part of Oxfam International and combining our skills and resources, we can have a greater impact on changing policies and addressing poverty and suffering.

We rely heavily on volunteers and individual and institutional donors whose contributions create the human and financial resources towards achieving our vision.

3. OUR APPROACH TO RECONCILIATION

Oxfam Australia is committed to working for true reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Reconciliation cannot be achieved while the huge disparity in health, well-being and life chances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians continues to exist. We join with other organisations across the Australian community to help close the gaps in life expectancy and opportunities and see it as a national priority for governments at all levels, as well as for Australian society as a whole.

We are committed to working in a respectful way with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to assist Indigenous Australians to gain greater control over their own affairs, to voice their own issues and determine priorities and policy on all issues relevant to their futures.

Our strategies in support of reconciliation operate at a number of levels within the organisation:

- Oxfam International
- Oxfam Australia Units across the organisation
- Oxfam Australia's Indigenous Australia Program
- Our partners and allies

4. OUR RECONCILIATION INITIATIVES

Oxfam Australia is committed to the development and implementation of reconciliation initiatives in a number of key areas outlined below. Initiatives will be further developed and documented in Oxfam Australia's Strategic Plan 2007-2011 and the Indigenous Australia Program's Strategic Plan and Operational Plan 2007-2011.

We note that the political environment influencing reconciliation matters is a changing and sometimes volatile one, requiring Oxfam to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances and emerging issues. Thus what follows is a work in progress as we will be developing new partnerships and projects as circumstances require.

Promoting cross-cultural awareness, communication and competence

- Review and create new organisational development processes that support the development of a culturally supportive organisational environment.
- Review current employee induction and professional development programs to ensure that cultural diversity considerations, both generic and specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, are addressed.

- Implement a program of cultural awareness training as part of new employee induction, staff and management development programs.
- Support employees whose work relates with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (remote, regional or urban) with cultural training to equip them to work in a cross-cultural environment.
- Encourage Oxfam Australia staff and supporters to attend seminars, lunchtime talks and take up other learning opportunities about Indigenous issues, Oxfam Australia's Indigenous Australia Program projects and reconciliation. Staff from all Oxfam units will be encouraged to participate in activities that broaden their knowledge of and contacts with Indigenous peoples.
- Ensure appropriate signage and artwork are developed in our new headquarters building that acknowledge and celebrate reconciliation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' ownership and custodianship of land, and our diverse and dynamic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage.
- Develop Oxfam Australia communications, in electronic and printed forms, which promote reconciliation and Indigenous community development in culturally appropriate ways, including the development of cultural protocols regarding representation of Indigenous peoples.

Employment Strategies

- Review Oxfam Australia's employment policies and strategies to improve the employment experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Oxfam – both in field and head office roles.
- Develop Human Resources and Organisational Development processes and tools to support staff working in remote areas with Indigenous communities.
- Create mentoring and support options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Ensure full and appropriate induction and support programs for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
- Participate in Indigenous employment networks to share information and learning.
- Identify and encourage the engagement of Indigenous consultants, trainers and researchers when contracting out specific pieces of work.

Oxfam Australia's Indigenous Australia Program

The work of the Indigenous Australia Program is focussed on three priority areas:

Indigenous Health & Well-being

While most Australians are living longer than ever before, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are dying almost 20 years earlier than other Australians and experience high levels of preventative diseases, chronic illness, mental and physical disability and reduced quality of life. Closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in health and well-being measures is an essential aspect of reconciliation.

To improve the health and well-being of Indigenous Australians we will:

- Manage and support the Gulf of Carpentaria Regional Health Service while appropriate long-term management structures are developed within the Gulf Indigenous communities. The Gulf Regional Health Service takes a holistic and community development approach to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people in the Gulf of Carpentaria region, particularly in the remote communities of Mornington Island, Normanton and Doomadgee;
- Develop partnerships with Indigenous and other organisations to establish common directions, build alliances and mutual support;
- Provide targeted financial and capacity building support to selected Indigenous partners' projects which strengthen their governance, management, service delivery and professional development;
- Commission research on key issues impacting on the health and well-being of Indigenous Australians;
- Engage in advocacy to influence government health delivery systems, policies and practices, to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved at all stages in decision making and that the needs and priorities of Indigenous communities and Aboriginal community controlled health organisations are listened to by governments.

Indigenous Youth

With Indigenous people's shorter average life span and higher birth rate, Australia's Indigenous population is much younger than the general population. Almost 60% of Australia Indigenous people are under 25 years of age. At the same time as the numbers of young Indigenous Australians are growing, the services available to educate and support them are often of poor quality and woefully inadequate. Oxfam's Indigenous Australia Program works with partners to close the massive gap between

the life expectations and opportunities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and young people.

We aim to support young Indigenous people to achieve their aspirations and potential, and to have their voices heard in decision making that impacts upon their lives.

We will do this by:

- Offering capacity building and financial support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's organisations and networks;
- Developing targeted programs of support for young Indigenous Australians to access international exchanges and other learning and networking opportunities, particularly those that create linkages between Indigenous young people across the world;
- Maximising the experience of young Indigenous Australians' participation in the Oxfam International Youth Parliament and its events;
- Supporting the development of leadership skills and opportunities for young Indigenous Australians;
- Providing targeted financial and practical assistance to selected health and well-being programs for Indigenous young people;
- Ensuring that the particular needs of young people are addressed in our Health and Well-being programs, especially in the Gulf Regional Health Service and other partnership projects.

Indigenous Self-determination

Oxfam Australia's Indigenous Australia program supports Indigenous people to exercise their human rights to basic services, sustainable livelihoods, a strong voice and cultural identity and diversity. We believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders must have an effective voice and opportunities for genuine participation in all decisions affecting their lives. In the current debate, we agree with Professor Mick Dodson that 'self-determination' is not an out-moded or failed experiment but in fact has never been sufficiently or appropriately resourced to allow it to succeed.

Across our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we work towards the goal that all government conduct their dealings with Indigenous Australians based on respect, rights and fairness.

We will do this through:

- Developing partnerships and alliances with Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations, based on Oxfam Australia's position of support to human rights based approaches to development;
- Influence governments to address the systemic issues that keep Indigenous peoples in poor health and poverty;
- Advocate for the establishment of an effective representative national Indigenous body;
- Support Indigenous leaders at community, regional, national and international levels and events;
- Through support to the UN Diplomacy Training program and other initiatives, equip Indigenous leaders with advocacy skills and an understanding of the international human rights framework, including the UN and other key international bodies;
- Work to ensure that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are heard and reflected in services for their communities;
- Help build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to get their message across, in areas including communications, research, advocacy, campaigns, marketing and policy development;
- Undertake research into relevant issues and monitor and evaluate our programs to ensure that our advocacy work is well based in experience and evidence;
- Share research and program learnings within Oxfam, with partners and relevant organisations;
- Develop alliances of support between NGOs working with Indigenous peoples, including participation in the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Indigenous Working Group.

5. ADMINISTERING OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Issues impacting on reconciliation and Indigenous peoples cut across the spectrum of Oxfam Australia's work. Initiatives in support of reconciliation are also the special responsibility of the Indigenous Australia Program which sits within the Public Policy and Outreach section of Oxfam.

Please note that Oxfam Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan is a work in progress, which will be added to and refined over the next nine months through the phases of review, consultation, preparation and drawing up of detailed documents in the development of Oxfam Australia's Strategic Plan and the various specific Oxfam units' and programs' Strategic and Operational Plans 2007-2011.

The following lists key Oxfam Australia structures and their particular role in administering our Reconciliation Action Plan. A detailed chart of responsibilities and accountabilities will be developed and published as an appendix of Oxfam's Reconciliation Action Plan, by June 2007.

Oxfam Australia's Strategic and Operational Planning will:

- Ensure that Oxfam Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan initiatives are incorporated in Oxfam Australia's Strategic and Operational Plans 2007-2011;
- Ensure reconciliation initiatives are incorporated in Oxfam Australia's Indigenous Australia Program's Strategic Plan 2007-2011 and Operational Plans.

Oxfam Australia management will be accountable for Oxfam's Reconciliation initiatives.

Oxfam Australia's Indigenous Australia Program will be responsible for the overview of progress of the Reconciliation Action Plan across the organisation, while specific operational processes and outputs will be the responsibility of the relevant Oxfam Australia units.

Oxfam Australia's Indigenous Australia Reference Group will:

- Provide the wisdom of experience and knowledge to build Oxfam's understanding of reconciliation, current and emerging realities, needs and directions facing Indigenous Australians;
- Contribute 'big picture' analysis and advice to inform Oxfam Australia's policy development and positioning in reconciliation initiatives and Indigenous affairs generally;
- Act as a sounding board and source of expert advice and guidance to the National Manager and Indigenous Australia Program (IAP) team;
- Provide analysis of the performance, strengths and weaknesses of the IAP's strategy, partnerships and projects;
- Provide advice and appropriate assistance on specific issues of concern to Oxfam Australia.

Oxfam Australia's Indigenous Australia Program (IAP) will:

- Act as a local resource, ambassador and change agent across the organisation's reconciliation initiatives and its implementation of Oxfam Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan;
- Facilitate increased awareness and understanding of reconciliation and the issues impacting on the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Develop partnerships with relevant Indigenous organisations to progress common goals in the priority areas of Health and Well-being, Youth and Self-determination;
- Manage and resource specific projects in the priority areas noted above;
- Support Indigenous leaders to represent and advocate for their communities at local, regional, state, national and international levels.

More generally Oxfam Australia will:

- Develop a Community of Practice on Indigenous Peoples and contribute to establishing an Oxfam International Community of Practice on Indigenous Peoples;
- Review program development processes and manual to better support the needs and circumstances of Indigenous peoples and their projects;
- Promote learning, ideas and discussions that encourage reconciliation;
- Support relevant Regional Programs (eg Southern India, South-east Asia, the Pacific) to address violations of the human rights of Indigenous peoples within their regions;
- Create a work environment that supports diversity and respects cultural difference;
- Develop strategies to recruit, support and retain Indigenous employees;
- Promote cultural awareness and knowledge about reconciliation across the organisation;
- Develop Oxfam Australia's marketing and communications tools, products, publications and processes to promote reconciliation and Indigenous community development in culturally appropriate ways, including the development of cultural protocols about representation of Indigenous peoples;
- Work to improve public understanding of and support for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, in Australia and internationally;

- Ensure that Oxfam Australia's financial management processes support Indigenous community needs;
- Help develop the financial skills and capacity of Indigenous partners.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan will be reviewed in June 2007, at which time a detailed Operational Plan will be added to the document and published on the Oxfam Australia and Reconciliation Australia websites.