

**Sponsor:** Oonah/ Yarra Ranges Council

**Refuter:** Tarneit Senior College

A Bill for an Act relating to the Mandatory Reconciliation Action Plans.

To be enacted by the YMCA Victoria Youth Parliament;

## **Mandatory Reconciliation Plans in Schools Bill 2021**

A Bill for an Act to establish mandatory Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) in all Victorian primary and secondary schools. This Bill is built upon the foundation of Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali Framework in its efforts to support schools in fostering meaningful reconciliation actions. With the support of Reconciliation Australia, a school's RAP will formally outline its commitment to achieving respectful and meaningful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous cultures. By engaging in actions to show solidarity with, and respect for, First Nations knowledge and cultures, RAPs contribute to the realisation of a more equitable and unified education system.

This Bill seeks to acknowledge the inequalities in educational outcomes between First Nations students and non-Indigenous students. The Bill makes efforts to act upon this in school policy. By working in close consultation with First Nations community members, the RAPs brought about by this Bill will honour and respect the self-determination and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the reconciliation process. To mitigate the risk of tokenism, each Victorian school will develop and enact their own unique RAP which is tailored to the needs of the local First Nations community. In addition, the inclusion of practices to care for Country seeks to ensure a holistic approach is taken to protect the physical, sociocultural and spiritual connections between land and people.

## PART I—Preliminary

### Clause 1 Purpose

The main purposes of this Act are—

- (a) to make significant efforts towards reconciliation;
- (b) to uphold equity and justice in all Victorian primary and secondary schools;
- (c) to provide a culturally safe school environment for First Nations students;
- (d) to value and respect Indigenous knowledge in the education system;
- (e) to encourage students to become socially and environmentally aware of their actions upon Aboriginal land.

### Clause 2 Commencement

This Bill shall commence upon receiving assent from the Youth Governor of Victoria.

### Clause 3 Definitions

In this Bill, we define the following to mean—

- (a) **reconciliation** means the restoration of positive relationships between First Nations Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians;
- (b) **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)** means a formal statement or framework outlining a school's commitment to reconciliation, developed in collaboration with Reconciliation Australia;
- (c) **Country** respectfully means the ancestral lands belonging to First Nations peoples, and acknowledges the physical, sociocultural, and spiritual connections between land and people;
- (d) **First Nations People(s)** means Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;
- (e) **student** means pupils in Victorian primary & secondary schools.
- (f) **Elders** refers to First Nations people who have been recognised as custodians of knowledge and lore and have and who have permission to disclose certain knowledge and beliefs;
- (g) **the Department** means the Department of Education, Victoria.

## **Part II—Establishment**

### **Clause 4 Overview**

- 4.1 Every Victorian primary and secondary school shall develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)—
- (a) it shall be developed in accordance with Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali RAP Framework;
  - (b) each RAP shall be subject to an annual review as per the Narragunnawali review process.

### **Clause 5 RAP development**

- 5.1 Each RAP shall be developed in collaboration with Reconciliation Australia.
- 5.2 Schools shall submit RAPs to Reconciliation Australia for review and approval.

### **Clause 6 Reconciliation Liaison Officer**

- 6.1 The Department shall assign a Reconciliation Liaison Officer (RLO) to each local council ward.
- 6.2 Each RLO shall be responsible for the following—
- (a) mediating First Nations community engagement;
  - (b) work closely with the Department, local schools, and Reconciliation Australia to develop relevant and appropriate RAPs;
  - (c) ensuring the provision of quality RAPs in local schools;
  - (d) support schools to maintain accountability to their RAP.
- 6.3 The selection process for RLOs shall be as follows—
- (a) RLOs shall require a minimum 2 years of professional or lived experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, in line with section 12(1) of the **Equal Opportunity Act 2010**.
  - (c) RLOs shall report and be accountable to the Department.

### **Clause 7 Community consultation**

- 7.1 Community consultation shall occur during the development of each RAP.
- (a) Community consultation shall occur between the RLO and the First Nations people local to the school.
  - (b) Recommendations made by First Nations people in community consultation sessions shall be forwarded to the relevant school.
- 7.2 A review with the local First Nations People shall occur every 6 months after the implementation of the RAP, to ensure the process is being respected and followed appropriately.

- 7.3 Schools shall be able to request further community consultation opportunities if they desire.

**Clause 8 Caring for Country**

- 8.1 Schools shall engage in practices to care for Country under the guidance of the RLO—
- (a) this shall be done in consultation with First Nations community members;
  - (b) to acknowledge Country, schools shall display the place name of the land on which the school is built.
- 8.2 The delivery of each RAP shall act to maintain both social and environmental wellbeing—
- (a) the environmental wellbeing of Country shall be addressed by appropriately drawing on local First Nations content and perspectives pertaining to the following disciplines—
    - (i) sciences;
    - (ii) geography;
    - (iii) sustainability;
    - (iv) local sites;
    - (v) plants and animals of significance.
- 8.3 Schools shall provide opportunities for students to build awareness about the Country upon which they learn and live.
- 8.4 Schools shall provide opportunities for students to care for Country and foster their role as environmental stewards.
- 8.5 Schools shall develop sustainability models underpinned by Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing.

**Clause 9 Culturally safe leadership**

- 9.1 All schools shall outline a plan to frequently incorporate culturally safe leaders in the school community.
- 9.2 All schools shall consistently review and refine this plan.
- 9.3 'Culturally safe leaders' include but are not limited to—
- (a) Elders;
  - (b) First Nations students;
  - (c) local First Nations community members;
  - (d) First Nations cultural educators.