

# Aboriginal Employment Plan 2021-2025



## Acknowledgement

The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (Eye and Ear) acknowledges the land upon which our sites are located as the traditional lands of the Kulin Nations. We pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

*Please note: Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.*

## Introduction

The Department of Health (DH) in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations have worked together for a number of years towards achieving holistic health, wellbeing and safety for Victorian Aboriginal communities. In 2013, Kareeta Yirramboi was the Victorian Government's plan to improve public-sector employment and career outcomes for Aboriginal people. Acknowledging the need to strengthen the public health sector's cultural responsiveness, the Victorian Koolin Balit health workforce plan 2014-2017 was introduced.

After much evaluation and consultation, the Victorian Government launched the Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027. Korin Korin Balit-Djack means: "Growing very strong" in the Woi wurrung language. This plan has been developed alongside two other key initiatives to support the improved health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Victorians, the Balit Murrup-Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework and the Aboriginal governance and accountability framework.

Korin Korin Balit-Djak embraces a cultural determinants approach to Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety and its guiding principal is self-determination. We define this as "the ability of Aboriginal people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural development as an essential approach to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage". This plan is also strengthened by Government's directions towards Treaty with Victorian Aboriginal communities. It outlines strategic directions within five domains:

1. Aboriginal community leadership
2. Prioritising Aboriginal culture and community
3. System reform across the health and human services sector
4. Safe, secure, strong families and individuals
5. Physically, socially and emotionally healthy Aboriginal communities

The three key priority focus areas within the third domain are:

- 3.1: Health and human services are culturally safe
  - 3.1.1 - Increase cultural capacity and cultural responsiveness
  - 3.1.2 - Respond to and eliminate racism
- 3.2: A strong and sustainable Aboriginal workforce
  - 3.2.1 - Grow recruitment and retention of the Aboriginal workforce
- 3.3: Aboriginal leadership in governance and accountability
  - 3.3.1 - Aboriginal led governance and evaluation using Aboriginal definitions of success
  - 3.3.2 - Increase Aboriginal community ownership of data and access to data

The Eye and Ear's Aboriginal Employment Plan (AEP) has been updated in line with our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2020-2022 and the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan 2019-2021. The AEP is strengthened by aligning with the key focus areas for implementing health sector system reform as detailed in the Korin Korin Balit-Djak Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027. At the Eye and Ear, we strive to be a diverse, inclusive and culturally safe employer-of-choice for Aboriginal people.

### **Victoria's Aboriginal Community**

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics data (2016), Victoria's Aboriginal population is estimated to be 47,787 people, with a median age of 23 years. In relation to education, over 35% of the population have a Certificate III or higher qualification. Victorian Aboriginal people are employed in a wide variety of occupations including: Community and Personal Service Workers (16%); Professionals (14.1%); and Clerical and Administrative Workers (12.6%). Victoria's Aboriginal peoples view health as not simply the physical wellbeing of an individual but the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community.

The legacy of Australia's history of colonisation - dispossession, cultural dislocation and separation from family and community due to unsafe policies and practices - has impacted greatly on the social and emotional wellbeing of Victorian Aboriginal peoples. The Korin Korin Balit-Djack states that "The Victorian Aboriginal population has also been impacted more significantly than other jurisdictions by the policy and practices that gave rise to the 'Stolen Generations', with 47 per cent of the current population having a relative who was forcibly removed from their family due to government policies. This has left a legacy in terms of physical, social and emotional health that Aboriginal Victorians are still dealing with today"

This trauma is experienced across generations (trans-generational) and is compounded by increased rates of incarceration and child protection intervention, which replicates institutionalised family separation.

The history of Aboriginal Victorians is also about resistance, reclamation of human rights and strength to re-establish self-determination. Despite significant investment and genuine commitment to Closing the Gap in health and wellbeing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, there still exists significant disparity. Self-determination is a platform for policy development and implementation.

Culture and heritage of Aboriginal communities across Victoria is rich, vibrant and diverse and is being embraced with the resurgence of language and lore. The DH is committed to ensuring that the diverse culture, history and life experiences of all Aboriginal Victorians are represented. Korin Korin Balit-Djak 2017-2027 aims to create 'a health and human services system that is inclusive, non-discriminatory and accessible for everyone'. This in turn will support better understanding and a culturally safe response to health, social and emotional wellbeing needs of diverse Victorian Aboriginal communities.

### **The Eye and Ear Environment**

At the Eye and Ear, we provide the best possible care to more than 220,000 patients each year. Of this number, over 2,000 patients per year identify as Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander.

Our consistently high standards of patient care are made possible through the world leading research we conduct together with our partners, paired with industry-leading staff and a commitment to teaching and training at every level.

Our patients are at the centre of everything we do and to continue to provide the best possible care we must embrace every opportunity to grow.

The Eye and Ear is committed to Closing the Gap for eye and ear health for the Aboriginal community. We have implemented strategies to improve cultural awareness by educating and supporting our staff to provide a culturally safe environment and service delivery. In 2012 the Eye and Ear signed the statement of intent to Close the Gap.

The hospital formally named our Aboriginal Health Unit, Murring Ba Wurring in June 2020. The name was formally endorsed by Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Gail Smith and literally means Eyes and Ears in Woi Wurrung language. Naming the Aboriginal Health Unit is an important step in our journey towards reconciliation as it supports cultural safety for community.

We have partnered with the Aboriginal community and developed positive working relationships with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS). This has allowed us to successfully implement and run our two outreach services in conjunction with VAHS and to design clinical pathways to assist in improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal patients. These pathways provide continuity of care and streamline access to care in a culturally safe manner.

In conjunction with Melbourne's leading universities, the Eye and Ear teaches and trains undergraduate and postgraduate medical, nursing and allied health professionals. The organisation offers a supportive education and training environment which is at the forefront of teaching and research. Our goal is to support training opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees and to develop pathways for Indigenous cadetship and traineeship programs.

The Eye and Ear has a small full-time Graduate Nurse Year Program, training Division 1 Registered Nurses within the busy Specialist Clinics, Emergency, Perioperative Departments and in-patient wards. All students have the opportunity to meet with members of our Murring Ba Wurring Aboriginal Health Unit for face-to-face cultural awareness training.

Increasing Aboriginal employment at the Eye and Ear will improve cultural awareness within the organisation and increase cultural safety for our Aboriginal patients. In turn, this will lead to improved understanding of eye and ENT health and empower the community to access care in a timely manner.

## Objective

The objective of the updated Eye and Ear AEP is to ensure the foundations for sustainable employment of Aboriginal people are maintained. We also seek to enhanced and strengthen recruitment and retention of Aboriginal people working at the Eye and Ear. Specifically, the AEP's overarching objectives are:

1. Increase the Aboriginal cultural awareness of all Eye and Ear employees
2. Create a culturally inclusive workplace for Aboriginal employees
3. Ensure a supportive environment for positive recruitment, on boarding and retention outcomes
4. Increase the number of Aboriginal employees at the Eye and Ear

## 1. Increase Aboriginal cultural awareness of employees

**Achievements** including those ongoing:

- Mandatory e-Learning Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training Package implemented
- Face to face cultural awareness program for targeted employees
- At orientation, new employees and volunteers meet with members of the Mirring Ba Wurring Aboriginal Health Unit for an introduction to Aboriginal programs including an introduction to the Eye and Ear Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)
- Training front line staff in 'Asking the Question' implemented
- Staff fact sheet produced to support culturally safe communication
- Cultural events during NAIDOC and Reconciliation Weeks are acknowledged and staff are encouraged to participate
- Posters are displayed across the organisation which ask Aboriginal patients to identify and remind staff to 'Ask the Question'
- An Acknowledgement of Country is given at meetings and all in-house forums and events
- A Welcome to Country is given at significant organisation wide events

Goal	Action	Responsibility
Increase Aboriginal cultural awareness of all employees	Monitor uptake of mandatory e-Learning Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training Package	Manager Planning and Patient Experience (MPPE)
	Identify departments or specific employees who may be offered face-to-face cultural awareness training	Mirring Ba Wurring Unit
	Implement strategies to promote participation in our Reconciliation journey. Identify employees who embrace Aboriginal culture and it's uniqueness to champion opportunities to celebrate the diversity	Mirring Ba Wurring Unit
	Investigate further opportunities to support cultural knowledge and awareness ie: presentations, cultural quiz during staff forums and resources for team meetings	Mirring Ba Wurring Unit

## 2. Provide a culturally inclusive workplace for Aboriginal employees

**Achievements** including those ongoing:

- Educating staff about Aboriginal programs, AEP initiatives and our Innovate RAP
- Cultural celebrations during Reconciliation and NAIDOC weeks: encourage staff participation at both internal and external events
- Aboriginal artwork and flags displayed in entry foyers and meeting rooms
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are displayed on reception desks and in the Boardroom
- Inclusivity statement added to all job ads
- Acknowledgement of Country added as part of all Eye and Ear staff email signatures, intranet with links to Reconciliation Australia, Closing the Gap and Australian Indigenous HealthInfo Net
- Culturally appropriate wording included for job ads that will attract and/or encourage applicants . Advertise in Koori Mail
- Banner with Aboriginal art work displayed at New Employee Welcome Event, some meetings and external forums

Goal	Action	Responsibility
Embed cultural security across the organisation	Monitor adherence to cultural protocols for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgment of Country at events. Raise awareness to the leadership group of the Acknowledgment of Country	Marketing and Communications
	Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in management roles	Executive Team People and Culture
	Create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be heard in organisational planning, policy development and service delivery	Senior Leadership Team
	Promote resources available to staff to further increase inclusivity	Marketing and Communications
Develop specific recruitment strategies which promote inclusivity	Investigate possibilities for creating further Aboriginal identified positions or recruitment via a priority process	People and Culture
	Cultural considerations for interviewing Aboriginal candidates guidelines- monitor adherence	People and Culture
	Investigate, promote and support participation in relevant government and affiliated Aboriginal employment based programs	People and Culture

## 3. Ensure a supportive environment for positive recruitment, on boarding and retention outcomes

**Achievements** including those ongoing:

- Amendments to internal recruitment, selection and onboarding procedure to align with appropriate practice
- Enhancement of the payroll system functionality to capture cultural background data, enabling new and existing staff to choose to record their Aboriginal status
- Modification of the online recruitment system to flag Aboriginal applicants as a priority to People and Culture
- Resources available to support managers in recruiting and onboarding of Aboriginal employees
- A tailored, supportive induction and orientation program designed to ensure new Aboriginal recruits receive a quality induction and orientation period for, at least, their first 6 months
- The Cultural Awareness e-learning Package has a module specifically tailored for managers to support them to provide more culturally safe and aware management practices
- People and Culture provide support and advice to managers and new Aboriginal employees to promote cultural safety in the work place
- People and Culture to promote resources for a culturally safe induction and orientation process to the Eye and Ear
- Mentoring support provided to managers by managers who successfully manage Aboriginal employees
- Mirring Ba Wirring Aboriginal Health Unit support staff to better understand cultural norms and to support Aboriginal staff when required
- Leading the Dharri Baagon working group providing cultural peer support and mentoring to senior Eye and Ear staff members

Goal	Action	Responsibility
Determine best practice for advertising Aboriginal positions	Advertise in Koori Mail and through VACCHO's Improving Care for Aboriginal Patients (ICAP) networks	People and Culture & Mirring Ba Wirring Unit
	Identify potential opportunities for Aboriginal employees as vacancies occur	Individual managers
	Promote career pathways for existing Aboriginal employee	Individual managers
	Actively promote and advocate for inclusion of Aboriginal people's knowledge and skills within the organisation	People and Culture
Further develop current networks within the local Aboriginal community to introduce new employment opportunities	Develop marketing opportunities to promote Eye and Ear as an employer of choice, ie: University Indigenous Units, Koori Education Support Officer Networks, Weethunga, Koori Youth Summit	People and Culture, Mirring Ba Wirring Unit & Marketing and Communications
	Build on existing relationships with key community partnerships including VACCHO and VAHS.	Mirring Ba Wirring Unit & (MPPE)
	Explore possibility of cross-agency co-locations of staff	Mirring Ba Wirring Unit & MPPE

	Work closely with Dental Health Services Victoria to share job opportunities	People and Culture Mirring Ba Wurring Unit
Promote cultural safety during recruitment	Aboriginal people are included in the selection process including short listing and interview panels for any identified position	People and Culture Individual Managers
	When interviewing a prospective Aboriginal employee for an Aboriginal identified position, you should invite an Aboriginal person onto the interview and selection panel. For a non-identified position, where the applicant is Aboriginal, they should be offered the option of having an Aboriginal person on the interview panel.	People and Culture Individual Managers
	Offer pre-interview support and guidance to applicants as required. This may include an introduction to the Mirring Ba Wurring Aboriginal Health Unit and a tour of the hospital	People and Culture Individual Managers
	Ensure the interview process is engaging by selecting a relaxed environment, where possible seating arrangements should be circular to avoid a power play	Individual Managers
	Making an Acknowledgment of Country before proceeding with interview is respectful protocol	Individual Managers
	Provide feedback on interview performance for each candidate interviewed with practical tips for improvement	Individual Managers
Further increase a new Aboriginal employee's cultural safety and job satisfaction	Individual managers will prepare for new Aboriginal employee's onboarding, welcome and familiarisation	Individual Managers
	Establish a key mentor for new employees – this may include a trusted Elder	Individual Managers
	Investigate external Aboriginal mentoring programs if this is preferred	Individual Managers
Ensure managers are appropriately trained	Ensure Manager(s) of Aboriginal employees attend training to support best practice supervision	Individual Managers with support from People and Culture with MPPE
	Ensure supportive and culturally appropriate annual performance review process	Individual Managers with support from People and Culture
	Managers are able to acknowledge the importance of family and community roles and cultural load on Aboriginal employees	Individual Managers

	Acknowledge that Aboriginal communities experience high death rates, including suicides. Sorry Business includes all kin and extended family attending the rites associated with death	Individual Managers
	Managers understand and support Aboriginal employee to access leave to fulfil family obligations and cultural needs during: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NAIDOC week</li> <li>• Sorry Business</li> </ul>	Individual Managers

**Legislation / References:**

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care NSQHS Standards. 2019. User Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Inner North West Primary Care Partnership and The Long Walk (2017) From Symbols to Systems: Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security in mainstream organisations.

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework: Cultural safety continuum reflective tool (Part2)

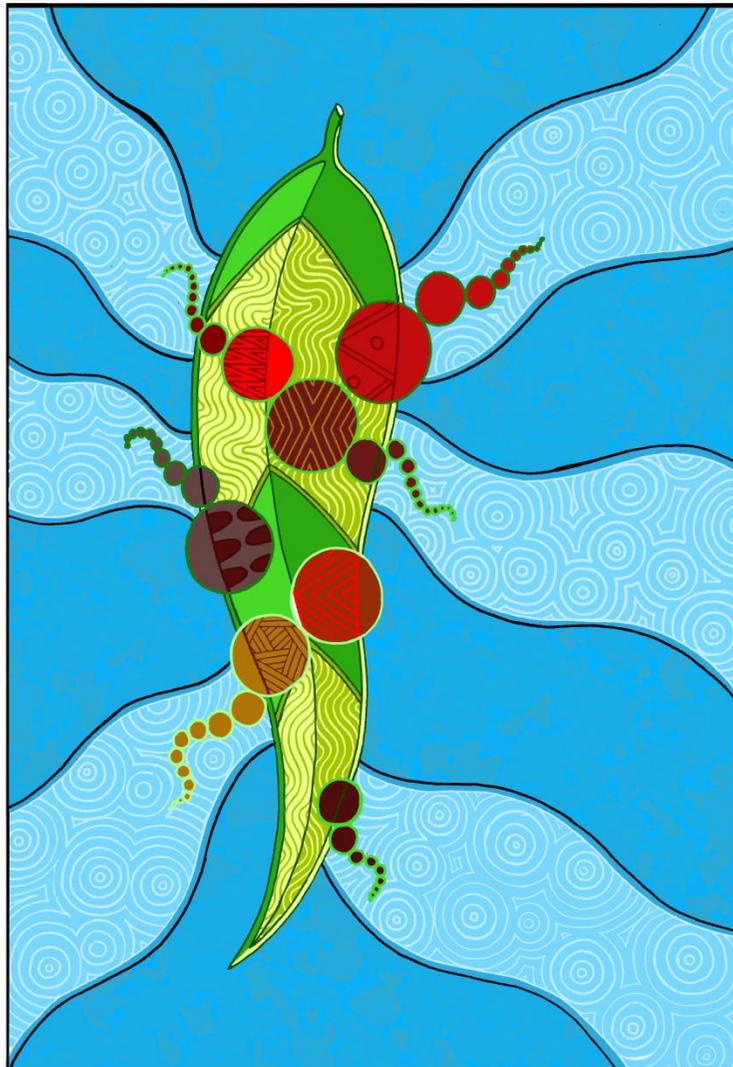
Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Balit Murrup: Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework 2017-2027

**Consultation:**

Thank-you to the following Aboriginal people who drafted, reviewed or participated in consultation for this plan: Carleen Miller, Natalie Tieri, Seona James, Charlie Knight and Peter Waples-Crowe.

The following groups reviewed the plan during the consultation process: Eye and Ear managers and executive, all hospital employees and the Eye and Ear RAP working group.



### About the artwork

**Artist:** Mandy Nicholson, Wurundjeri

**The meaning:** Mannagum leaf- welcoming of visitors, used in smoking ceremony. Embedded in the leaf are circles depicting continuation of cultural practices and ceremony today and the sharing of our cultures with others. The waterways symbolise the waterways that run into the Birrarung (Yarra) and become one, so we begin our shared history of Melbourne.

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