

Aboriginal Employment Plan

2018-2021



**Mercy Health
Implementation Plan
2018-2021**



Mercy Health
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Introduction

Acknowledgment

Mercy Hospitals Victoria Limited (MHVL) would like to respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land in which all of our buildings stand both within Victoria and more broadly. MHVL acknowledges and pays respects to Elders both past and present and recognises the integral part that culture and history plays in lives of all Aboriginal people.

Background

Karreeta is the Gunditjmara word for “grow” and Yirramboi is the Taungurung word meaning “tomorrow”. Karreeta Yirramboi is the Victorian Government’s plan to improve public-sector employment and career development outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait (Aboriginal) people.

Karreeta Yirramboi set an Aboriginal employment target of one per cent for the Victorian public sector and requires public-sector organisations with 500 or more employees to develop an Aboriginal Employment Plan (AEP).

The public health sector plays an important part in the overall achievement of an Aboriginal employment target. Thirty-two Victorian public health services have a workforce in excess of 500 employees. The aim is to develop AEPs for each organisation, tailored to their specific needs and capacity, which are reflective of the communities in which they operate. MHVL meets the criteria and is responsible for designing and implementing an AEP to meet these requirements.

The Department of Health has engaged with the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations (DEEWR) to facilitate and coordinate this AEP project. The project is funded by DEEWR with the Department of Health taking responsibility for selecting the 32 organisations. Priority is given to health services with 500 or more employees.

Plan structure

This plan demonstrates our ongoing commitment to Aboriginal employment within MHVL. We take the learning's from our first AEP 2012-2015 and are pleased to have developed a number of tangible initiatives for implementation within phase two of our AEP. Once again the AEP has been revised and written for MHVL after information was sourced from staff at the organisation's two largest hospitals, Mercy Hospital for Women at Heidelberg and Werribee Mercy Hospital. Generally, the information is relevant to the parent organisation and common to both hospitals and other sites hence the acronym 'MHVL' is used. The names of either Mercy Hospital for Women or Werribee Mercy Hospital are used where information relates specifically to either hospital. We are also pleased to link this plan to the MHVL Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) allowing ongoing input and support from our RAP Aboriginal Reference Committee, along with consultation with the Aboriginal community and organisational stakeholders.

Objective

The continued objective of this plan is to increase employment participation of Aboriginal people at MHVL. This target is based on head count and not effective full-time equivalent (EFT).¹

Through the process of increasing Aboriginal employment participation, greater understanding of cross-cultural requirements will be achieved to develop the environment and systems for long-term Aboriginal participation across MHVL and this will be a primary focus moving forward.

Proposed timeframe and resources

Whilst MHVL acknowledges the public sectors one per cent Aboriginal employment target, this plan is based on a review of our previous AEP and aligned to our RAP. It will focus on building the cultural competency of the organisation along with creating entry pathways for both Aboriginal employees and students. MHVL is strongly focused on building cultural competency as an overall approach to improving Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal patient experiences.

Approach

This AEP is designed to provide practical steps to increase the Aboriginal workforce participation goal, as detailed in the Karreeta Yirramboi employment and training plan.

To ensure MHVL's plan is balanced, an integrated implementation model has been adopted throughout. This model ensures the plan addresses four critical areas:

1. **Resources** – funding, people and infrastructure;
2. **Internal** – procedure, preparation, ownership and measurement;
3. **Development** – employment initiatives, training and investment; and
4. **Engagement** – partnerships, networks and strategic alliances.

The objectives and outcomes of the plan are spread over the period 2018 to the

¹ MHVL is aiming to achieve a one per cent employment target subject to change.

end of 2021. It is important to remember when utilising this document that this is not a 'static plan'. As opportunities arise and momentum grows through new initiatives and greater employee and partnership participation, this plan must reflect such change, and consistently align to the initiatives of the RAP and broader organisational objectives.

Environment

Organisation Profile

Mercy Health

Mercy Health is a Catholic community benefit organisation founded by the Sisters of Mercy to deliver health, aged care and community services. Each year Mercy Health cares for nearly half a million people across Victoria, southern New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

The health group offers acute and sub-acute hospital (inpatient / outpatient) care, aged care, mental health programs, specialist women's healthcare, early parenting support, palliative care, home and community care, and health worker training and development.

Mercy Hospital for Women

Mercy Hospital for Women is a major public hospital and specialist referral centre with the medical, nursing, midwifery and allied health expertise to provide complex care for obstetric, neonatal and gynaecological needs.

The hospital cares for public and private patients across maternity, neonatology and paediatrics, perioperative, gynaecology, and women's health services.

Mercy Hospital for Women is a leader in research and teaching, particularly in relation to women's and newborn's health. The hospital has one of only four neonatal intensive care units in Melbourne and a special care nursery. Mercy Hospital for Women cares for some of Victoria's most unwell babies and provides support for families throughout health journeys.

Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre

O'Connell Family Centre is one of three early parenting centres in Victoria. The centre has residential, day and community programs working with families with children from birth to four years of age.

Werribee Mercy Hospital

Werribee Mercy Hospital is a public hospital which serves the south-western region of Melbourne. The organisation provides maternity and neonatal services, general surgical and medical services, emergency services, palliative care and home and community care. Mental health programs are also available through the hospital and local clinics.

Aboriginal Community

MHVL has demonstrated a genuine commitment to contribute towards improving the health of Aboriginal people, particularly through its 'New Directions' program. In 2012, a report was completed which reviewed the organisation's response to recognised health issues affecting Aboriginal people. The report was entitled 'Nangnak Wan Myeek Community Consultation Report', produced under the New Directions program. The four main findings outlined in the report are consistent with the issues identified by MHVL staff interviewed in relation to this plan. In summary, they were:

- Improving systems for identifying Aboriginal patients
- Improving staff awareness of MHVL's Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers
- Providing more Aboriginal cultural awareness training for staff
- Addressing recognised barriers to Aboriginal people attending health service appointments.

MHVL does not have an affiliation or connection with one particular Aboriginal community in relation to its delivery of health services at either Werribee Mercy Hospital or Mercy Hospital for Women; however, most Aboriginal patients who present at Mercy Hospital for Women's are from local areas. Otherwise, the organisation services patients from a wide geographical area. This includes the greater metropolitan Melbourne region, country Victoria as well as southern New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and, on occasions, other states in Australia, although new Aboriginal employees are more likely to be sourced from Aboriginal communities in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

MHVL acknowledges that there is an unacceptable gap between the health outcomes for the Aboriginal community and the wider Victorian community.

By engaging with Aboriginal people, MHVL aims to build relationships with and respect for the Aboriginal community. In doing so, the organisation strives to address the current unacceptable health gaps that currently exist, while identifying employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in its service delivery. The AEP will help provide an effective process to promote and reach these goals.

The appointment of Aboriginal employees by MHVL will be an effective way of encouraging the presentation of Aboriginal people for health treatment.

MHVL will welcome and integrate Aboriginal employees into its wider health services team in any roles for which they are qualified and selected through the organisation's normal process. Their roles will not be limited to specific 'Aboriginal' roles. This will ensure that Aboriginal employees are fully integrated and valued members of the MHVL team. They will be provided opportunities to develop skills across all facets of MHVL's services, in both clinical and non-clinical spheres.

Objectives

As described, each public health service must strive towards achieving one per cent workforce participation of Aboriginal people.

This plan has been developed in accordance with the following objectives:

- commitment to actively strengthening the inclusion of Aboriginal culture in the workplace
- improving pathways and employment opportunities for the Aboriginal community in a culturally safe environment
- to strengthen career pathways and educational placements for Aboriginal students.

Each key area has specific detailed strategies to achieve the outcome. An indicative time line has been provided to assist in the implementation.

Many of the career opportunities within the health sector are professional and require academic qualifications. Achieving outcomes in many professional roles within MHVL would be unattainable within the time allocation of the Karreeta Yirramboi plan. Therefore, to achieve the desired outcomes, we have developed a mixed employment approach.

This mixed employment approach will include TAFE entry-level opportunities within the organisation and the introduction of suitable employees into part-time and casual positions which do not require specific higher education.

An additional strategy is the identification of undergraduate Aboriginal students currently completing professional qualifications. Consideration of funded cadetship placements not only engages additional Aboriginal employees with MHVL but also provides critical employment placement for the acquisition of practical skills.

As outlined within the Karreeta Yirramboi toolkit MHVL will explore the adaptation of the 'Designated and Identified Positions'. Following the introduction of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 in August 2011, MHVL can advertise and reserve positions for Aboriginal applicants without applying for anti-discrimination exemption from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). This change in policy allows MHVL to target specific sectors of the organisation for Aboriginal employment.

Key Initiatives

The organisation has decided on detailed strategies and actions for particular employment initiatives. The initiatives for MHVL's AEP are designed to provide a proactive and practical approach to increasing the Aboriginal workforce and building cultural awareness.

Targets

MHVL currently employs eleven (11) self-identified Aboriginal staff out of a total workforce across the organisation of approximately 4,300 employees.

To achieve the one per cent target (and to strive towards a two per cent target) MHVL requires an innovative and committed approach to increasing Aboriginal employment participation through a variety of initiatives.

The occupations may range from those requiring tertiary qualifications at a degree level - such as medical, allied health and nursing positions - to positions requiring TAFE qualifications or less such as patient services, Aboriginal liaison, allied health assistants, administration and support services.

The most recent Aboriginal Labour Market data demonstrates that more Aboriginal people are employed in health and human services than in any other industry and the demand is growing, with 77% women occupying these roles (Victorian State Government, Aboriginal Workforce Strategy). According to the 2011 census, Health Care and Social Assistance organisations accounted for 1,774 of the Aboriginal workforce, with Aged care and registered nurses two of the highest occupations. Consistently the Victorian data demonstrates that 51% of the Aboriginal community live in regional Victoria and 49% living in metropolitan Melbourne.

Progress 2013-2015

MHVL is pleased to have progressed many areas outlined in our first AEP. Upon review and through the work of the RAP working group and Aboriginal Reference Committee, MHVL has made progress in a number of areas including;

- Adding recognition of Aboriginal peoples and the first Australians as a footer on our intranet/internet and email signatures as well as all publications.
- Aboriginal Self Identification
 - Recruitment & Payroll systems now allow staff to self-identify
 - Candidates able to identify upon application
- AEP plan available on website.
- Acknowledgement of / Welcome to Country Procedure developed.
- Audit of existing artwork completed and artwork placed in high volume and interview places at MHW.
- Flags purchased for all sites.
- Allocation of permanent column in Mercy Health quarterly publication 'Our Voice' to showcase Aboriginal projects and stories.
- Development of a RAP
- Ongoing commitment from leadership to progress and support the implementation of the AEP
- Locating the AEP development in HR versus the tendency to locate it in an Aboriginal serviced department (ownership and uptake of this as a significant HR commitment)
- Staff champions identified for this work amongst leadership and HR
- Cultural competency training delivered
- Development of appropriately welcoming Aboriginal facilities for Aboriginal staff and patients at Werribee Mercy Hospital.
- Participation in Aboriginal employment networking opportunities.

Implementation Plan

2018-2021



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Cultural Awareness – Culturally Friendly Environments

The success of an AEP for MHVL is underpinned by cultural awareness and effective partnerships with the Victorian Aboriginal Community. It is essential that key managers and those engaging directly with the Aboriginal community and services have a basic level of cultural awareness and a sound understanding of key initiatives such as Koolin Balit (Closing the Gap). The concept of cultural safety is not only applicable to the Aboriginal community members whom may access MHVL services but also for Aboriginal employees. Therefore, building a workplace that is culturally aware of the Victorian Aboriginal community and possible cultural sensitivities is instrumental to the retention of Aboriginal staff and in the provision of a culturally safe service.

MHVL will focus its Cultural Awareness Program in terms of work area needs, for example a detailed program for managers that includes a historical context along with current day issues and effective partnership building. A generalist half day program would be suitable for the broader staff population. MHVL will engage current identified Aboriginal staff to review and support content for cultural awareness programs across the organisations, this will ensure a program that is developed based on the real needs and barriers as identified and encountered through the day to day work of Aboriginal employees, and the interface they have with the Aboriginal communities and their organisations. This will be linked in to the MHVL learning framework to ensure we embed our capacity to sustain a culturally supportive environment for our staff and patients.

MHVL will not limit cultural awareness to training type programs and will consider a broad range of options to embed cultural knowledge within the day to day operations of the organisation as already progressed during 2013-2015.

Additional strategies will also include a cultural space on the intranet site that offers cultural information, Aboriginal program details, key dates and other initiatives (AEP/RAP). MHVL will also introduce Snack Session or lunch box forums as an effective way to deliver topic based sessions that are also time effective for busy work environments such as hospitals. These sessions will also be offered during key dates throughout the year such as Reconciliation and NAIDOC Weeks with the view of building up a calendar of events across the year.

Action	Description	Outcome	Who	Timeline
Create an Aboriginal inclusive workplace for all staff which actively acknowledges, celebrates & supports Aboriginal culture	Review and implement an Aboriginal Cultural Awareness program that meets the specific needs of MHVL	<p>A specifically developed program that meets the needs of Mercy Health Services will build cultural safety for Aboriginal staff and community members accessing services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an introduction Cultural Awareness program accessible for all MHVL staff. • MHVL will target direct supervisors of Aboriginal staff/programs to attend Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training along with Managers that supervise programs that have regular/ frequent contact with members of the Aboriginal community (i.e midwifery/ social work). • Consider the integration of cultural awareness and safety training within the Mercy Health Learning ladder assisting staff to access appropriate levels of training. 	HR	<p>2018-2020</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>In progress</p>
Online Cultural Awareness Training	<p>A summarised online version of the Cultural Awareness Training will be made available to all staff.</p> <p>Ensure cultural awareness training forms part of the orientation of all new staff members.</p>	Investigate the feasibility of online training where Managers through the RAP and PDR (Performance Development Review process), would be required to support staff's participation in this online program and participation rates would be monitored via HR.	HR	2018-2020
Cultural Intranet Page	<p>MHVL will aim to share broader information through the development of cultural fact sheets (to be located on the intranet and accessible by all staff).</p> <p>This will be achieved through the development of an online 'Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Hub' to be accessed via the intranet.</p>	<p>This would build on the work already done in terms of Welcome/Acknowledgement protocols and can cover topics such as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorian Aboriginal community • Aboriginal programs • Key Aboriginal dates • Grief and loss • Effective partnership building with local Aboriginal organisations • Asking the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander question 	HR	<p>2018</p> <p>Complete</p>

Promoting pathways and careers opportunities will be achieved through active and ongoing engagement with the Victorian Aboriginal community. The AEP Working group will provide a fundamental framework for seeking cultural advice in successfully implementing key initiatives of phase 2 of MHVL's AEP. Through the AEP the range and variety of roles will be promoted through community job fairs and events, along with promotion through the extensive Aboriginal networks. MHVL understands the importance of building the Aboriginal workforce across all sectors of our organisation in addressing the Aboriginal Health Gap.

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Retention – orientation, mentoring and career support

Retaining Aboriginal employees is just as important as attracting Aboriginal staff in the first place. As documented in the Kareeta Yirramboi toolkit investing in good orientation, mentoring, and career support practices pays off in the short, medium and longer term. Strategies to retain employees and develop their career and leadership potential can bring benefits to an organisation. Strategies to retain employees and develop their career and leadership potential can bring benefits to an organisation.

Action	Description	Outcome	Who	Timeline
Career Development and Retention Strategies	<p>Identify career development opportunities and specialisations for Aboriginal staff.</p> <p>Develop clear pathways for career development, and opportunities for career progression that aligns with the PDR process.</p> <p>Explore clinical secondment opportunities for health professionals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure workplace and professional relationships are based on mutual respect, tolerance of diversity and a shared understanding of cultural safety • Consider cultural sensitivity and safety within processes for resolution of any difficulties, differences or misunderstandings that may occur, including review/debrief post issue resolution. • Address cultural realities in order to facilitate full participation in service delivery by Aboriginal co-workers for example via the Aboriginal Reference Committee, consultation with Community on specific issues. • Ensure work practices used in a cross cultural context are grounded in an awareness of one's own culture and the cultural realities of others • Establish an Aboriginal staff support network 	HR	2018-2021
Mentoring	<p>Investing in a pool of mentors from within existing Aboriginal staff may assist in retention.</p> <p>Explore opportunities for 'cross mentoring, whereby an Aboriginal staff member is paired with a mentor from a specialist field of practice to enhance both professional relationships.</p>	<p>Informal Mentoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The option of two people entering into a mentoring relationship of their own choice, without being asked by a third party or a formal agreement. It usually occurs between co-workers or friends, is unstructured and changes over time. In Indigenous contexts informal mentoring often occurs between an Elder or other respected member of a community with a younger person seen to have potential to step up and build their skills. Informal mentoring is a very important part of knowledge sharing for Aboriginal people and has been a central part of education for thousands of years. 	HR	2018-2020

Formal Mentoring

- Explore the feasibility of a more structured mentoring arrangement. Formal mentoring that involves an acknowledgement between the mentor and mentee that a mentoring will take place. This approach will have clear objectives and form a part of a wider learning and development program. MHVL will initiate a formal process for selection, matching, participant support, conclusion and evaluation of the program. The program will have a clear start and finish point. Both the parties will be aware of their roles and responsibilities and will meet on a regular basis.

Career Development and Pathways

Providing effective and non-threatening performance management is an excellent way to maximise the retention of Aboriginal staff members in the long term. MHVL is in a unique position to grow the Aboriginal workforce through student placements with the aim of long term employment within the direct health delivery workforce. Success in this area will be aligned to the implementation of effective cultural awareness strategies across the whole of MHVL ensuring cultural safety and a workplace that supports Aboriginal identity and community participation. It is well documented that Closing the Health Gap will be achieved by increasing the Aboriginal health workforce across all areas and supporting student placements through comprehensive orientation programs, mentoring and cultural supports are key areas for success. MHVL recognise that many Aboriginal students attend metropolitan locations to study from regional communities and therefore require relevant cultural supports and connections within the workplace.

Action	Description	Outcome	Who	Timeline
Student Placement Pathways	<p>Identify existing student pathways and explore a more targeted approach.</p> <p>Incorporate elements of the New Starter manual in order to develop an Aboriginal Student Placement Information Package.</p> <p>Clarify placement expectations and conditions, specify that student participation in cultural events (NAIDOC, Reconciliation Week etc) is welcomed and encouraged.</p> <p>Create an environment of cultural safety and reflective learning by providing Aboriginal learning spaces.</p> <p>MHVL will explore investment in a dedicated student placement liaison with a well-developed working knowledge of the placement challenges and barriers for Aboriginal staff and demonstrate an ability to implement creative strategies to encourage students to MHVL</p>	<p>MHVL will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the viability of utilising a position in the Education Services Department as a MHVL student placement liaison officer to develop a targeted marketing strategy to attract Aboriginal Students across MHVL sites. Ensure that all student placement officers within the Learning Team have attended Aboriginal Cultural Journey training. Explore partnerships with Aboriginal Health services and educational institutions relevant to the desired student cohort. Explore an Aboriginal Cadetship, targeted at first university students. Explore an Aboriginal Graduate Program. Include an Aboriginal Friendly student statement for student orientation manuals. The manual may include artwork, language and photos relating to Aboriginal students. Include information in the student placement manual such as where to access information about mentoring processes (buddy system, Aboriginal staff network meetings and key contacts, cultural support, Aboriginal 	Learning Team Aboriginal Program Team	2018-2020

Identify and support Aboriginal midwifery trainees.

spaces within MHVL), Aboriginal inclusion activities and practical matters such as dress code etc.

- Ensure students who self-identify as Aboriginal, have a mentor as agreed, ideally another Aboriginal staff member, (someone to go to lunch with in the first weeks at minimum) who can introduce the student to other Aboriginal staff at MHVL
- Facilitate the ability for Aboriginal students to shadow experienced staff. This will provide the student with the opportunity to observe and familiarise themselves with the functions of the role they will be undertaking, thus improving their understanding of the tasks involved.
- Examine the likely benefits for MHVL and the student in the context of a weekly morning catch up with other Aboriginal students (separate from the bigger network) facilitated by the Aboriginal Health Liaison or MHVL Education Services.
- Ensure staff in the area the student will be placed have completed cultural awareness training and demonstrate this awareness in their everyday interactions.
- Obtain feedback from workplace student supervisor to identify and evaluate culturally safe actions that were demonstrated, or challenges to be addressed where we are aware of Aboriginal students being placed.



SCP CONSULTING

STRENGTHENING CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS



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