**November 2020**

**Link Housing enlists Bibi Barba to symbolise reconciliation during**

**NAIDOC Week 2020 celebrations and the launch of Link Housing’s first Reconciliation Action Plan**

Bibi Barba is an Indigenous artist who combines her grandmother’s storytelling and personal connection to the land as her inspiration for producing artworks that combine traditional culture and contemporary style. Born in Queensland and raised in Sydney, Bibi remains connected to her Wiradjuri tribe on Keppel Island as a salt-water Woka Woka woman, recognising her lifelong association with sea and land.

As an artist for 35 years, Bibi has explored many different career paths including as a designer, artist and law student. Today she continues to be an advocate for artist rights and is recognised internationally as a respected voice in areas of Indigenous education and advocacy.

Bibi feels strongly about art being a mechanism to heal, “[art] is the most universal language, it is the art of understanding and communicating with each other” Bibi said.

In 2019 Bibi was approached to become one of the Indigenous voices in the development of Link Housing’s first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to build on the foundations that have been established since Link Housing’s inception in 1984 and to support their Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week celebrations. The introduction to Bibi came through one of Link Housing’s residents who has given her time to advise and support Link Housing on its reconciliation journey.

This coming NAIDOC Week, Bibi will help Link Housing launch their first RAP at a celebration in Ryde and streamed online via Facebook Live.

“Given my role as an artist and designer with a voice in certain communities, it was a privilege to be asked to collaborate with Link Housing and share my art and culture with their community” said Bibi.

Bibi and a collection of several other organisations and Aboriginal partners provided their input in a working partnership to help Link Housing becoming more culturally aware by establishing Link Housing’s ‘Reflect’ RAP, which was endorsed by Reconciliation Australia earlier this month and formalises the not-for-profit’s commitment to reconciliation through a series of actions that the organisation will undertake over the next 12 months.

“(The RAP is) a framework to help organisations foster the ability for human beings to be able to live harmoniously by respecting each other’s culture. It also reaffirms Link Housing’s commitment to ‘Closing the Gap’ and becoming a more inclusive organisation to improve Indigenous economic outcomes through employment, training and procurement opportunities,” Bibi said.

“The RAP helps broaden the spectrum and generosity of our culture and is a mechanism for non-indigenous people to be involved in reconciliation as we begin to heal past intergenerational trauma. Since the time of colonisation, this provides an opportunity to listen, understand and learn how we can live in harmony together and appreciate each other’s culture.”

Recognising Bibi’s talent, powerful story and voice, Link Housing commissioned her to do their RAP artwork using a unique process that involved both staff and residents.

“The artwork is a big statement that invites people to learn about Indigenous culture and unite together to understand it. We are all human beings and changing generations and their perspective on Aboriginal culture and living together is important” said Bibi.

The artwork was designed by Bibi to create ‘the dreaming of Link Housing’ which symbolises the dream to bring community together and do so harmoniously. The lines in the artwork symbol a pathway to community, while the dots represent footprints.

Designed as three parts, the middle artwork is an original designed and painted by Bibi, symbolising unity and community through Indigenous culture and colour. The other two parts were designed by Bibi and painted by Link Housing staff and residents in a series of unique, uplifting and educational art and culture workshops led by Bibi during NAIDOC Week last year.

“The participation of Link Housing staff and residents across three rotational painting sessions provided a finishing piece that is incredible because everyone feels connected and has a piece in it” Bibi said.

The art and culture workshops also included an introduction to hear Bibi’s story and time to create an Aboriginal art bookmark to take home as a token of Bibi’s appreciation for their participation and to signify their own involvement.   
  
Following the masterclasses, Bibi added the final touches to the piece of art, which is now proudly on display at Link Housing’s office in West Ryde, NSW.

Link Housing CEO, Andrew McAnulty recognises the value of respecting and understanding culturally diverse groups and believes capturing their input is critical to deliver a future-focused vision for community housing.

“The RAP reflects Link Housing’s commitment to reconciliation, focusing on three key areas including organisational commitment, shared understanding and layering the foundations to connect in order to take this journey together for the future.” Mr McAnulty said.

“This plan provides us with a framework to support the national reconciliation movement in a structured way. Through our community housing partnerships, projects and services, Link Housing has the capacity to further advocate and actively support reconciliation.”

Link Housing will launch their RAP at their NAIDOC Week celebration on Monday 9 November 2020, 10.30am. Joining Link Housing and Bibi will be Craig Madden (Welcome to Country), Uncle Terry Olsen (traditional dance) and Gomaroi (didgeridoo). Due to COVID-19, a small number of guests will be invited to attend the Ryde event, with others invited to participate virtually via Facebook Live. To be part of the event online, visit the [Link Housing Facebook page.](http://www.facebook.com/LinkHousingCommunityHousing)

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**About Link Housing**

Link Housing is a not-for-profit organisation with a charitable mission to provide safe, sustainable and affordable homes to enhance lives and communities. The organisation has been providing community housing for 35 years and now manages close to 4000 homes for over 6000 people across metropolitan Sydney.

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