

From Symbols to Systems

**Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Cultural Security in
Mainstream Organisations**

Cultural Security Templates



Inner North West
PRIMARY CARE PARTNERSHIP





Prepared by Maria Dugan, Liz Phillips, Colin Mitchell, Leanne Brooke, Cathy Austin, Shona Stewart, Ron Briggs, Nicole Bloomfield, Joanne Atkinson, Tracey Evans and Don Stewart.

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Consultation

A Working in Two Worlds Forum was held in March 2017 on the lands of the Kulin Nation in Melbourne, Victoria with over 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in mainstream organisations. The participants generously shared their thoughts, concerns and ideas about how mainstream health and community service sector work impacts them and how employers can more effectively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.

This feedback, as well as an examination of current policy frameworks, helped to inform *From Symbols to Systems: Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Security in Mainstream Organisations*. The framework presents cultural security templates to guide mainstream service delivery organisations, government departments and service commissioning agencies seeking to address culturally based hazards and improve cultural security.

Introduction

The importance of effective partnerships between Aboriginal and mainstream¹ organisations, for the delivery of effective, efficient and equitable health, community and justice services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people cannot be overstated. Recognising this, governments at all levels have made significant investments in an effort to make mainstream health, community and justice service systems more accessible, culturally safe and appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There has also been significant investment in training to improve the cultural responsiveness of government departments and mainstream organisations and the cultural awareness of non-Indigenous people working in them.

In spite of improvements in cultural responsiveness gained through these and other actions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in mainstream organisations are regularly exposed to culturally based hazards. These hazards impact their personal health and wellbeing and undermine their ability to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. By undermining cultural safety, culturally based hazards create barriers to people accessing services, which in turn adversely impacts a client's health and wellbeing and, more broadly, undermines Closing the Gap targets and outcomes.^{2,3} These and other aspects of employment in mainstream organisations were discussed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at a Working in Two Worlds forum convened in Melbourne in March 2017.

¹ A service or organisation that is not an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation is often referred to as a 'mainstream' organisation.

² *Racism in Australia's health system*, Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) Policy Statement, 2016.

³ *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012–2022*, Department of Health, 2012.





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Why is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security so important?

There is a direct connection between the cultural security⁴ of mainstream services provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their health and wellbeing outcomes.⁵ This is because cultural security is essential for creating and maintaining the culturally safe environment an organisation needs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients effectively and to minimise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee exposure to culturally based hazards.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security is also necessary for mainstream health, community services and justice services to forge strong strategic partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and communities. Improving cultural security in mainstream organisations is also increasingly being recognised as a critical part of Australia's efforts to achieve national Closing the Gap outcomes targets.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in mainstream community liaison and other roles are often critical gatekeepers for the mainstream health, community service and justice systems. Their unique skills, knowledge and experience are often essential to the delivery of high-quality, culturally responsive, support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Their interventions can directly influence whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members will access and make effective use of those services. In short, because they directly impact client access and service effectiveness, culturally based hazards can dilute both an organisation's ability to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client health and wellbeing and its contribution to national Closing the Gap outcomes.

Recognition that individual client health and wellbeing and Closing the Gap targets can be compromised if culturally based hazards are not addressed has prompted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies, state and territory governments and mainstream service organisations to develop cultural security policies and implementation frameworks. Typically based on a continuous quality improvement approach, these frameworks encourage mainstream organisations to systematically identify culturally based hazards at the whole-of-organisation level and to proactively involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and service users in the design of work processes. The frameworks also emphasise the critical importance of executive leadership, engagement with local communities and other key stakeholders, supportive environments, participatory planning, and systematic monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.

⁴ Cultural security is an outcome of using systems-based approaches to identify and monitor the effectiveness of the organisational and staff competencies needed to provide culturally responsive services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

⁵ *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2017 Report*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017.





The action areas in this document, summarised in Figure 1 below, are based on current frameworks and on the advice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in mainstream organisations in Victoria. They enable whole-of-organisation-wide protocols and strategies that place culturally informed values at the centre of service development and delivery.

They identify strategies to support mainstream organisations to provide services that meet the needs of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and minimise the impact of culturally based hazards on their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Figure 1. Key actions for improving cultural security in mainstream organisations

Key actions for improving cultural security in your organisation and increasing the probability that your organisation will positively impact Closing the Gap outcomes include:

- acknowledging the ongoing impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's right to self-determination, as a core principle for guiding change to more effective service delivery, workforce development and community engagement
- encouraging understanding and responsiveness to the cultural views, beliefs and knowledge systems of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in your organisation and using its services
- creating effective partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- addressing structural barriers to recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and to their career development
- creating opportunities for new knowledge gained through cultural awareness training, focusing on changing individual attitudes and behaviours of non-Indigenous staff consistently across an organisation to realise greater potential of your non-Indigenous staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients
- mandating accountability through more effective and systematic monitoring and evaluation of the cultural responsiveness of your organisation's systems, strategies and programs and clinical and administrative practices
- pro-actively creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be heard in organisational planning, policy development, and service delivery and other day-to-day activities
- improving your understanding of client perceptions of the cultural safety of your service or organisation.



How to use this document

The templates in this document can assist in the development and successful implementation of a whole-of-organisation response that is appropriate to both your clients' and your organisation's needs and is underpinned by ongoing:

- consultation with clients, staff, communities and other key stakeholders
- reviews of organisational practice and action to modify practice when required
- monitoring to ensure ongoing compliance with your organisation's cultural security standards and practice
- evaluation of outcomes.

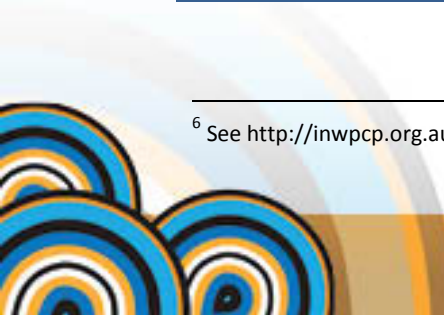
Readers familiar with occupational health and safety and other risk management approaches will recognise that the performance-based approach taken here is similar to risk management and continuous quality improvement approaches used to improve occupational health and safety outcomes. This framework should be used in conjunction with your organisation's Aboriginal Employment Strategy and Reconciliation Action Plan or equivalent policies and with regard to what are now almost universally accepted core principles for effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, community and justice services delivery. Some of these are shown in Figure 2.

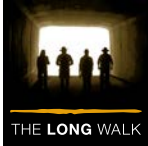
It is recommended that you prepare your own organisation's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security strategy using the templates in this resource in conjunction with other resources in *The Building Blocks to Organisational Cultural Responsiveness Toolkit*.⁶

Figure 2. Some core principles for mainstream health, community and justice services

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is: *"not just the physical well-being of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being, thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their Community. It is a whole-of-life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life"*. (National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, NACCHO Constitution: Definitions, page 5)
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations have a critical role in the delivery of primary health care and community and justice services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- In spite of the increased focus on cultural responsiveness, some mainstream health, community and justice systems are still not accessible or user-friendly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people due to interpersonal and institutional racism.

⁶ See <http://inwpcp.org.au/resources/closing-the-health-gap-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people/>





- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, families and communities play a critical role in the design and delivery of mainstream services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be employed in front-line and executive roles in mainstream organisations.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation on mainstream Boards of Management and other advisory and governance groups needs to increase.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and their families and communities need to have a greater say in the design and delivery of health, community, justice and other services.

Further reading

The template in this document is based on current best-practice cultural security frameworks and policies and on the views of 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in mainstream roles who discussed cultural security and related issues at a Working in Two Worlds forum held in Melbourne in March 2017. For more information on the Working in Two Worlds forum discussions, see *From Symbols to Systems: Strengthening Cultural Security in Mainstream Organisations*, Inner North West Primary Care Partnership and The Long Walk, Melbourne, 2017.



Areas for action – domains of cultural security

The action areas in this template are drawn from other templates and recognised as fostering whole-of-organisation protocols and strategies that place culturally informed values at the centre of service development and delivery and enable an organisation to better meet the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using its services. They also enable your mainstream organisation to support its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff more effectively. The template should be used in conjunction with Aboriginal Employment Strategies and Reconciliation Action Plans and other internal policies.

Domain 1. Whole-of-organisation approach

A systemic whole-of-organisation approach will ensure that cultural security is embedded across the organisation and commitment to action is underpinned by accountability measures, governance systems and evaluation

Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
1. Effective policy, governance and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and operational policies that support cultural security are widely promoted and disseminated. • Cultural security principles are reflected in key organisational documents, service delivery agreements and reporting systems and embedded into regular business practices such as staff, team and management meetings. • Governance structures are representative of communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, carers and communities are supported to participate in them. • Reviews and analyses are conducted about key decisions to support goals of cultural responsiveness and equity. • Strategic policies related to cultural security are monitored and reported against to assist your organisation to become an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to grow the number of staff across all employment streams. • Develop strategic partnerships with Aboriginal community controlled organisations and other Aboriginal service providers and seek to include representatives of these organisations on governance groups when appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Organisational awareness is increasing and policies and strategies that support cultural security are being routinely used. □ Cultural security is integrated into reporting and accountability processes. □ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented on governance and advisory groups. □ Identified budgets to support improving cultural security are being developed. □ There is continuous investment in health system components to support enhanced and culturally responsive service delivery. □ Use of complaint and major incident reports to inform action on cultural security is routine. □ Improving health and wellbeing outcomes and service delivery indicators (i.e. potentially preventable admissions).
2. Financing and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate financial resources in annual budgets to activity to improve cultural security. • Investment and resources to enhance service delivery, support leadership, research, communication, workforce, consumer and community participation. • Allocation of resources to enable appropriate remuneration of Aboriginal community representatives on governance and other advisory groups. 	

Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
3. Workplace health and safety systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly monitor, evaluate and review cultural security processes and practices. Incorporate cultural security into OH&S systems. Incorporate learnings from staff exit interviews into cultural security systems. 	
Domain 2. Leadership Leadership at all levels plays a key role in driving cultural security. Leaders promote the importance of planning, implementing, evaluating and celebrating cultural security performance and achievements		
1. Ensure staff performance and accountability for cultural security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed cultural security accountabilities in performance agreements of executive and management roles. Ensure performance development plans prioritise cultural safety and responsiveness. Leaders and managers establish processes and mechanisms to ensure that teams are held accountable for the delivery of culturally secure services and practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed in executive and other leadership positions. Performance agreements of senior health staff specify cultural security accountabilities. Performance development plans include a focus on cultural safety and responsiveness.
2. Develop leaders and champions who are committed to cultural security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge leaders and champions who actively engage in improving cultural security services by publicly recognising their contribution. Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership roles, including specific cultural ambassador and mentoring roles and cultural security groups. Actively support and encourage new and emerging leaders who recognise and promote the value of cultural security in your organisation. Promote and highlight examples of best practice and innovative cultural security initiatives by staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal acknowledgement of leaders and champions in cultural security. Establishment of cultural security groups that could provide advice to management or serve as learning groups for staff within your organisation.
Domain 3. Consumer and community participation Clients and other service users and local community are engaged as active partners with service providers to provide feedback that supports culturally secure service planning, implementation and evaluation		
1. Client Centred Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients are provided with care that is responsive to needs and values. Accessible information is provided in a respectful way to support clients and families to make informed decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are improved and enhanced. Positive feedback is received from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and their families.
2. Consumer and community partnership in service planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in the development of health information materials to ensure that information is relevant, readable and understandable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance partnerships are established with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.



Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement systematic processes that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and communities in the development and implementation of service design and redesign. • Establish governance partnerships which include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and the community and other community members. • Engage Aboriginal community service providers in strategic and operational planning processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients participate in service planning and implementation. □ Health information materials are assessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. □ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients actively engage in service measurement and evaluation.
3. Participation in monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and community representatives in developing evaluation approaches and during evaluation of programs and services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ For health organisations, The National Safety and Quality Health Services Standard 2 – Partnering with Consumers and related NSQHS Standards are successfully implemented. □ There is increased performance by staff at all levels through the introduction of information sharing programs and effective conflict resolution processes that value local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols.

Domain 4. Workforce

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be employed in key roles and actively engaged in cultural security systems development in health, community services and justice organisations. These people also need access to professional development opportunities, both personal opportunities and those likely to lead to improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client satisfaction outcomes

1. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainee positions through initiatives such as scholarships and vocational training opportunities. • Actively promote careers and recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, by working with universities and training providers and by having orientation days to promote the organisation as a preferred place of employment to grow the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across all employment streams. • Consider forming co-location agreements with local Aboriginal service providers which enable staff of both organisations to gain experience by working in the other organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed is increasing across the organisation (i.e. not just in identified Aboriginal community liaison roles). □ Increased numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed in executive and other leadership positions. □ There is an increase in Full Time Equivalent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health staff and trainees. □ Cultural safety training modules are developed in collaboration with the local community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
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Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
<p>2. Improve retention levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide on-the-job mentoring and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. • Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in induction of new staff. • Ensure that the history of local Aboriginal people’s first contact with Europeans and stories about local Aboriginal Elders and other people and local organisations are included in staff induction. • Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with supported secondment and other short-term opportunities to experience different roles and program areas. • Ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff have career and performance development plans in place and are provided with funding and other support and training to achieve career and life goals. • Build, strengthen and appropriately recognise and reward local Aboriginal staff working in regional offices. • Develop pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to transition from entry level to professional and leadership roles guided by early engagement and appropriate mentoring and training. • Work towards having at least 10% of senior positions filled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. • Ensure that cultural leave policy and provisions reflect contemporary needs and are provided and supported. • Undertake an annual review of the distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the organisation and undertake an annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff satisfaction survey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers are consulted and involved in the development of new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker duty statements. □ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are actively involved in staff recruitment and induction programs. □ Cultural security systems and cultural safety monitoring and evaluation are maintained by a panel that includes local community representatives and senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managers, supervisors and other staff. □ Local community leaders and members are engaged in the support and mentoring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and in the induction and professional development of all staff. □ A higher level of appreciation and acceptance of the knowledge, skills and experience that community leaders and other people engaged in the induction and professional development of all staff bring to the organisation. □ Increased recognition of cultural difference and diversity is reflected in improved client satisfaction with the service. □ There is positive feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff about their employment experiences.
<p>3. Culturally safe staff recruiting, training and support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local community in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health staff, implement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ cultural safety training modules in collaboration with the local community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers ◦ duty statements that recognise and value the cultural knowledge and experience of collaboration with the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ More cultural responsiveness audits are completed on staff at all levels. □ The percentage of staff who complete mandated cultural awareness training is increasing. □ Increasing proportion of staff demonstrating understanding of, and commitment to, Cultural Safety principles and protocols.



Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ mandatory cultural safety training modules for senior healthcare managers and supervisors that acknowledge, respect and support the specialist roles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the need to access and engage with the local community ◦ programs and processes to create an enhanced level of knowledge and skills for non-Indigenous healthcare personnel regarding cultural difference and diversity ◦ programs and processes that recognise and promote the concept of holistic healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients ◦ cultural security and cultural safety auditing frameworks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The proportion of staff with an enhanced level of respect for the unique role and responsibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers is increasing. □ Staff have the critical skills and knowledge to actively engage with local communities. □ All staff have at least a base level of appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural differences and diversity, of their history, cultures and philosophies and appreciation of contact history and its impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.
<p>4. Cultural security knowledge and skills of non-executive staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all staff attend cultural security training and development and possess the knowledge and skills to work effectively with colleagues from culturally diverse and different backgrounds. • Ensure that there are additional and ongoing professional development opportunities for staff to enhance cultural safety and cultural security responsiveness. • Develop and implement an appropriate tool for auditing individual and team assessments of cultural safety and responsiveness to identify needs for further development. • Ensure that all staff are aware of and demonstrate a commitment to the practice of 'cultural safety' in the way they deal with their colleagues as well as clients. • Ensure that all staff are involved in self-reflective practices. • Ensure that all staff are aware of and utilise processes to resolve grievances and provide feedback to management relating to cultural tension issues that may arise in the workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ All staff have the skills to implement cultural security practices appropriate to their role. □ All staff are aware of and confident enough to actively use processes to resolve grievances and provide feedback to management relating to cultural tension issues that may arise in the workplace. □ Professionals understand client and family concerns and questions and check for cultural understandings around health concepts and recommended treatment. □ Organisation leaders and other managers are ensuring that cultural security is integrated into quality improvement initiatives.
<p>5. Cultural security knowledge and skills of Boards and other Governance groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Board members with the knowledge and skills to oversee the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of cultural security good practice. • Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the Board and other governance groups and on other senior decision-making bodies in the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Board members and executives have a substantial understanding of the history of Cultural Safety, its purpose and application. □ Board members and executive staff have an extensive understanding of how Cultural Security will positively impact and support government policies such as Closing the Gap.



Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
6. Cultural security knowledge and skills of executive staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive staff should be provided with the knowledge and skills to oversee the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of cultural security good practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board members and executive staff are aware of funding opportunities available to enable training, professional development and access to relevant resources to help implement Cultural Security across the organisation.
7. Cultural security knowledge and skills of managers and other supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that managers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a fundamental understanding of cultural safety principles and their application to healthcare workplace environments possess skills and knowledge to conciliate workplace grievances plan necessary Cultural Security professional development and training for their staff on an ongoing basis are able to oversee and design regular self-reflective processes to help evaluate the effectiveness or otherwise of Cultural Safety programs and practices in the workplace have suitable communication and conflict resolution skills to ensure culturally safe practices are followed in the workplace meet regularly with executive to discuss issues and challenges that may arise from the implementation of Cultural Safety in the workplace Use oversight processes to engage members of the community in the practice of Cultural Safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers and supervisors have the skills to lead a team to implement and oversee implementation of culturally secure practices in the workplace. There is elimination and/or zero tolerance of racism throughout the organisation. Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are actively involved as valued and equal members of practice improvement and other teams. Programs and processes that offer the opportunity for all staff to share their ideas are actively supported by managers and senior executive staff. A code of cultural conduct for Board members, managers and senior executive staff is developed.
Domain 5. Communication		
Effective communication is integral to embedding cultural security processes in organisations		
1. Ensure informed consent and enable client-centred care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients have access to accredited interpreters and/or Aboriginal support or community liaison worker when this is necessary Provide training for staff to develop their awareness and strengthen their interpersonal communication techniques, including when in working with interpreters and Aboriginal support or community liaison workers, and to improve the mutual sharing of information relevant to the client's needs. Develop culturally appropriate education sessions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients (for example: to improve health literacy) which support clients to make informed decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback is being regularly sought from and provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. The percentage of clients who request an interpreter or Aboriginal support or community liaison worker and who received one is increasing. The number of staff who complete training on effective and culturally safe communication and health literacy has increased. There are positive evaluations of client information materials and education workshops.





Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
2. Improve the communication environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate signage, commonly used forms, education and audio-visual materials are appropriate for the needs of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. • Request that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients provide feedback and inform audits and reviews of client information, including education materials and programs. • Emphasise the importance of training to ensure that staff are knowledgeable about the tools and resources available to support them to deliver information to clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ A number of audits/reviews of client information take place, including education materials and programs, which involve collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to assess their effectiveness and actions arising from those audits.
Domain 6. Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation		
Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation underpin learning and reflection on how to address cultural security. Learnings inform ongoing planning		
1. Develop quality data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify data requirements and sources, train and support staff to ensure quality data for future evaluation and research in relation to cultural security. • Develop and refine key performance measures to enable ongoing improvements in data systems, services and programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Key performance indicators to assess cultural security are being used. □ Evaluation reports include measurement and assessment of cultural security. □ A number of assessments/audits are conducted with a focus on cultural security.
2. Quality improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement organisational assessments and audits to identify levels of cultural competence, cultural security gaps and to inform improvement opportunities as well as strategic and operational planning processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Research focused on effectiveness of cultural security initiatives is conducted.
3. Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research that has the potential to support improvements in the delivery of care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ensure that the outcomes of research are accessible to the community. • Share research outcomes, information on innovations and successful cultural security programs across the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Performance information is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. □ Meetings, forums and other mechanisms are employed to share information on cultural security programs and actions.
4. Establish rigorous evaluation practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New services, programs and initiatives include a focus on cultural security in program evaluations. • Ensure that program and policy evaluations inform development and planning. 	



Areas for action – domains of cultural security

This *Cultural security template for Government Departments and service-commissioning agencies* is intended to be read in conjunction with the Cultural security template for service organisations. It identifies complementary actions for funding agencies seeking to address culturally based hazards and improve cultural security within a wider whole-of-government approach. The template should be used in conjunction with Aboriginal Employment Strategies and Reconciliation Action Plans and other internal policies and government policy frameworks relevant to each agency’s role.

Domain 1. Whole-of-government approach

A systemic whole-of-government approach will ensure that cultural security is embedded across all levels of government and that commitment to action is underpinned by accountability measures, governance systems and evaluation

Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
1. Effective policy, governance and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance structures including representatives of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, carers and communities are mandated for all government departments and funded service providers. • Government statutory and policy reviews reflect cultural security goals. • Strategic policies related to cultural security are monitored and reported against. • All new services, programs and initiatives include a focus on cultural security. • Ensure that departmental programs and policy evaluations inform cultural security development and planning improvements. • Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans mandate compliance with Victoria’s Human Services Standards for all government departments and funded service providers providing services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Awareness and use of relevant policies and strategies are evident. □ Cultural security is integrated into reporting and accountability processes. □ Cultural security issues are being addressed by senior government governance and advisory groups. □ State government budget measures to support improved cultural security auditing, regulation and evaluation are identified. □ Continued investment in health, community services and justice measures support culturally responsive service delivery enhancements.
2. Financing and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate financial resources in annual budgets to activity to improve cultural security. • Invest resources to enhance service delivery, support leadership, research, communication, workforce, consumer and community participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans for all government departments mandate compliance by mainstream funded agencies with the four service quality standards of Victoria’s Human Services Standards and their associated criteria and common evidence indicators.
3. Program and service commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service commissioning policies mandate implementation of cultural security frameworks by all government departments and their funded service providers. • Departmental Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service commissioning agreements with mainstream organisations mandate reporting on service plans and other service delivery requirements which identify the actual spend on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, and related outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Reporting shows increased compliance by funded agencies with the four service quality standards of Victoria’s Human Services Standards and their associated criteria and common evidence indicators.



Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic systematic sample auditing of mainstream Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service commissioning agreements, service plans and other service delivery requirements to ensure compliance with Victoria’s Human Services Standards the Aboriginal culturally informed addendum to the Human Services Standards evidence guide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Complaints and major incident reports are used to inform action on cultural security. □ There are improved health and wellbeing outcomes and service delivery indicators (for example: fewer potentially preventable hospital admissions, lower rates of self-discharge, or higher rates of clients finishing a course of treatment).
4. Occupational health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate Victoria’s OH&S policy, statutes, regulations, codes and in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in mainstream organisations, community leaders and peak organisations to determine their relevance to cultural security risks and hazards. 	<p>Subject to the evaluation outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ WorkSafe Victoria developing an Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan. □ WorkSafe Victoria incorporating cultural security elements and compliance with Victoria’s Human Services Standards into policy, OH&S statutes, regulations and codes.

Domain 2. Leadership

Leadership at all levels plays a key role in driving cultural security. Leaders promote the importance of planning, implementing, promoting, evaluating and celebrating cultural security performance and achievements

1. Performance and accountability for cultural security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government leaders acknowledge cultural security leaders. • Government embeds departmental and funded agency accountability for culturally secure services and practices in annual state budget processes. • Ensure performance agreements embed and prioritise cultural security and responsiveness accountabilities in performance agreements of senior government executive and management roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Increased numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed in executive and other leadership positions. □ Senior staff are reporting on cultural security accountabilities. □ There is formal public acknowledgement of cultural security leaders and champions. □ Cultural security groups that can provide advice to management or serve as learning groups for staff within hospitals and regions are established.
2. Leaders and champions committed to cultural security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge leaders and champions who actively engage in improving cultural security services by publicly recognising their contribution to delivering better health care. • Actively support and encourage new and emerging leaders who recognise and promote the value of cultural security in human and justice services delivery. • Promote and highlight examples of best practice and innovative cultural security initiatives by staff. 	





Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
<p>Domain 3. Consumer and community participation</p> <p>Clients and other service users and local community need to be engaged as active partners with service providers to provide feedback that supports culturally secure service planning, implementation and evaluation</p>		
<p>1. Consumer and community partnership in service and policy planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide public reporting of information on cultural security achievements. • Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in the development of information materials to ensure that information is relevant, readable and culturally safe. • Implement systematic processes that involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and communities in the development and implementation of service and policy design and redesign. • Establish high-level governance partnerships to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and the community are engaged in strategic and operational planning and evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Performance information is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, clients and peak bodies. □ Meetings, forums and other mechanisms to share information on cultural security programs and actions are sponsored. □ Health, community and justice service relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are improved and enhanced. □ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients participate in human and justice service planning and implementation. □ High-level health, community and justice service cultural security partnerships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are in place or being developed.
<p>Domain 4. Workforce</p> <p>A systemic whole-of-government approach will ensure cultural security is embedded across all levels of government and commitment to action is underpinned by accountability measures, governance systems and evaluation</p>		
<p>1. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in health, community and justice services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a 'model' mainstream organisation culturally secure Aboriginal Employment Strategy aligned both to the six cultural security implementation domains in this template and to broader quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation processes. • Implement processes that encourage government departments and funded agencies to develop Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans, Aboriginal Employment Strategies and OH&S strategies that are consistent with the 'model' culturally secure Aboriginal Employment Strategy. • Audit cultural security implementation plans developed by government departments and their funded agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The number of cultural security action plans is increasing. □ The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in front-line and senior managerial roles is increasing. □ The average length of time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people work with the one organisation is increasing. □ Feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients indicates improving cultural safety.





Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
2. Workplace health and safety systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate cultural security into OH&S regulations and guidance codes. • Ensure that OH&S regulatory officers are trained in cultural security compliance assessment. • Liaise with OH&S trainers to ensure that cultural security elements are included in OH&S training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders and peak bodies indicates improving cultural security and safety.
<p>Domain 5. Communication</p> <p>Effective communication is integral to embedding cultural security processes in executive government, departments and service-commissioning organisations</p>		
1. Awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior government figures acknowledge cultural security leaders. • Senior government figures promote the importance of strategic and operational policies that support implementation of Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans, the Human Services Standards and cultural security action plans by government departments and their funded agencies. • Senior government figures promote the importance of strategic and operational policies that support implementation of cultural security plans by government departments and their funded agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Cultural security is reflected in key policy documents, service delivery agreements, reporting systems and embedded into regular departmental business practice. □ Audits/reviews indicate plans being implemented.
2. Understanding of obligations under Victoria's Human Services Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messaging targeted to mainstream organisations for their need to comply with service delivery agreements developed under the Aboriginal culturally informed addendum to Victoria's Human Services Standards evidence guide. • Messaging targeted to mainstream organisations using positive examples of compliance with service delivery agreements developed obligations under the Aboriginal culturally informed addendum to Victoria's Human Services Standards evidence guide. • Messaging targeted to mainstream organisations receiving funding of the funding agency's intention to systematically audit organisational compliance with the Aboriginal culturally informed addendum to Victoria's Human Services Standards evidence guide. 	





Priority action area	Strategies	Ways to track progress
<p>Domain 6. Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation</p> <p>Quality improvement, planning, research and evaluation underpin learning and reflection on how to address cultural security. Learnings inform ongoing planning</p>		
<p>1. Develop quality data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify data requirements and sources, and train staff to ensure that quality data for future evaluation and research in relation to cultural security is available. • Develop and refine key performance measures to enable ongoing improvements in data systems, services and programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Key performance indicators to assess cultural security are researched, developed and refined. □ Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan Evaluation reports include measurements and assessment of cultural security in departments and their funded agencies.
<p>2. Quality improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a ‘cultural security organisational systems and client care standard’ for mainstream organisations, which can be audited. • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client involvement in cultural ‘security audits leading to a Koori “tick” of approval linked to service accreditation. • Mandate organisational assessments and audits to identify levels of cultural competence and cultural security gaps and to inform improvement opportunities and related strategic and operational planning processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Regular, systematic sampling audits of cultural security in departments and funded agencies are conducted. □ Research focused on effectiveness of cultural security initiatives is conducted and communicated. □ Performance information is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, clients and peak bodies.
<p>3. Research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research that has the potential to support improvements in the delivery of care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ensure that the outcomes of research are accessible to the community (to strengthen health literacy). • Share research outcomes, information on innovations and successful cultural security programs within and across government, advisory and policy planning groups, particularly those involved in Health, Community and Justice Services delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Meetings, forums and other mechanisms to share information on cultural security programs and actions are sponsored.



Case study 1. Marrabinya model of care^{7, 8}

Marrabinya (Wiradjuri 'hand outstretched')

Purpose

To create a stronger platform for the delivery of Aboriginal primary healthcare services in Western New South Wales.

Key principles

Marrabinya's key principles are:

- solutions driven through Aboriginal-owned General Practice clinics and services
- the spread of integrated health, social and cultural capacity across mainstream General Practice and primary care networks
- transformation to cultural safety, involving three major steps: Cultural Awareness; Cultural Sensitivity; and Cultural Safety
- cultural awareness training on its own is not enough
- it cannot be assumed that a program that is successful in one context will work in another; developing and implementing cultural competence programs must be tailored in partnership with and drawing on input from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Expected outcomes

To have all contracted providers, including mainstream providers of services to Aboriginal people, working towards meeting the requirements set out in the Western NSW Aboriginal Health Council Cultural Safety Framework. Initially, contracted providers will show their commitment to transforming towards cultural safety and will subsequently work to meet the six Cultural Safety Framework Standards over the following three to five years.

Core document

Western NSW Aboriginal Health Council Cultural Safety Framework. The framework sets out a continuum for primary healthcare service providers and progress is achieved across six standards:

- **Standard 1. Culturally safe and responsive clinical culture**
This requires evidence that clinical practice is culturally responsive and supported by culturally based clinical supervision aimed at the continuous improvement and adaptation of clinical practice in services provided to Aboriginal people.
- **Standard 2. Culturally responsive models of care**
Demonstration that all models of care have been culturally validated and promote a culturally safe service planning and delivery framework for services to Aboriginal people.
- **Standard 3. Culturally safe workplace**
This requires evidence that workplace practices and workplace design create an environment that supports and responds to the cultural safety of Aboriginal people receiving services, and where all service providers can develop and deliver culturally responsive services.

⁷ *What works in partnering to deliver effective Aboriginal health services: The Western NSW Primary Health Network experience*, Deeble Institute, Evidence Brief No. 15, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, August 2017.

⁸ *Western NSW Primary Health Network shows what works in delivering effective Aboriginal health services*, media release, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association and Western NSW Primary Health Network, 23 August 2017

- **Standard 4. Policy and procedure cultural audit**

This requires evidence of a continual cultural audit of and cultural adaptation in the use of all policies and procedures where these policies or procedures affect the delivery of primary healthcare services to Aboriginal people.

- **Standard 5. Cultural community engagement**

This requires evidence that the appropriate Aboriginal communities are actively involved in consultation, service design and service delivery planning. In addition, evidence of continual proactive dialogue with the appropriate local Aboriginal communities will be required as it relates to the delivery of individual clinical interventions.

- **Standard 6. Cultural workforce planning and management**

This requires evidence that affirmative action workforce planning and implementation strategies are in place to support and foster the increased participation of Aboriginal people in the health workforce. This includes culturally adaptive supervision twice a year and workplace performance appraisals.

Case study 2. Women's Health West Reconciliation Action Plan⁹

"The process doesn't stop. The journey is still ongoing; we are looking forward to raising the bar."

Background

Women's Health West (WHW) was established in 1987 and expanded significantly in 1994 to deliver a range of family violence services for women and children, including crisis outreach and court support, housing establishment and crisis accommodation options, counselling and group work programs. WHW currently delivers services across seven local government areas in western metropolitan Melbourne, and is an active participant in regional and statewide reforms.

WHW recently launched its whole-of-organisation Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The RAP is intended to ensure that WHW works closely with the local Aboriginal community to close the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait women, children and their communities in Melbourne's west. Work on the RAP began in November 2014 with an initial plan aimed at laying the foundations for respectful, reciprocal relationships with the local Aboriginal communities. The RAP commits WHW to contributing to a future in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience health, safety and wellbeing in the community, which will in turn positively impact broader Aboriginal communities.

In 2013 the WHW staff put a proposal to the WHW Board to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (a Foundation Plan). The proposal was endorsed by the Board, and the Policy and Development Coordinator was given responsibility for driving the change within the organisation.

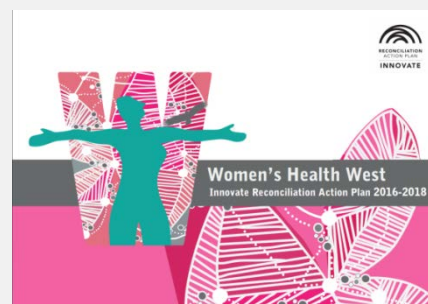
"The RAP was the pivotal policy framework that provided us with a systematic approach to move forward."

⁹ Case study sourced from *Final Evaluation of the North and West Metropolitan Region PCP Consortium Koolin Balit Project*, Juliet Frizzell Consulting, September 2017, p. 32-35.

In the initial stages, the Policy and Development Coordinator sought advice and support from Reconciliation Australia, the Wurundjeri Council, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA). She also began attending the North West Metropolitan Region (NWMR) Koolin Balit Wellbeing Partnership meetings and sourced information, resources and tools from the *Building blocks to organisational cultural responsiveness* toolkit (see inwpcp.org.au/toolkit-main-page/).

To support the work required, two groups were established:

- an internal Working Group (WHW managers and staff), chaired by an executive manager. This group was responsible for developing the RAP and leading change across the organisation
- an Aboriginal Advisory Group (8 women and Elders from Aboriginal groups across the west) chaired by the CEO. This group was established to provide cultural advice to WHW and guidance on how to progress reconciliation.



As part of the process of developing the Foundation Plan, WHW completed a Cultural Audit using a tool supplied by the INW PCP. The audit highlighted a range of improvements that WHW needed to make to improve its culture responsiveness and realise its reconciliation goals.

As a result of the audit, WHW:

- implemented changes to make its building more culturally welcoming. The Cultural Audit Checklist: Creating a welcoming environment from the toolkit was used to inform changes to the building, including the waiting area
- introduced 'public recognition' of the Aboriginal communities in the west, in all its publications, on its website, and at meetings and events
- encourages staff to attend and participate in community events, and has established formal mechanisms for ongoing engagement with Elders and community members
- provided cross-cultural training for all staff in 2015 and 2016
- actively built and strengthened its partnerships with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Elders and community leaders.

Importantly, WHW began to actively talk about reconciliation internally and externally, and to establish its vision for reconciliation... *"To lay the foundations for respectful, reciprocal relationships with our Aboriginal communities, generating the conditions and self-reflection required within our organisation and our internal processes to work towards reconciliation."*

WHW's Foundation Plan was completed in August 2015. The process of developing the plan highlighted the importance of adequately resourcing the next stages of the reconciliation journey. The organisation was fortunate to secure a grant from the Helen McPherson Trust to progress its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan and community engagement activities.

In August 2015, WHW began work on its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. The grant was used to employ a full-time Project Worker whose role was focused on “working in the Aboriginal community”, and to roll out two community engagement projects:

- Nan, Aunty, Mum “you are a treasure to our family” – the project was designed to identify barriers facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in accessing breast screening services in Melbourne’s west and to find solutions to overcome those barriers. The project was coordinated and delivered by Ngahina Waretini.
- Koori Health Days in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre – a 12-week health program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre delivered in partnership with Aunty Lynn Killeen.



WHW’s Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan was completed in October 2016 and sets out:

- the organisation’s RAP vision, which is “*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s right to self-determination, land, cultures and histories are respected and celebrated across Australia*”
- three focus areas:
 - build strong partnerships
 - promote cultural safety
 - enhance opportunities.

The detailed Action Plan sets out a range of actions and deliverables that WHW will implement by December 2018. These include:

- organising at least one event for National Reconciliation Week annually
- building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, women and children of the Kulin Nation, and partnerships with the Wuundjeri Council, Boonwurrung and Wathaurong Elders, cultural heritage councils and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- developing a Community Engagement Plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, women and children
- including the RAP as a standing agenda item on each team meeting agenda
- consulting with Traditional Owners on what would make WHW’s building culturally welcoming to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, community women, partners and staff
- developing health promotion programs that are guided by, and delivered to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and young people in a culturally sensitive way
- staff attending cultural awareness training biannually

- reviewing training manuals and other resources to ensure the inclusion of culturally appropriate and inclusive language and imagery
- reviewing human resource policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants participating in our workplace
- developing and implementing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Strategy
- developing one commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultant and/or business.

In mid 2016, WHW identified that it needed to improve its recruitment processes. While it was hearing that there was interest from the Aboriginal community in two vacant positions, despite advertising the positions twice, they were unsuccessful in recruiting Aboriginal people to fill them. The issue was raised at the Aboriginal Advisory Group. Feedback from the group indicated that the position descriptions and the recruitment process itself, were barriers. Around this time, a number of senior staff from WHW attended the VACCHO training Managing Aboriginal Staff and Programs organised and promoted through the Wellbeing Partnership.

Using the feedback from the Aboriginal Advisory Group and the learnings from the VACCHO training, WHW reviewed and redeveloped its recruitment policies and procedures. The position descriptions were shortened and the selection criteria reduced and changed. The recruitment process was streamlined into an Expression of Interest and panel interview, and applicants were offered the option of bringing along a support person to the interview.

After attending the training, WHW recognised that it had an obligation to build workforce capacity and not to undervalue culture and connection in 'selection criteria'. It also identified gaps in organisational knowledge, including how to support staff effectively during sorry business.

The processes of reflection led WHW to determine that it needed to develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Retention Strategy. A key focus of the strategy will be on stripping away the barriers to employment, exploring how all things HR can be improved, and how WHW can move beyond 'dedicated positions' to increase employment of Aboriginal people across the entire organisation, including front and back-of-house positions.

When WHW staff were asked to reflect on the learnings so far they said:

"To create change you need buy-in from all parts of the organisation, from the Board, senior managers and all departments."

"Community engagement is central to making good decisions."

"It is critical to show the community you're (WHW) committed through the delivery of joint projects and activities, by participating in community events, and through the employment of Aboriginal staff."