



Australian
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Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning – Evaluation and monitoring framework January 2018 to June 2020

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Overview of Narragunnawali and previous (Phase 1) evaluation findings

Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning is a major program designed and implemented by Reconciliation Australia. *Narragunnawali* (pronounced narra-gunna-wally) is a word from the language of the Ngunnawal people—the Traditional Owners of the land on which Reconciliation Australia’s Canberra office is located, —meaning alive, wellbeing coming together and peace. The program is designed to support all Australian schools and early learning services in developing a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions. The program is designed to be delivered at the whole-school or early learning service level, with benefits for all students and staff, as well as for the wider community.

Since early 2015, the Australian National University (ANU) has been involved in the evaluation and monitoring of Narragunnawali. One of the principles of the evaluation was a genuine collaboration between the ANU project team and Reconciliation Australia. In addition to a collaborative approach, four additional principles were followed as part of the methodology. Specifically, the project aimed to:

- Use a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analytical techniques;
- Provide information to Reconciliation Australia at regular intervals in order to ensure lessons learned can be incorporated as the program is developed;
- Collect information where possible from those who are directly involved in Narragunnawali; and
- Make use of available data where possible and data collected as part of the program.

The methodological approach was structured around a set of questions. Given the voluntary nature of the program, there are a set of main questions guiding the analysis:

- **Process:**
 - Why are certain schools and early learning services participating and others not?
 - For those who are participating, what are the strengths, weaknesses and suggested improvements for the program?
- **Outcomes:**
 - For those who are participating, what is the effect of the program on four main outcomes, namely does Narragunnawali lead to:
 - A higher level of understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage?
 - A higher level of pride in our shared national identity?
 - Increased trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the rest of the Australian population?
 - Reduced prejudice experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and teachers?

Since the commencement of Narragunnawali in 2014, the evaluation has shown that it has been a remarkably successful program. The number and diversity of schools and early learning services that are engaged with the program has increased dramatically such that by the end of 2017, nearly 1 out of every 10 schools and early learning services in Australia have commenced or completed a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). This is an extraordinarily high proportion for a program that is not compulsory and that is largely made available through an online platform that schools and early learning services need to voluntarily opt into.

The program has continued to adapt and improve since its inception. New resources and an updated online platform are now available. Furthermore, while they did not feature heavily in the Phase 1 evaluation, the first round of national Awards for reconciliation excellence in education were announced and celebrated in late November, 2017. The evaluation has also provided very strong evidence for the program to be having an effect on schools, early learning services, and teaching staff. For example, looking at Reflection Survey data from schools and early learning services, those that had reported that they were not sure or were not undertaking an activity in the initial surveys had a very high probability that they were undertaking that activity in a later follow-up. Furthermore, there were very few schools and early learning services that ceased undertaking activities that they had commenced. To put it another way, those schools and early learning services engaged with Narragunnawali maintain the reconciliation activities that they are already doing, and increase the activities through time.

Principles and questions

The first phase of the evaluation of Narragunnawali focused on a number of important aspects of a program that was in its infancy. The evaluation focused on growth in the program, as well as whether and why particular schools or early learning services are more or less likely to engage in the program, and how that is changing through time. The evaluation also looked at the extent to which progression through the stages of developing a RAP are occurring, and whether certain schools or early learning services progress at different rates than others.

Based on the principle of making use of as much existing data as possible, we have looked at how the RAP Working Groups feel about the activities that are happening in schools and early learning services (and how that changes through time), the content of whole-of-school/service Vision for Reconciliation statements, and what external datasets can tell us about the opportunities and outcomes of teachers of Indigenous children, as well as the children themselves. Finally, we have collected a limited and targeted amount of primary data to supplement the existing datasets. As the program continues, this style of analysis and these questions will continue to be important. However, as Narragunnawali matures as a program, it will be important to expand the range of questions asked, and the range of data analysed.

A subsequent phase of evaluation will need to take into account the dynamic focus and features of the Narragunnawali program itself. In the 2017-2022 Project Proposal prepared by Reconciliation Australia, it was proposed that there be a continuation of existing – as well as the introduction of additional – program components. These were summarised as follows:

- Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) – plans for whole school change, facilitated through a powerful online platform;
- Professional Learning – teacher-led resources aligned to RAP Actions and existing Professional Standards; webinars; and presentations at existing face-to-face conferences;
- Curriculum Resources – lessons and learning activities, aligned to RAP Actions and existing school and early learning frameworks;
- National Awards – recognising and celebrating Reconciliation excellence in the education sector;
- Evaluation and Research – independent program evaluation to inform efficacy as well as to ensure sustainability;
- Communications and Marketing – wide promotion of program and dissemination of policy positions and messages of societal change;

- Initial Teacher Education – within their degrees, teachers and educators learn about reconciliation;
- RAPs in education jurisdictions – Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors, as well as Early Education and Care bodies, formally committed to reconciliation;
- Increase data capture – attitudinal surveys from teachers and educators, students and children, parents and carers as well as community representatives; and
- Annual symposiums – reconciliation-themed and centred around change in early learning, primary and secondary schools.

This updated – phase 2 – proposal was designed to support a revised set of aims and objectives, based on key learnings and developments over the first phase of Narragunnawali’s operations. According to Reconciliation Australia, the overarching aim of Narragunnawali is ‘for Australian schools and early learning services to foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions’. To support this aim, the stated objectives are to:

- Support schools and early learning services to:
 - develop and/or strengthen links with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Outcome 1.0)
 - to engage in meaningful, symbolic and practical actions of reconciliation (Outcome 2.0)
- Empower and support teachers and educators to:
 - develop their own awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures (Outcome 3.0)
 - be confident and competent to support reconciliation in their schools and classrooms and with their students and their students’ families/communities (Outcome 4.0).

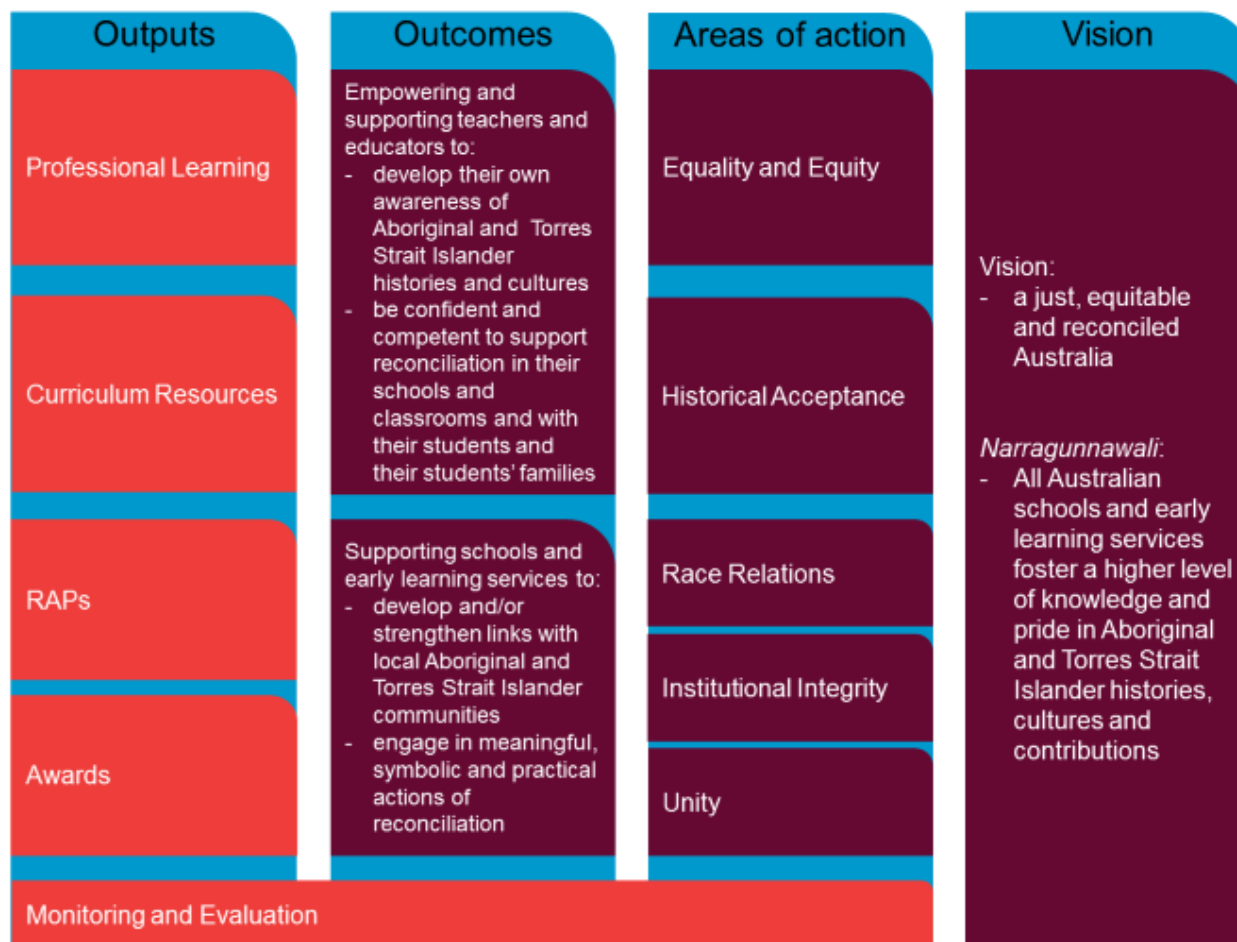
These objectives are underpinned by:

- Monitoring and Evaluation (Outcome 5.0)
- Communications and Policy (Outcome 6.0).

The aim and objectives are also supported by – and can be evaluated according to – the five integral and interrelated dimensions of reconciliation identified in *The State of Reconciliation in Australia* report (2016)¹, all of which are summarised in the ‘Areas of action’ column within Figure 6 below.

¹ The State of Reconciliation in Australia: Our history, our story, our future (2016)
https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/The-State-of-Reconciliation-report_FULL_WR.pdf

Figure 6 Narragunnawali outputs, outcomes, areas of action and vision



Evaluation questions

In order to support these aims and objectives, it is proposed that an updated set of evaluation and monitoring questions be identified and pursued in phase 2. A proposed set of questions around 7 themes or areas are outlined below. While this proposal is for research from January 2018 to June 2020, the questions are designed to support a longer term research agenda that aligns with Reconciliation Australia’s 2017-2022 Research Agenda.

1. Growth, uptake and usage
 - a. To what extent are new schools and early learning services engaging with Narragunnawali, and what are some of the factors that motivate this engagement?
 - b. Are existing schools and early learning services continuing to engage after the initial implementation of a RAP, and what are some of the reasons why/why not?
 - c. What is the depth of engagement of schools and early learning services?
 - d. What are some of the clear – quantitative and qualitative – outcomes of engaging with Narragunnawali, and reconciliation in education more generally, over time?
 - e. What are some of the key indicators and measures of reconciliation excellence in the education sector, and to what extent does the Narragunnawali framework and resources align with, and support, these measures?
 - f. How does the above vary by the type of school and early learning service, and what are some of the factors that may explain this variation?

- h. What is the usage of components of Narragunnawali by other community members?
 - i. What is the attitude other community members towards Narragunnawali, and towards reconciliation in education more generally? What factors might explain these attitudes?
 - j. How do these levels of knowledge, usage, and attitudes vary across population groups like those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous people from other countries, newly arrived migrants, those born in Australia from the dominant Australian culture, those in rural/remote areas, males/females, and across generations?
 - k. What other effects does engagement with Narragunnawali, or engagement with schools and early learning services that have engaged with Narragunnawali, have on non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents/carers and community members?
6. Student experience
- a. What is the level of knowledge of Indigenous/non-Indigenous students about Narragunnawali and its components?
 - b. What is the attitude of Indigenous/non-Indigenous students towards Narragunnawali, and reconciliation in education more generally? What factors might explain these attitudes.
 - c. What is the effect of Narragunnawali on Indigenous/non-Indigenous students and children whilst they are in schools or early learning services?
 - d. What is the effect of Narragunnawali on Indigenous/non-Indigenous outside of school, and after they have graduated from schools or early learning services?
7. Expansion of Narragunnawali
- a. To what extent have Narragunnawali and workplace RAPs and resources been able to effectively embed themselves into university or vocational education and training, with a particular focus on Initial Teacher Education
 - b. To what extent have Narragunnawali and workplace RAPs and resources been able to effectively embed themselves into education jurisdictions, and other bodies/organisations with an education-related focus?
 - c. Are there measureable outcomes from this expansion, with a particular focus on the impact back into schools?

Evaluation methodology

To answer the above evaluation questions, it is necessary to design a revised evaluation methodology. This methodology will follow an updated set of principles from the first evaluation, with the following seven principles proposed:

1. A collaborative approach with regular engagement between the evaluation team, Reconciliation Australia and additional stakeholders
2. Use a mix of qualitative, observational and experimental data collection and analytical techniques;
3. Provide information to Reconciliation Australia at regular intervals in order to ensure lessons learned can be relevantly and responsively incorporated as the program is continually developed;
4. Present findings to the public in accessible documents, and engage with policy makers and practitioners outside of Reconciliation Australia;
5. Publish findings from the evaluation in relevant academic journals or wider fora, ensuring rigour and peer review;
6. Collect information where possible from those who are directly or indirectly involved in Narragunnawali; and

7. Make use of available data where possible and appropriate, and data collected as part of the program.

The methodological approaches that have been used in Phase 1 of the evaluation are likely to be continued into Phase 2. However, it is proposed that a number of new approaches be considered and trialed. These include:

- The provision of a self-reporting mechanism (and accompanying data visualisation) allowing local level assessment of impact, that can be scaled to obtain a national picture of reconciliation in schools – an Education barometer;
- Longitudinal qualitative analysis;
- Analysis of individual users of Narragunnawali – teachers/educators, non-teaching staff, students/children, parents/carers and community members; and
- Experimental approaches to assess learning resources.

Each of these methodological approaches are discussed in more detail below.

An Education Barometer

It is proposed in the second phase of the evaluation that one of the main focuses of the primary data collection will be on the development, piloting, and implementation of an Education Barometer that measures the attitudes of teachers and educators, as well as students or other stakeholders that have an association with a school or early learning environment. This barometer would be self-completed, and would supplement the data collected in the current Reflection Survey. It would be based on the survey instruments developed in the first phase of the evaluation, and integrated with the current Australian Reconciliation Barometer. A proposed methodological approach would be:

- a) Develop a proposed survey in consultation with Reconciliation Australia, with schools or early learning services having their own unique log-in or survey portal;
- b) Approach one or two education jurisdictions as pilot jurisdictions;
- c) Encourage the education jurisdictions to ask all schools/early learning services to participate in the survey, regardless of whether they have signed up to Narragunnawali;
- d) Automatically provide aggregate level data and de-identified data to the schools and early learning services, and make it straight forward to repeat the barometer. The default would be for the barometer to be repeated at set time intervals, however schools and early learning services would have the flexibility to repeat at intervals of their own contextualized choosing;
- e) Collect and analyse de-identified data for all schools and early learning services centrally on a regular basis. De-identified results could be provided to the jurisdictions.
- f) Make available to all jurisdictions and systems for self-completion once piloted.
- g) Integrate with the collection of the national Australian Reconciliation Barometer to enable comparisons of trends and patterns inside and outside schools and early learning services.

Longitudinal qualitative surveys

In the first phase of the Evaluation, limited qualitative analysis was undertaken of attitudes, experiences and self-reported outcomes of engaging with Narragunnawali. One of the challenges, however, was that the dynamic nature of the program meant that interviews conducted with schools and early learning services about the program became less relevant through time. It is proposed that for this second phase of the evaluation, this dynamic nature of the program be exploited through longitudinal qualitative data collection.

Specifically, it is proposed that a representative set of schools and early learning services be recruited in the first half of 2018. Teachers and education professionals in these institutions will be interviewed remotely every 6 months and asked not only about their initial views of Narragunnawali, but also about how their experiences have changed as the program itself has been updated, and as they have spent time in the program. It is also proposed that additional small sets of newly engaged schools and early learning services be recruited throughout different points in time of the evaluation period to supplement the analysis.

Individual users of Narragunnawali

In the first phase of the Evaluation, the unit of the analysis for the administrative data was the school or early learning service. However, one of the innovations of Narragunnawali 2.0, was the increased ease with which individual users could engage with Narragunnawali, including through an individual-log in. It is proposed that the characteristics of those who have signed into Narragunnawali as individual-users be examined, including the type, level, reason for and results of engagement. It is also proposed that a subset of these users (teachers, students, parents/carers, and community members) be contacted to convey their individual experience.

Assessing learning resources

A number of professional learning and curriculum resources have been made freely available through Narragunnawali, accessible to users regardless of whether they have created a Reconciliation Action Plan. These have been created or selected by Reconciliation Australia to support the implementation of RAP Actions, and general understanding and engagement with reconciliation. Each curriculum resource is simultaneously aligned with national curriculum frameworks, and each professional learning resource is aligned with national professional standards for teachers. It is proposed in this phase of the project, that these resources be tested experimentally for their effectiveness. The proposed methodology is outlined below (keeping in mind that the qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys outlined above will also touch on views of the learning resources):

- Identify a sub-set of resources with Reconciliation Australia/Narragunnawali that are likely to have a particular effect on knowledge and/or attitudes;
- Identify a representative population (potentially from an online commercial panel) that is unlikely to have been exposed to the resources;
- Randomly assign the sample to a treatment group who view or consume the resources and a control group who does not; and
- Test for differences in knowledge and/or attitudes after engaging with the resources.

By testing for the effect of a range of resources, it will be possible to make generalisable statements about the types of resources that are likely to have large effects and those whose effects may be more limited.

Stakeholder engagement strategy

Continuous discussion with Reconciliation Australia

A key focus of this evaluation will be continuous discussion with Reconciliation Australia. These discussions will focus on the ANU presenting initial results and findings, Reconciliation Australia passing on relevant information from the implementation of the program, and both parties discussing whether there are any changes required to the evaluation questions and methodology.

Regular Project meetings will involve key staff from the ANU evaluation team, and key staff from Reconciliation Australia. At these meetings, the ANU team will present its plans for the

evaluation, report on progress to date in conducting the evaluation, and seek relevant feedback from the Reconciliation Australia team. Similarly the Reconciliation Australia team will report to ANU on the progress of the program (especially participation of new schools, early learning service and individuals), and significant contacts with and feedback from stakeholders relevant to the evaluation. Both parties will then consider any changes to the evaluation approach that such feedback and discussion suggests. It is expected that such meetings will take place every 2-4 weeks, depending on the amount of reporting back required at that particular point in time. Email updates will be provided in alternative fortnights.

Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC)

A new EAC will be established to guide the evaluation. It is suggested that the chair be external to both the ANU and Reconciliation Australia, and will be nominated in partnership between the two organisations. The EAC will not include staff from either organisation, but will report to both.

In addition to the chair, other members might include those from the current EAG and around 4-6 members selected to represent key stakeholders from different education jurisdictions, among them Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation, Government, Catholic and Independent school sector representatives, early learning services, teachers and parents. Importantly, members will not represent their organisation, but rather be on the EAC as individuals with a wealth of experience and insight.

Discussions will take place between the ANU and Reconciliation Australia early in this phase of the project to ensure that the EAC is used effectively, and to draft a mutually agreed terms of reference.

Human Research Ethics

It will be an ANU requirement that we gain approval from the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee to carry out this work. This will be a particularly sensitive proposal as it involves both Indigenous people and young people less than 18 years of age. It will have to go to the full ANU Ethics Committee at their monthly meeting. This requires that the evaluation team completes a full on-line human research ethics application and submits it usually mid-month, for consideration at a Human Research Ethics Committee meeting at the end of the month. The outcome is usually transmitted a few days after the meeting, and often requires that additional questions are responded to before the Chair of the Committee gives final approval for the work to proceed. Thus this process can take around 4-6 weeks.

At the same time, each education jurisdiction will also require that its own Ethics processes are followed. The processes of obtaining the necessary Ethics Approvals could be rather lengthy and complex. In some jurisdictions evaluations are considered to be research, in others they are not, and approval processes differ.

Output strategy

It is proposed that summary reports be provided to Reconciliation Australia two times per year in 2018, 2019 and 2020. Reports 1 through to 5 will include a monitoring component, where the number and characteristics of schools and early learning services engaged with Narragunnawali is presented and summarised, as well as a brief update on all aspects of the evaluation. In addition, each report will include a thematic discussion focussing on one or two aspects of the detailed evaluation. Report #6 will provide a summary of the overall findings from the evaluation.

Additional reports may be provided if mutually agreed between the ANU and Reconciliation Australia.

All written reports will be provided to Reconciliation Australia for comment. All written reports will be provided to Reconciliation Australia for comment. While analyses will remain externally and impartially evaluated by the ANU, it is anticipated that most if not all comments on the reports will be able to be incorporated and all intellectual property in the Contract Material vests in Reconciliation Australia on creation.

In addition to the written reports, it is anticipated that one public seminar be given each year, either at the ANU or at appropriate academic conferences. It is also anticipated that at least one seminar be given to Reconciliation Australia per year, outlining the main findings and implications.

Budget

The total budget for the project is \$281,770 (GST excl). This budget includes \$238,588 for salaries and related on-costs, of which \$174,450 is for a dedicated Level B academic who will spend 0.25 FTE on the project, and \$64,138 is for A/Prof Nicholas Biddle who will spend approximately 50 days (FTE) on the project.

In addition, there is \$23,182 allocated to travel for the project. This includes 15 interstate trips throughout the life of the project in order to meet with and engage with education departments to facilitate primary data collection.

The final component of the budget will be \$20,000 for recruitment of sample to the experimental assessments. It is proposed that a large, commercial panel be used, with results benchmarked to the relevant population.

In order to keep the project to this budget, a number of decision have been made to maintain the scope of the project. These are:

- Making use of existing data wherever possible. This includes data collected as part of the online platform, but also data collected by external agencies (including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children, and the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children);
- Facilitating data collection by schools and early learning services themselves. This will not only minimise budget, but also allow schools and early learning services to maintain some control and agency over the data collection process;
- Making use of video and teleconferencing for interaction between the ANU research team and Reconciliation Australia. While some face-to-face meetings will be required, these will be undertaken where possible around existing travel;
- Collecting qualitative data remotely. The most detailed qualitative data collection is possible through face-to-face interviewing. However, undertaking all interviews in this way is prohibitively expensive for a project of this type. It is proposed, therefore, that online, tele-depth, and bulletin-board methods be used as the primary qualitative data collection methodology. Additional face-to-face data collection may be considered using additional budget from Reconciliation Australia or third party data sources.