



Mercy Health
Care first



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN
INNOVATE

Mercy Health

Reconciliation Action Plan: Innovate April 2021-April 2023



The Mercy Health reconciliation story in images

The *Mercy Health Reconciliation Action Plan* features original artwork by Yorta Yorta and Gunnai artist Dixon Patten. Dixon is Director and Designer of Bayila, an Aboriginal-owned graphic art company founded in Melbourne (Nairn). Dixon's own story is entwined with Mercy Health, having been born at the Mercy Maternity Hospital in East Melbourne. Dixon was also present for the birth of his two nieces at Mercy Hospital for Women in Heidelberg.

Here, Dixon explains the narrative and symbolism of the artwork:

This artwork represents Mercy Health's commitment to reconciliation and honours the connection and dedication to the communities it serves.

The central motifs represent the founding Sisters and Mercy Health's heritage story. The figures represent strong women and honouring the maternal roots of Mercy Health's identity. The hands represent Aboriginal people and honouring them as the First Peoples of Australia. The feet represent Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people walking together in reconciliation and exchanging energy, knowledge and perspectives.

The formations to the left and right of the Sisters' represents the various branches

of Mercy Health beyond maternity. The various circles represent the different communities and the pathways depict our connection to each other.

The boomerangs represent returning to culture principles for guidance while on the reconciliation journey. The shields represent resilience. The 'birthing' trees represent traditional Aboriginal birthing practices; where a woman's placenta was placed in a tree and that tree was sacred to the newborn and during their lifetime. The gum leaves represent being 'Welcomed to Country'.

The coolamon was used for many traditions: babies were carried in them as a nurturing practice and they were also used in smoking ceremonies, which are a spiritual cleansing ritual. The message sticks were used as a 'passport' to allow others to cross the different countries, this allowed for exchange of dialogue and education.

The ancestors are wrapped in their possum-skin cloaks, a tradition in which a person had one cloak from birth to death.

Mercy Health was formed in Nairn (Melbourne). In the artwork, Bunjil and Waa, two creator beings for the Kulin (traditional owners of Melbourne) fly overhead, guiding and protecting us on our life's journey.

Title: wabung-ngetel

Call of Country
Gunnai Language

Artist

Dixon Patten
Bayila Creative
Gunnai and Yorta Yorta



Statement from Mercy Health Chief Executive Health Services

As an organisation founded in the Catholic heritage of the Sisters of Mercy we are committed to the value of the whole person. Through our heritage we are committed to understanding and acting for and with others to ensure every person can trust in our respect and support, and has the right to self-determine, to feel cultural safety and to flourish.



Through our application to reflection, innovation, stretching ourselves and elevating our reconciliation actions over time and with authentic commitment, we want to grow and deepen our response to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We know that past practices and injustices have caused and continue to cause suffering resulting in trauma, loss and grief for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. For that reason, we are impelled to act. Our Health Services Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) details our understanding of our current capacity to act with the intention that as our knowledge, understanding and capacity grow, we will challenge ourselves to extend and deepen that action. Our RAP is honest at each stage and aspirational as we look to the future.

In this, our second RAP, we are building on the work we have done in our Reflect RAP (2017/18) which set out to align our reconciliation actions with the mission and strategic objectives of our health services. Innovation is a core value of Mercy Health and through this next stage of our reconciliation journey, our Innovate RAP, we want to deepen our understanding of historical injustices and practices and challenge our organisation to form a stronger moral and ethical connection with the actions that are required to achieve change.

We know our understanding will come from listening and engaging with community. We call on all our staff to open the 'ear of their heart' to understand the barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples face and to build trust.

The actions in this plan build on many well-established initiatives already in place across our health services.

We stand united with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as we continue this walk in a spirit of trust, humility and shared hope and action for meaningful change.

Jason Payne
Chief Executive Health Services
Mercy Health

The 'birthing' trees represent traditional Aboriginal birthing practices. A woman's placenta was placed in a tree and that tree was sacred to the newborn and during their lifetime.

The ancestors are wrapped in their possum-skin cloaks, a tradition in which a person has one cloak from birth to death.



Statement from Reconciliation Australia Chief Executive Officer

Reconciliation Australia commends Mercy Health on the formal endorsement of its inaugural Innovate RAP.



Commencing an Innovate RAP is a crucial and rewarding period in an organisation's reconciliation journey. It is a time to build strong foundations and relationships, ensuring sustainable, thoughtful, and impactful RAP outcomes into the future.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement.

This Innovate RAP is both an opportunity and an invitation for Mercy Health to expand its understanding of its core strengths and deepen its relationship with its community, staff and stakeholders.

By investigating and understanding the integral role it plays across its sphere of influence, Mercy Health will create dynamic reconciliation outcomes, supported by and aligned with its business objectives.

An Innovate RAP is the time to strengthen and develop the connections that form the lifeblood of all RAP commitments. The RAP program's framework of relationships, respect and

opportunities emphasises not only the importance of fostering consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, but also empowering and enabling staff to contribute to this process as well.

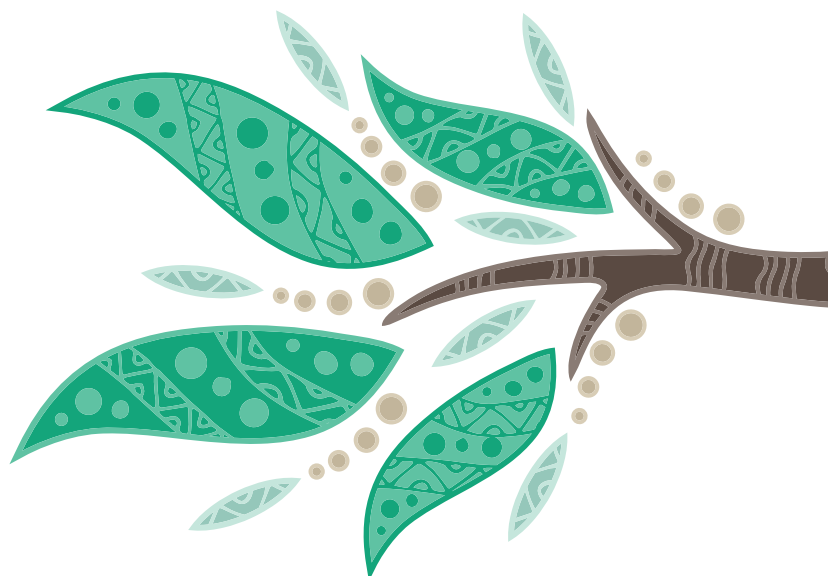
With over 2.3 million people now either working or studying in an organisation with a RAP, the program's potential for impact is greater than ever. Mercy Health is part of a strong network of more than 1,100 corporate, government and not-for-profit organisations that have taken goodwill and intention, and transformed it into action.

Implementing an Innovate RAP signals Mercy Health's readiness to develop and strengthen relationships, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation and pilot innovative strategies to ensure effective outcomes.

Getting these steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations Mercy Health on your Innovate RAP and I look forward to following your ongoing reconciliation journey.

Karen Mundine
Chief Executive Officer
Reconciliation Australia





Mercy Health was formed in Nairn (Melbourne). Bunjil and Waa, two creator beings for the Kulin (traditional owners of Melbourne) fly overhead; guiding and protecting us on our life's journey.

The hands represent Aboriginal people and honouring them as the First Peoples of Australia.

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About Mercy Health

Mercy Health is a Catholic organisation grounded in a 2,000-year tradition of caring for others. Founded by the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Health is made up of 10,000 people who provide acute and subacute hospital care, aged care, mental health programs, maternity and specialist women's health services, early parenting services, home care services and health worker training and development. Mercy Health employs people from many cultures and backgrounds who, irrespective of their beliefs, share a common bond to care for those in need.

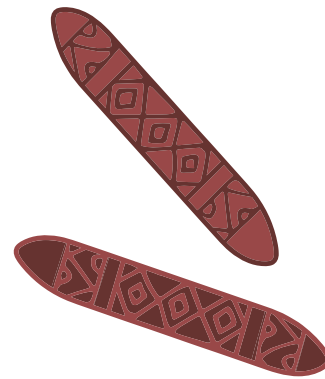
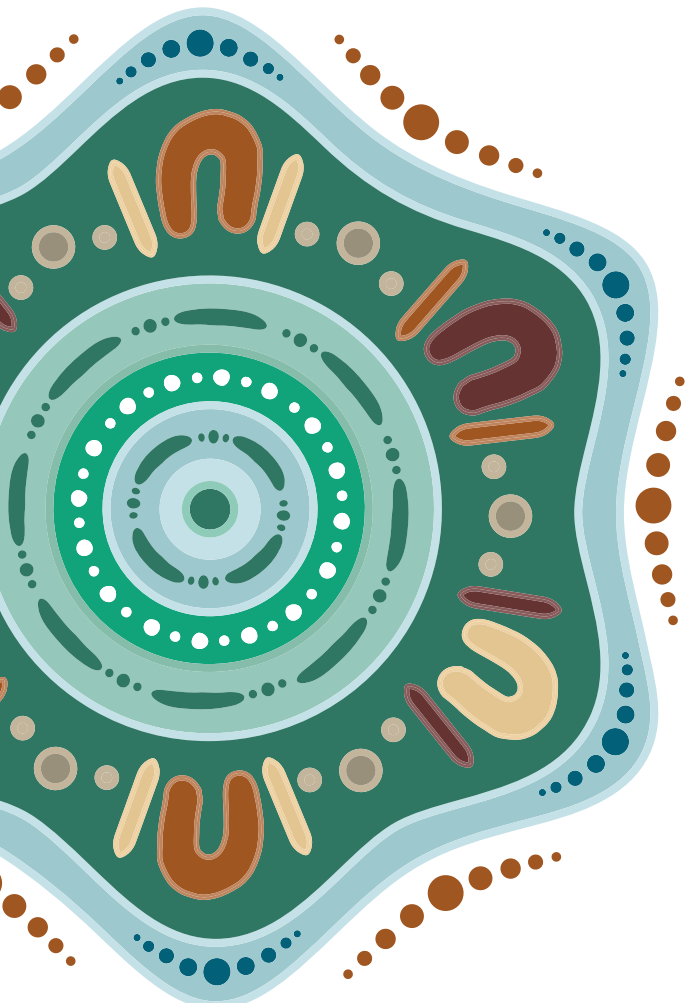
Mercy Health – Health Services employs 4,600 people across 11 locations in Victoria and New South Wales, including 31 Aboriginal staff and three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Our services include Mercy Care Centre Young and Mercy Health Albury in New South Wales, and Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre, Mercy Hospital for Women, Mercy Mental Health, Mercy Palliative Care and Werribee Mercy Hospital in Victoria. Our Victorian



health services are collectively referred to in this report as Mercy Hospitals Victoria Ltd.

Mercy Health – Health Services will be referred to as Mercy Health throughout this publication. It covers the following legal entities:

- Mercy Hospitals Victoria Ltd
- Mercy Palliative Care Ltd
- Mercy Health Service Albury Ltd
- Mercy Care Centre Young Ltd.



The central motifs represent the founding Sisters and Mercy Health's heritage story. The figures represent strong women and honouring the maternal roots of Mercy Health's identity.

The shields represent resilience.

The coolamon was used for many traditions: babies were carried in them as a nurturing practice and they were also used in smoking ceremonies, which are a spiritual cleansing ritual.

Our values

Our Innovate RAP is underpinned by the Mercy Health values.

Compassion

We are present for others in their time of need.

- We demonstrate kindness and generosity of spirit.
- We provide support in times of need.
- We display a passion to serve others.

Hospitality

We welcome people with warmth and offer comfort.

- We engage people with warmth and a genuine interest in them and their needs.
- We help people to feel emotionally understood, welcomed, accepted, comfortable and safe.
- We provide assistance where and when it is needed.

Respect

We act with integrity and justice and value each person's dignity.

- We treat every person as unique and respond to them accordingly.
- We are open and honest in all things, at all times.
- We respect people's decisions and never judge them.

Innovation

We draw on research, evidence and teaching to inform what we do.

- We use evidence, research and teaching to guide and improve all we do.
- We embrace change as an opportunity for renewal and improvement.
- We seek opportunities to try new ideas and acknowledge people for their contributions.

Stewardship

We advocate for those in need and strengthen our ministry and its resources.

- We speak out about unmet needs.
- We protect all resources and we are accountable for the highest standard of service and behaviour.
- We demonstrate integrity and virtue in carrying forward our reputation.

Teamwork

We work together to progress the Mercy Health mission.

- We work together to serve others and provide the best possible care.
- We communicate openly and honestly, valuing each other's contributions.
- We respect the needs and feelings of others and actively seek their perspective.



Always was, always will be

For Mercy Place Warrnambool aged care resident Dorinda Fletcher, NAIDOC Week is a significant week on the calendar. For three years in the 1960s, Dorinda, her husband and children lived on Elcho Island, a small island off the coast of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

Dorinda and her husband worked as missionaries with the island's Indigenous population and learned to speak their language. The family was so enamoured with the island and its people that they returned in 1981 for a further six years.

For NAIDOC Week 2020, Dorinda and nine fellow Mercy Place Warrnambool residents participated in a virtual Aboriginal basket weaving session at the residential aged care home as part of Mercy Health's NAIDOC Week celebrations. Mercy Hospital for Women Senior Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Jo Pappas facilitated the session.

Mercy Place Warrnambool Service Manager Helen Paris said the basket weaving session, overseen by the home's dedicated Lifestyle team, provided a lovely reminder for Dorinda of her days on Elcho Island. It was a wonderful way for residents to connect with Indigenous culture and acknowledge NAIDOC Week.

"The basket weaving was not just a fun activity, it was a recognition of the traditional owners of our land and provided a great opportunity for us to learn more about our country's rich Indigenous history," Helen says. "It was particularly significant for Dorinda, who has very fond memories of her time on Elcho Island. She often shares some of the words she learned while there with us and taught us many interesting things this NAIDOC Week."



Mercy Place Warrnambool aged care resident Dorinda Fletcher learning to weave a basket.



Mercy Hospital for Women Senior Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Jo Pappas taught the residents how to weave the baskets.

Mercy Health RAP champions

The Program Director, Ambulatory, Community and Allied Health is the Executive sponsor of our Innovate RAP.

2021–23 RAP Committee members, including five Aboriginal staff members

Tanya Darrer (Acting) Program Director Ambulatory, Community and Allied Health, Mercy Hospitals Victoria Ltd (MHVL)

Marika Jackomos, Manager Aboriginal Programs, MHVL

Jo Pappas, Senior Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer, Mercy Hospital for Women (MHW)

Merinda Slater, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer, MHW

Cathy Garlett, Aboriginal Postnatal Engagement Officer, MHW

Kyra Booth, Aboriginal Project and Data Support Officer, MHW

Virginia Vaughan, Aboriginal Women's and Children's Liaison Officer, Werribee Mercy Hospital (WMH)

LJ Singh, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer, WMH

Christine Arnold, Director of Nursing/Operations Manager, Mercy Health Albury

Mary-Lou Cusack, Director of Nursing/Operations Manager, Mercy Care Centre Young

Fiona Gray, Program Director Medical, Subacute and Palliative Care Services, Mercy Health – Health Services

Alexandra Armstrong-Young, Group Manager Community Experience

Kristin Earles, Group Manager Feedback

Andrew Tomlinson, Deputy Program Director (Acute and Perinatal), Mercy Mental Health (MMH)

Angela Chalmers, Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness (FaPMI) Coordinator, MMH

Helen Cull, Human Resources Manager, Mercy Health – Health Services

Rebecca Drysdale, Nurse Unit Manager, Specialist Clinics, MHW

Julia Rabar, Communications Manager

Alicia Wright, Organisational Development and Diversity Manager

Erana Tito, Group Equity and Inclusion Advisor

Kerri McEgan, Manager and Director of Nursing, Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre

Leanne Foster, Manager Social Work, MHVL

The Mercy Health RAP Committee is an integrated part of the Mercy Health Aboriginal Reference Committee. The two committees meet together four times a year and both report to the Mercy Health Clinical Governance Committee. Membership of the Aboriginal Reference Committee includes Aboriginal workers from the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Elizabeth Morgan House, Western Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Footprints for Success, Austin Health and Banyule Community Health.



Our vision for reconciliation

Mercy Health is committed to continuing to develop a strong relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, based on trust and respect. Our vision for reconciliation is a future in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience equitable health and wellbeing.

This Innovate RAP represents Mercy Health's commitment to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including children and young people. This commitment is aligned with the mission of Mercy Health: to bring God's mercy to those in need.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities

We will provide more training opportunities and employment pathways and continue to work on the cultural competence of our staff so that the services we provide are accessible, equitable, culturally safe and respond to the values and beliefs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Respect

Reconciliation also includes the acknowledgement of past injustices which we learn from in order to support the healing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and move towards connected and healthy communities. This includes respecting and understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's connection to Country, cultures, histories, sovereignty and right to self-determination.

Trusted relationships driven by accountability

As part of our Innovate RAP we will strive to improve our engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and key organisations in the design and delivery of our services. We will routinely review and build on our consultation mechanisms to ensure that the voices of First Nations people are listened to and heard.

Building on the achievements of our Reflect RAP, and the many initiatives already well-established in our health services, the Innovate RAP will help us continue to make progress within the areas of employment, community partnership and provision of health services. There are three sections in this report — Relationships, Respect and Opportunities — each of which lists actions, responsibilities, timelines and deliverables.

The following principles underpin our commitment to reconciliation and the way in which we will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities:



The boomerangs represent returning to culture principles for guidance while on the reconciliation journey.

The coolamon was used for many traditions: babies were carried in them as a nurturing practice and they were also used in smoking ceremonies, which are a spiritual cleansing ritual.

Our reconciliation journey

Some of the key achievements following the implementation of our Reflect RAP have included:

Victoria

- Expansion and integration of Aboriginal Programs across Mercy Hospital for Women (MHW) and Werribee Mercy Hospital (WMH) including the employment of two new staff members to support our western region Aboriginal community.
- Establishment of Maternity Group Practice Nangnak Baban Murrup at MHW for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- Ongoing staff participation in Cultural Journey Training. An online cultural training package is being developed to complement face-to-face training and to expand the reach of the program.
- Aboriginal Nursing and Midwifery Cadetship Program. The Aboriginal Cadetship position provided the cadet with pre-graduation professional experience while undertaking undergraduate studies in nursing or midwifery. The cadet position reflects a collaborative relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates and Mercy Health. Our cadet was based at WMH and worked in a range of clinical areas to support the nursing/midwifery team to provide quality patient care.
- Aboriginal secondary student work experience program. Three Aboriginal students attended MHW for a week and learned about a range of clinical areas.
- Acknowledgement and celebration of NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week across Mercy Health, including Mercy Health residential aged care homes across the country.

New South Wales

- Staff participation in online and face-to-face 'Respecting the Differences' cultural training.
- Mercy Health Albury (MHA) staff participation in online 'Health for Older Aboriginal People' education.
- Staff participation in New South Wales Ministry of Health online training 'Asking the Question: improving the identity of Aboriginal persons' to learn about identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the importance of asking the question and identity.
- 'Sorry Business' education for staff during National Palliative Care Week.
- Participation by 14 Mercy Care Centre Young (MCC) staff and one consumer advisor in a NAIDOC Week expo alongside other health and education providers.
- Ongoing relationship with the Murrumbidgee Local Health District Aboriginal Cultural Development Officer.





Relationships

Mercy Health is committed to building strong, respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations to achieve positive health outcomes for the communities we serve. This is integral to providing a culturally safe environment and understanding how our organisation can continue to improve the services we provide.

Focus area: Strengthen partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and organisations

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. 	June 2021, 2022	Program Director Ambulatory, Community and Allied Health (ACAH)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement. 	June 2021, 2022	Manager Aboriginal Programs
	Mercy Health Albury (MHA) and Mercy Care Centre Young (MCC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and maintain relationships with the local Aboriginal communities, including Elders, through participation in cross-agency events and programs in the region, including days of cultural significance in Aboriginal communities. Work with local Aboriginal communities to raise the profile of services provided by MHA and MCC, develop an engagement plan and continue to strengthen existing relationships with Aboriginal Health Workers. Continue to participate in Advance Care Planning workshops alongside the Aboriginal Health Workers (AHW). 	June 2021, 2022 July 2021 March 2022	Operations Manager/Director of Nursing (DON) MHA Operations Manager/DON MCC
	Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre (OFC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop relationships with Aboriginal communities early parenting programs and services. Ensure effective communication and consultation with Aboriginal support workers that are supporting families during admission at OFC. 	May 2021 May, September 2021, 2022	Manager/DON OFC

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	<p>Mercy Hospitals Victoria Limited (MHVL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore Aboriginal specific membership of existing Community Advisory Groups (Mercy Mental Health, Werribee Mercy Hospital and Mercy Hospital for Women) and nominate quarantined positions on these committees. • Include nominated quorum of Aboriginal community representatives on the Mercy Health Aboriginal Reference Committee (all sites and programs). • Ensure MHVL reports to the Mercy Health Board on Aboriginal health as part of health services annual reporting. 	<p>June 2021</p> <p>May 2021, 2022</p> <p>May 2021, 2022</p>	<p>Group Manager Community Experience</p> <p>Program Director ACAH</p>
	<p>Mercy Hospital for Women</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen relationships with key Aboriginal agencies to support improved care for our patients. This includes the finalisation and execution of a service agreement with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, strengthened relationships with Banyule Community Health and other key stakeholders. 	<p>July 2021</p>	<p>Group Manager Community Experience</p> <p>Manager Aboriginal Programs</p>
	<p>Werribee Mercy Hospital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop partnerships with community agencies in Victoria's west to facilitate community engagement and expand on support and services offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to provide culturally safe and appropriate treatment free of racism. 	<p>June 2021, 2022</p>	<p>Manager Aboriginal Programs</p> <p>Group Manager Community Experience</p> <p>Group Manager Feedback</p>



Passionate advocate for Indigenous Health

“I’m dedicated to improving Aboriginal health, especially in the early childhood years. If we get that right, I think we will be able to close the gap for the future.”

Werribee Mercy Hospital Aboriginal Women’s and Children’s Liaison Officer Virginia Vaughan supports women and children who are patients at Werribee Mercy Hospital and identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. She provides cultural support and advocates around aspects of their hospital care and links them to support services in Wyndham and the wider community once they are discharged.

As well as holding a nursing degree, Virginia has a wealth of experience in Aboriginal health. In between having children, she worked for 15 years at The Gathering Place Medical Aboriginal Corporation. Founded and managed by Virginia’s mother Colleen Marion, the Gathering Place provided culturally sensitive healthcare to Indigenous Peoples in the Wyndham area.

Virginia is passionate about the relationships she builds with patients and enjoys the many opportunities to cuddle babies. “I held a baby for two hours the other day and I thought: ‘I get paid to do this!’ I also just love getting to know the mums and listening to the wonderful stories they have to tell,” she says.

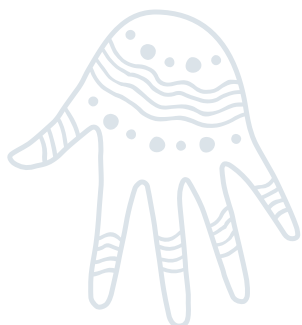


Werribee Mercy Hospital Aboriginal Women’s and Children’s Liaison Officer Virginia Vaughan.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise and host at least one Mercy Health internal event for NRW each year. 	27 May–3 June 2021, 2022	Communications Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register our NRW event via Reconciliation Australia's NRW website. 	May 2021, 2022	Organisational Development and Diversity Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support an external NRW event. 	27 May–3 June 2021, 2022	Group Equity and Inclusion Advisor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the RAP Committee participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. 		Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend an invitation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to share their reconciliation experiences or stories, through <i>Our Voice</i> as part of a regular feature on Aboriginal Health. 	27 May–3 June 2021, 2022	Program Director ACAH
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage staff and senior leaders to participate in external events to recognise and celebrate NRW. 	27 May–3 June 2021, 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Mercy Health sites to host local NRW events. 	27 May–3 June 2021, 2022	
3. Promote Reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and review a strategy to communicate our RAP to all internal and external stakeholders. 	April 2021, 2022	Communications Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote reconciliation through ongoing active engagement with all stakeholders. 	April 2021, 2022	Group Equity and Inclusion Advisor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to positively influence our external stakeholders to drive reconciliation outcomes. 	April 2021, 2022	Program Director ACAH
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with other like-minded organisations to develop ways to advance reconciliation. 	April 2021, 2022	Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement strategies to engage our staff in reconciliation. 	April 2021, 2022	



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, update and communicate our existing anti-discrimination policy and other relevant Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	July 2021, 2022	Program Director ACAH
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisors to consult on our anti-discrimination policy. 	July 2021, 2022	Organisational Development and Diversity Manager Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate senior leaders on the effects of racism. 	July 2021, 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mercy Mental Health (MMH) staff will undertake specific training around understanding the impacts of colonisation, trans-generational trauma, racism, discrimination, marginalisation and disadvantage and poor mental health outcomes. 	July 2021, 2022	Deputy Program Director (Acute and Perinatal) MMH MMH Aboriginal Health portfolio holder



Respect

Respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, lands, waters, histories and rights is imperative to the delivery of a culturally safe service and that education and building capacity of our staff is a continuous journey.

Focus area: Recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety is a key component in our workplace and within all of our programs and services.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. As an organisation, increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	Mercy Hospitals Victoria Ltd		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, implement and communicate a cultural learning strategy for our staff. 	December 2021, 2022	Human Resources Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate staff on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and issues, in particular stereotypes and prejudices including implicit and explicit racism and privilege and how these affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. 	December 2021, 2022	Communications Manager Organisational Development and Diversity Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that an understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, kin, connection to Country, language and the right to self-determine, is a baseline component of cultural awareness for non-Indigenous staff. This will include face-to-face training run by Strengthening Cultural Partnerships, online learning, in-services and communication with staff via internal channels (online cultural hub on the Mercy Health intranet, Workplace by Facebook and email). 	December 2021, 2022	Group Equity and Inclusion Advisor Program Director ACAH Manager Aboriginal Programs Deputy Program Director (Acute and Perinatal) MMH
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to offer cultural awareness training for staff that defines cultural learning needs of employees in all areas of our business and considers various ways cultural learning can be provided (online, face-to-face workshops or cultural immersion). 	December 2021, 2022	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify cultural learning requirements specific to our staff training needs. 	July 2021, 2022		

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to review programs and strategies aimed at building the cultural knowledge and competency of Mercy Health staff, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improving identification practices by providing training for staff to ask all patients ‘Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?’ This is an important part of our planning services as well as ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and families have access to and are offered cultural advocacy and support – reviewing and assessing the viability of e-learning options for staff – capturing data and measuring our staff’s current level of cultural knowledge. • Investigate opportunities to work with local Traditional Owners and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants to develop cultural awareness training. • Provide opportunities for RAP Committee, RAP champions, HR and other key leadership staff to participate in cultural training. • Continue to promote Reconciliation Australia’s Share Our Pride online tool to all staff through the Aboriginal cultural hub. • Investigate local cultural experiences and immersion opportunities, such as an on-Country experience for staff, guided by a Traditional Owner. 	<p>July 2021, 2022</p> <p>April 2021, 2022</p> <p>May 2021, 2022</p> <p>April 2021, 2022</p> <p>June 2021, 2022</p>	
	<p>Mercy Health Albury (MHA) and Mercy Care Centre Young (MCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate opportunities to partner with Murrumbidgee Local Health District to develop cultural awareness training. 	<p>May 2021, 2022</p>	<p>Operations Manager/DON MHA</p> <p>Operations Manager/DON MCC</p>

Opening eyes and doors to a career in health

While the Australian population is made up of 3.3 per cent Indigenous Australians, only about one per cent of people working in health-related occupations identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. To help increase the number of Indigenous Australians working in health, Mercy Health developed a Mercy Health Aboriginal Employment Plan (AEP).

As part of our AEP, Mercy Health partnered with schools and Weenthunga Health Network to recruit three Indigenous students for a work experience program at Mercy Hospital for Women in July 2019.

During the four-day program, the three students learned what life was like as a midwife, a nurse, a sonographer, a physiotherapist, a dietitian, a clerical support worker and an Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer. They also worked on a brochure explaining the benefits of participation in the Mercy Health Indigenous work experience program.

“The girls were really positive about their time here,” reflects Mercy Health Group Equity and Inclusion Advisor Erana Tito. “At the end of their experience, two of the students are keen to pursue a career in health. We think that’s a pretty good result.”

“I think we need more Indigenous health workers because our people love to be treated by their own people.” – Student Tara Crumpen-Slade



Mercy Health Group Equity and Inclusion Advisor Erana Tito with students Imogen Manderson, Tarlisha Simpson and Tara Crumpen-Slade.



Students are taught how to swaddle a baby.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly review the Policy and Procedure for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country to ensure they remain current and reflect the expectations of both Mercy Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. 	July 2021, 2022	Organisational Development and Diversity Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a list of key contacts for organising a Welcome to Country and maintaining respectful partnerships. 	July 2021, 2022	Group Equity and Inclusion Advisor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country at one significant event (minimum). 	July 2021, 2022	Communications Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include an Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of internal and external meetings. 	May 2021	Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite Traditional Owners into our office to explain the significance of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. 	July 2021, 2022	Program Director ACAH
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise and display an Acknowledgement of Country plaque for all 11 Mercy Health – Health Services buildings. 	January 2022	
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week. 	May 2021, 2022	Human Resources Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate with their cultures and communities during NAIDOC Week. 	July 2021, 2022	Communications Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for all staff to participate in NAIDOC Week activities. 	July 2021, 2022	Organisational Development and Diversity Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have at least 10 staff across Mercy Health sites and programs attend an external NAIDOC Week event. 	July 2021, 2022	Group Equity and Inclusion Advisor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold an internal or external NAIDOC Week event in consultation with Traditional Owners. 	July 2021, 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support an external NAIDOC Week community event, either by joint partnership or staff attendance. 	July 2021, 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact our local NAIDOC Week Committee to discover events in our community. 	June 2021, 2022	

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Develop and deliver culturally safe services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to review internal consumer information as required to ensure that it is culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and families. 	August 2021, 2022	Communications Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and families is on all relevant documents (forms, registrations and so forth) so that patients and families can access cultural support and advocacy and Mercy Health can better plan services. 	August 2021, 2022	Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to review areas such as patient services to ensure staff are trained and understand why they are required to ask all patients if they identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in origin. 	August 2021, 2022	Nurse Unit Manager Specialist Clinics
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a framework for continuous review and improvement with Social Work Services, in partnership with our patients and their families. Ensure that the children and families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients are given the opportunity to speak about their care and provide feedback around improving the cultural safety of Mercy Health – Health Services. 	August 2021, 2022	Manager Aboriginal Programs Manager Social Work
	<p>Mercy Health Albury (MHA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MHA Palliative Care workers to offer Aboriginal palliative care patients joint visits with the Aboriginal Health Worker in order to provide culturally safe support and advocacy to patients and their families. 	June 2021, 2022	Operations Manager/DON MHA
	<p>Mercy Health O'Connell Family Centre (OFC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current model of care to ensure it includes programs that provide a coordinated and safe approach when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families. 	July 2021, 2022	Manager/DON OFC

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	<p>Mercy Hospital for Women (MHW)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with the Nangnak Baban Murrup Maternity Group Practice (Nangnak MGP) at MHW, develop a health promotion component building on resources from the Nangnak Wan Myeek Program (New Directions). This will help improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families. Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are consulted about their preferred model of maternity care at MHW and are offered a choice that suits their individual needs. 	<p>November 2021</p> <p>November 2021, 2022</p>	<p>Manager Aboriginal Programs</p> <p>Nurse Unit Manager Specialist Clinics</p>
	<p>Werribee Mercy Hospital (WMH)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to raise the profile of Aboriginal Health at WMH, particularly the development of the Nangnak Wan Myeek Program and the role of the new Aboriginal Women's and Children's Liaison Officer. Develop a health promotion component of the Nangnak Wan Myeek program to achieve a measurable impact on patients by exploring partnership opportunities. 	<p>September 2021</p> <p>December 2021</p>	<p>Manager Aboriginal Programs</p>
	<p>Mercy Mental Health (MMH)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a regular review of the MMH Aboriginal Health portfolio including developing a position description to ensure it meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and families. Ensure the person holding the portfolio has undergone comprehensive cultural awareness training. Conduct a cultural audit of MMH and develop a cultural safety plan to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. Review the inpatient units to make sure the spaces are culturally welcoming. Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients' families are given the opportunity to speak about their care and provide feedback around improving the cultural safety of Mercy Health. 	<p>June 2021, 2022</p> <p>June 2021, 2022</p> <p>August 2021</p> <p>June 2021, 2022</p>	<p>Deputy Program Director (Acute and Perinatal) MMH</p> <p>MMH Aboriginal Health portfolio holder</p>

Building healthy resilience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women

In 2019, Mercy Hospital for Women hosted more than 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander year 10–12 students as part of the Weenthunga Health Network's Nyarrn-gakgo Mangkie Girls Resilience Program, which means 'hear within' in the Woiwurrung language.

"The main purpose of the day was to expose young Aboriginal women to what a career in health might be like," says Mercy Hospital for Women Aboriginal Programs Manager Marika Jackamos. "An added benefit of the day was that it reiterated to these young women that hospitals are safe places for them to attend should they ever need healthcare."

The girls were shown around the hospital's Outpatient Clinics and maternity wards and were even offered a glimpse of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, which cares for sick and premature babies. The girls also heard from a number of guest speakers about careers in health.

"Hopefully in a few years' time we receive job applications from some of the girls who attended,"

— Mercy Health Group Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator Erana Tito



Students and staff from Yramalay/Wesley Studio School who attended the Girls Resilience Program, with Mercy Hospital for Women Aboriginal Postnatal Engagement Officer Cathy Garlett (second from left) and Mercy Hospital for Women Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Merinda Slater (far right).



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	<p>Mercy Palliative Care (MPC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all MPC staff have the opportunity to complete Aboriginal Cultural Journey Training and Advance Care Planning training. • Conduct audits to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are being correctly identified upon admission to the service and end-of-life wishes are identified early, including planning for specific cultural needs. This may include patients who wish to die at home or on Country. • If an Aboriginal patient is hospitalised in the WMH inpatient unit, make sure the inpatient and community palliative care teams collaborate and partner with the patient to ensure end-of-life wishes are identified early and observed. • If the patient presents at an external palliative care unit, the community team will ensure appropriate handover, including any specific cultural needs and end-of-life wishes. • MPC social workers will liaise with the Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer where appropriate to ensure end-of-life needs are met in a culturally sensitive manner. 	September 2021, 2022	Program Director Medical, Subacute and Palliative Care Services
	<p>Mercy Hospitals Victoria Ltd (MHVL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the guidance of Aboriginal Programs staff and the Aboriginal Reference Committee, ensure all sites complete a cultural audit to create an environment that is culturally safe and welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, families and visitors. 	September 2021, 2022	Program Director ACAH Program Directors Manager Aboriginal Programs

Opportunities

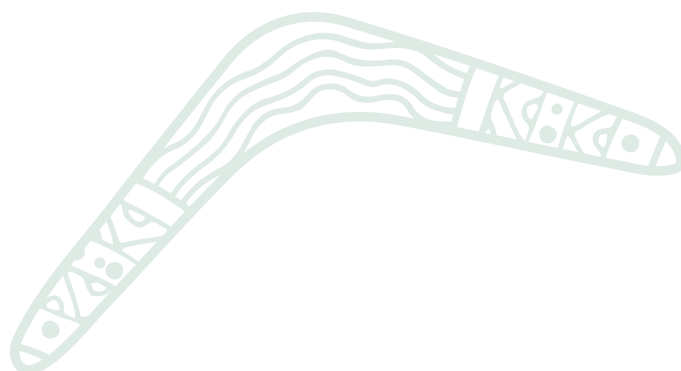
Our opportunities must be in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' needs and priorities. Mercy Health recognises that opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities supports meaningful Reconciliation development.

Focus area: Increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to engage, train and work for our organisation.

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
9. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and review the Mercy Health – Health Services Aboriginal Employment Plan 2018–21. 	December 2021	Human Resources Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in our workforce. 	December 2021	Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies, including professional development. 	April 2021, 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise all vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants participating in our workplace. 	April 2021, 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment pathways through traineeships and placements, and explore internship opportunities. 	June 2021, 2022	



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
	<p>Mercy Health Albury (MHA) and Mercy Care Centre Young (MCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with the New South Wales Aboriginal Workforce Strategic Framework, develop strategies around employment, pathways and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – advertising MHA and MCC jobs in Aboriginal publications and networks – asking existing MHA and MCC staff to update their Aboriginality status on the Mercy Health payroll system, if they wish to do so – exploring the opportunity for MHA and MCC to offer placements, work experience or traineeship opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities – exploring opportunities to partner with Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation. 	<p>August 2021, 2022</p>	<p>Operations Manager/DON MHA</p> <p>Operations Manager/DON MCC</p>
<p>10. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review procurement policies and procedures to identify barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to supply our organisation with goods and services. • Create and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy. • Develop and communicate to staff a list of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to procure goods and services. • Develop at least one commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander owned business. • Investigate Supply Nation membership. 	<p>June 2021</p> <p>June 2022</p> <p>June 2022</p> <p>June 2022</p> <p>June 2021</p>	<p>Organisational Development and Diversity Manager</p> <p>Group Equity and Inclusion Advisor</p>



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. Provide support and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a cultural mentoring network for existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. 	August 2021, 2022	Human Resources Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide scholarship opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students such as graduate positions. 	August 2021, 2022	Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide existing and new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff leadership opportunities such as training and upskilling. 		Organisational Development and Diversity Manager

Supporting and connecting mothers and babies

Just shy of two years in her role as Mercy Hospital for Women (MHW) Aboriginal Postnatal Engagement Officer, Cathy Garlett loves being able to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and babies and connect them with the local community. "I love connecting people to community and working with families," Cathy says.

Cathy's mob is the Nyikina people from the Kimberleys in Western Australia (WA) and she has a background in social work and counselling at various Aboriginal organisations, including Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation and Ruah Community Services, both in WA. She is perfectly equipped to offer MHW mothers the cultural, social, emotional and practical support they need after having a baby.

Cathy also connects mothers with Aboriginal services in the local community when they leave the hospital. Cathy actively supports one of these services, the Djilak-Djirri Playgroup run by Banyule Community Health, which gives mothers the opportunity to develop friendships and participate in healing activities with other members of the

local community. Her involvement in the playgroup means she can keep in touch with the mothers and see their babies develop. "Seeing the babies come to playgroup and watching them grow is really something special. It's like I'm their Aunty," she says.

As an Aboriginal woman, mother and grandmother, Cathy has a way of engaging women and their families so they feel culturally supported. "I love working with families over a long period of time, empowering them and providing them with the practical and cultural support they need," she says.



Aboriginal Postnatal Engagement Officer, Cathy Garlett.

Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
12. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Committee to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Committee will oversee the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP. 	June 2021	Program Director ACAH
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Terms of Reference for the RAP Committee. 	April 2021	Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Aboriginal Reference Committee and Reconciliation Working Group. 	April 2021, 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet at least four times a year to monitor and report on RAP implementation. 	April, June, September, November 2021 February, June, September, November 2022	
13. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define resource needs for RAP implementation. 	April 2021	Program Director ACAH
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage our senior leaders and other staff in the delivery of RAP commitments. 	April 2021	Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and maintain appropriate systems to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. 	April 2021, 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint and maintain an internal RAP Champion from senior management. 	April 2021	



Hands-on role leads to full-time work

A work placement with Mercy Health helped Belinda Jonkers land her dream job working with Indigenous children. While completing her Diploma of Community Services, Belinda undertook work placement within the Werribee Mercy Hospital Social Work Department.

“It was a really interesting area of work and I learned a lot,” Belinda explains. “I learned how to do aged care assessments to work out what our patients needed in order to return home. It was a very rewarding job.”

Belinda, who is a Gunai-Kurnai, Ngarigo Monaro woman, then joined Mercy Health Aboriginal Programs under Mercy Hospital for Women Senior Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Joanne Pappas.

“I found I was able to connect with the families straight away being Indigenous myself,” says Belinda. “We had a very special connection.”

The placements gave Belinda the confidence to go out and find her dream job with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency. “Working with Mercy Health gave me more confidence in myself and made me realise that I wanted to work in the Aboriginal sector,” she says. “I am now doing exactly what I want to be doing in my career.”



Belinda Jonkers, who completed a work placement with the Werribee Mercy Hospital Social Work Department.



Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
14. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. 	30 September 2021, 2022	Manager Aboriginal Programs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report RAP progress to all staff and senior leaders quarterly. 	February, May, August, November 2021, 2022	Program Director ACAH Communications Manager
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly report our RAP achievements, challenges and learnings, annually in the Mercy Health – Health Services Report of Operations. 	November 2021, 2022	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate participating in Reconciliation Australia's biennial Workplace RAP Barometer. 	May 2022	
15. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. 	August 2022	Program Director ACAH Manager Aboriginal Programs

Gold standard care for our First Nation women

Mercy Hospital for Women's Nangnak Baban Murrup Clinic is participating in a La Trobe University project, which seeks to enhance the process of identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternity patients and their babies, and offer them the Maternity Group Practice (MGP) model of care.

MGP provides a patient with the same midwife throughout the duration of her pregnancy, from her first appointment through to two weeks after the birth of her baby.

La Trobe University received funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) to run the research project.

Mercy Hospital for Women Clinical Midwife Specialist Zoe Lock and La Trobe University Research Midwife Ingrid Holmes led the project's implementation at Mercy Hospital for Women. Specifically, they recruited

patients for research and educating Maternity Group Practice, Antenatal Clinic and Birth Suite midwives about the project and how to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

"In order to provide care for these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women selecting Maternity Group Practice, we are creating an environment in which patients feel comfortable to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women," says Zoe.

"It's really important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families have a choice about what type of maternity care they receive. The fact that so many of these patients have accepted the Maternity Group Practice model since this program was introduced is really wonderful."



*Mercy Hospital for Women
Clinical Midwife Specialist
Zoe Lock and Mercy
Hospital for Women Senior
Aboriginal Hospital Liaison
Officer Jo Pappas.*

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About the artist: Dixon Patten

Dixon Patten is a proud Yorta Yorta and Gunnai man.

Dixon has over 13 years' experience in the arts and design space as an artist, curator and graphic designer and is now the lead storyteller for Bayila Creative.

Art has always given Dixon a platform for interpreting and understanding the world through many lenses; his experiences and learnings have given him cultural and personal liberation that has

allowed him to embrace his role as storyteller with honour and pride.

Dixon is passionate about storytelling in all its forms and loves the information, wisdom, knowledge and energy exchange that unites us as people(s).

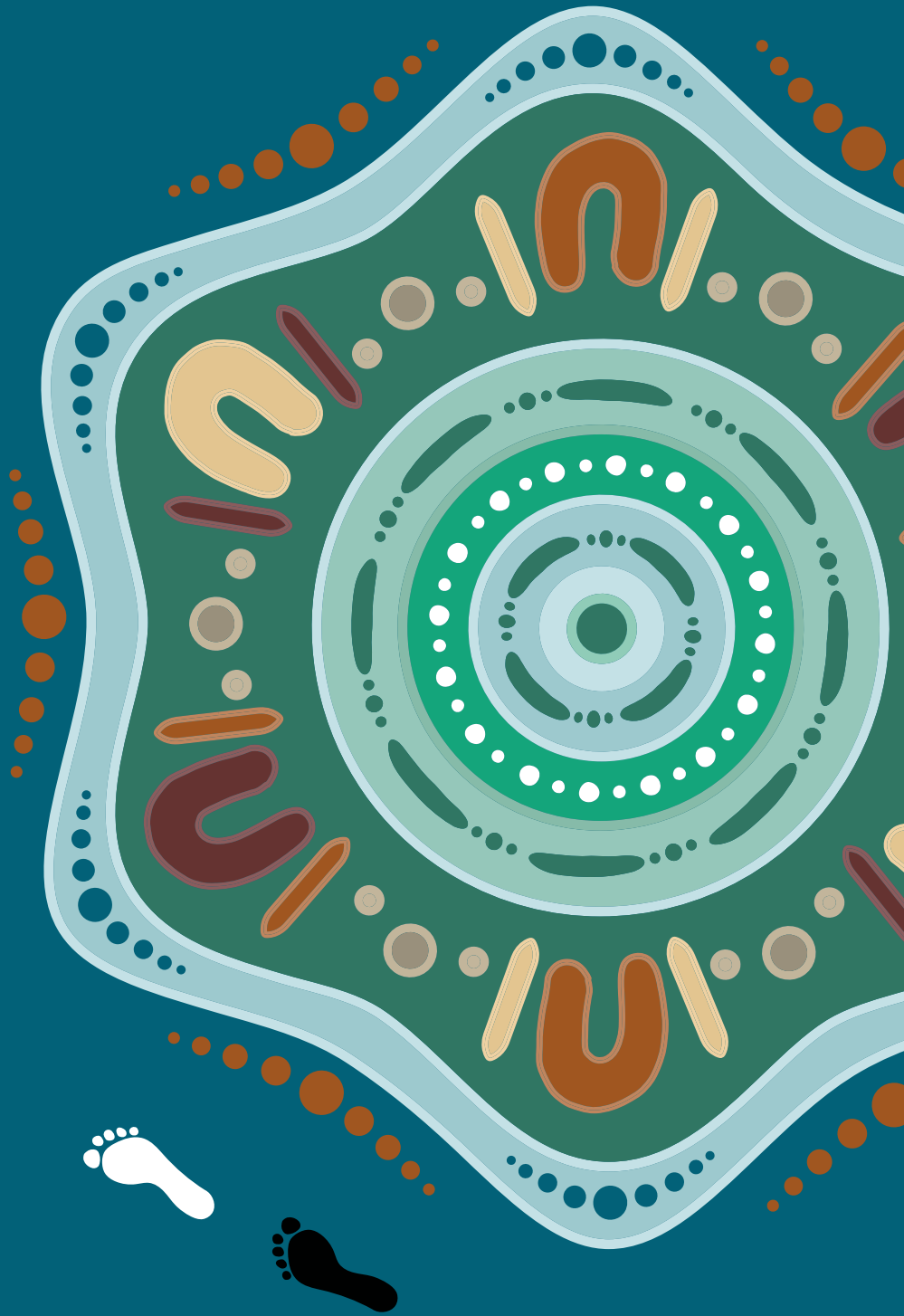
His motivation is to Indigenise and humanise spaces that may seem otherwise clinical and hopefully influence conversations, instil a sense of understanding and for people to simply connect.





Mercy Health

Care first



Mercy Health acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Australians. We acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous Australia. We respectfully recognise Elders past, present and emerging. This Reconciliation Action Plan was produced on Wurundjeri Country.