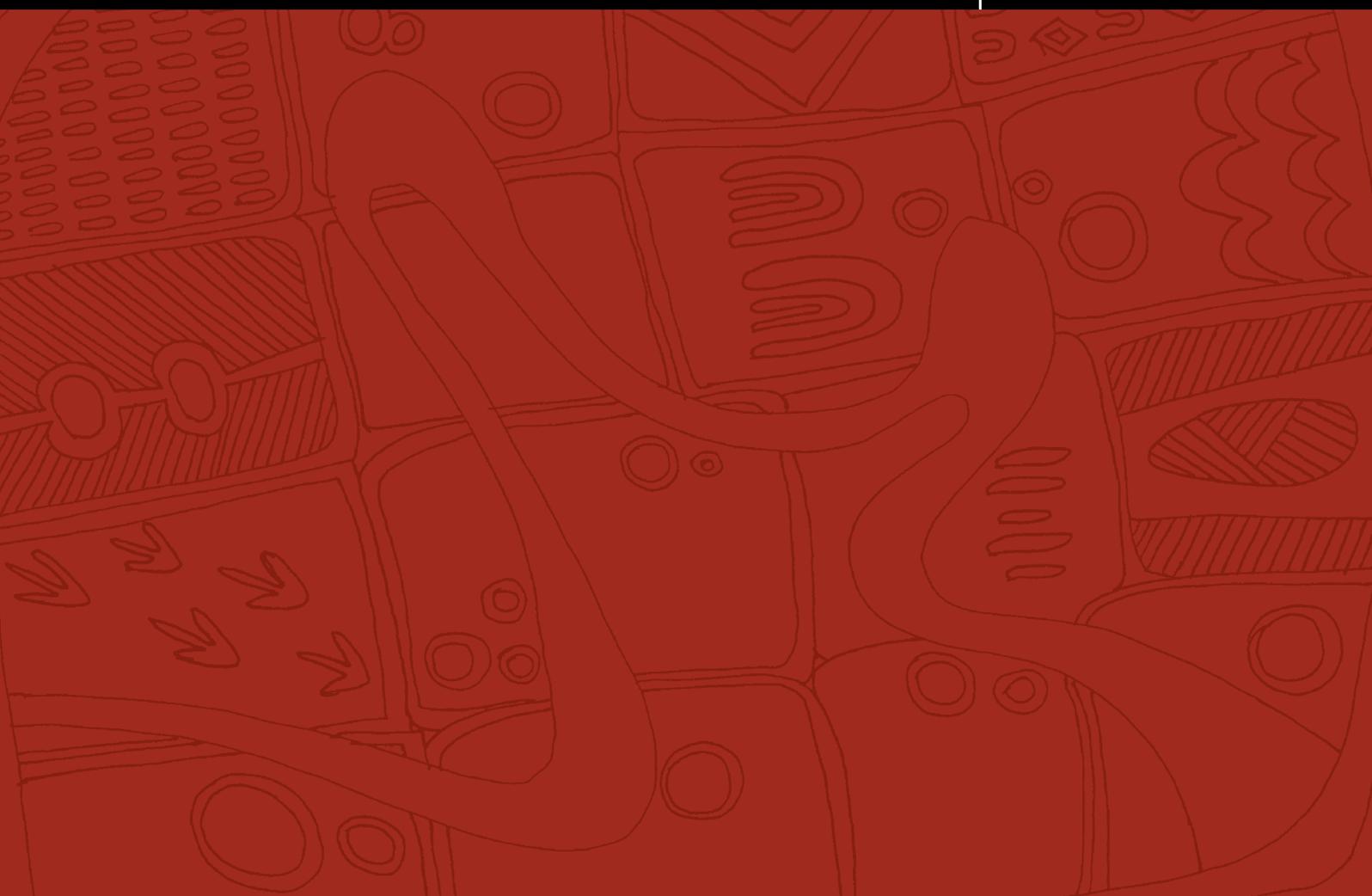


Department of Health

health

Koolin Balit
Aboriginal health workforce plan
2014–17







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Koolin balit – healthy people in the Boonwurrung language

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Please note:

Throughout this document, the term Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Indigenous is retained when it is part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

Secretary's foreword

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and their Elders past and present.

The Aboriginal community in Victoria is a youthful, growing population, living across many areas of the state and actively contributing to a range of economic, social and cultural activities. Despite positive growth in the rates of employment and education over recent years, Aboriginal people in general still experience higher rates of health issues, unemployment and associated economic disadvantage.

Achieving better health outcomes for Aboriginal people requires a multi-faceted approach. We know that having a job and a place in the economy builds self-esteem, independence and positive role models, and contributes to the overall health and wellbeing of Victoria's Aboriginal community. Economic participation by Aboriginal people is enabled through proactive education, training and professional development strategies that lead to meaningful work opportunities and career pathways.

As one of the largest employers in the state, the health sector is uniquely placed to provide employment opportunities to Aboriginal people.

In May 2013 the Hon. David Davis, MP, Minister for Health, launched *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012–2022*. The document outlines the government's commitment to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people living in Victoria.

If we are to realise the objectives of *Koolin Balit* we must strive to ensure Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health professionals have the skills and cultural understanding to engage Aboriginal people and their communities. We all have a role to play in helping establish a more culturally sensitive health system where Aboriginal people are welcomed, respected and understood.

The *Koolin Balit Aboriginal health workforce plan 2014–17* identifies Victoria's health workforce development priorities and the suite of initiatives that will ensure Aboriginal people have access to a range of career development and employment opportunities in health.

Considerable progress was made under the previous Closing the Gap initiative and we are committed to building on and strengthening that effort under *Koolin Balit*. During this time of changing demands for healthcare and service delivery, we have a unique opportunity to focus our attention on developing a culturally competent workforce to meet the healthcare needs of Aboriginal people now and into the future.



Dr Pradeep Philip
Secretary
Department of Health



Victoria's Aboriginal population health and workforce status

In the five years between 2006 and 2011 Victoria's Aboriginal population has increased by 26 per cent. The 2011 Australian Census data recorded that 47,991 people, less than one per cent of the overall Victorian population, identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Fifty per cent of Victoria's Aboriginal community live outside of Melbourne, with strong regional representation in areas such as Greater Shepparton, Mildura and Geelong.

By 2012, 23,000 of Victoria's Aboriginal population were of working age (between 15 and 64 years). The median age of the Aboriginal population at the time was 22 years in comparison with the overall Victorian population's median working age of 37 years.

More young Aboriginal students are staying in schools longer, completing Year 12 studies and accessing a broader range of training and career opportunities in the vocational education and training (VET) and higher education sectors. There are still challenges to be overcome in terms of attrition/completion rates, which are particularly affected at transition points such as when students leave the support of the school system and begin further study.

In comparison with the broader Australian population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on average die younger, have significantly higher rates of ill health and are more likely to have a disability. The major health concerns are chronic in nature and include cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory disease, diabetes, mental illness and oral health issues. Meanwhile, infant mortality rates have decreased, resulting in a younger population.

The poor health status of Aboriginal people can often be linked to a complex set of socioeconomic factors including social indicators such as training and employment opportunities. Meeting the needs of a growing and changing Aboriginal community requires culturally appropriate workforce capability. The role of the professional, managerial, clinical and non-clinical health workforce is essential for delivering health services that meet the needs of the Aboriginal community.

Improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people requires a proactive approach that recognises and addresses the barriers to Aboriginal people accessing the full suite of available health services. Improved access to health services for Aboriginal people is achieved when health services are culturally inclusive and service delivery is culturally responsive.

Increasing the rates of workforce participation and training completion by Aboriginal people in the Victorian health system will also improve access to health services and ultimately achieve better health outcomes for Aboriginal community members. The Victorian Department of Health aims to ensure the delivery of a highly skilled and highly trained Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health workforce to deliver better health outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities.

Through this *Aboriginal health workforce plan*, Aboriginal people will have increased opportunities to enter or remain in the health workforce via a range of workforce development, recruitment and retention initiatives.

Victorian Aboriginal health workforce plan

The Victorian *Koolin Balit Aboriginal health workforce plan 2014–17* will deliver a Victorian Aboriginal health workforce that reflects the aspirations of Aboriginal people and that focuses on unlocking our human capital and workforce capabilities over the duration of the plan and beyond.

The plan identifies key workforce development priorities and initiatives to strengthen the cultural responsiveness of health services and the health workforce. Implementation of these initiatives will lead to the following outcomes:

- more health services providing culturally responsive service delivery that meets the needs of the Aboriginal community
- progress on the department's commitment to increase Aboriginal employment in Victorian public health services
- more Aboriginal people working in clinical and non-clinical roles in mainstream and Aboriginal health services
- more Aboriginal people participating in professional development or upskilling opportunities in clinical and non-clinical roles in mainstream and Aboriginal health services
- more Aboriginal people working across a broader range of health professions in professional and clinical roles that include medicine, nursing, allied health, primary health, health promotion, management and leadership roles
- more career pathway, traineeship and cadetship opportunities that have successfully developed and trained an increased tier of new workforce entrants
- improved human resources (HR) infrastructure, supervision, recruitment and retention within Aboriginal-controlled community health organisations.

To achieve this, the *Aboriginal health workforce plan* implements the priorities under *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012–2022* which sets out the following key actions:

Enabler 1 Improving the data and evidence to improve health service planning and delivery for Aboriginal Victorians

Enabler 2 Strengthening Aboriginal organisations

Enabler 3 Improving cultural responsiveness of mainstream health workforces and health services



The enablers outlined under the Victorian *Koolin Balit* strategic directions align with the principles set out in the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce strategic framework 2011–2015*, as developed by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Working Group 2011. The principles are:

- cultural respect
- holistic approach
- health sector responsibility
- community control of primary healthcare services
- working together
- local decision making
- state/territory and national decision making
- promoting good health
- building the capacity of health services and communities
- accountability for health outcomes
- partnerships and coordination in policy development, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- mechanisms for accountability.

The priority actions of the Victorian Government also align with the following strategies:

- *Victorian Aboriginal economic strategy 2013–2020*
- *Kareeta Yirramboi: Victorian public sector employment and career development action plan 2010–2015*
- *Victorian Aboriginal affairs framework 2013–2018*.

Key priorities actions and outcomes

Priority area
Delivering a stronger skilled Aboriginal workforce throughout Victoria
Outcome
A total of 120 Aboriginal people will have received training grants over the four years to upskill and undertake training in health qualifications including allied health, nursing, primary health, health promotion, alcohol and drug services, dental assisting, physical activity and management
Actions
1.1 Provide entry-level, professional and career development opportunities for aspiring Aboriginal health workers seeking entry pathways into assistant-level and professional employment opportunities in mainstream health services
1.2 Support Aboriginal people to take up employment opportunities across a broad range of disciplines and professional and managerial levels
1.3 Provide up to 30 Aboriginal people per annum for four years to gain a university or VET qualification in a health discipline or to improve their clinical or managerial skills
1.4 Support Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to strengthen workforce planning, development and needs evaluation activities

'I am so happy to have been given a great opportunity to follow my interests and start a rewarding career in health.' – *Darren Wilson, trainee from Eastern Health studying Certificate IV in Drug and Alcohol*

'Darren is already assisting the service to strengthen engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and he is involved in engaging Aboriginal people in discussions about substance use and linking in with Eastern Health services.' – *Gavin Foster, Manager, Eastern Health Alcohol and Drug Specialist Services*

Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) has an established Aboriginal dental assistant (DA) trainee program. The trainees work with other dental professionals, treating and educating patients, providing administrative support and helping to maintain dental equipment.

In addition to putting these trainees onto rewarding career paths, the program has made the hospital a more welcoming environment for Aboriginal people. Since the implementation of the program, the number of clients identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander accessing care at the Royal Dental Hospital Melbourne has increased by an incredible 30.9 per cent.

Karinda, an Indigenous patient, says the program has vastly improved the hospital environment for her and her children.

'I visited the hospital a few times before the DAs started but I never felt as comfortable as I do now. The addition of these young people to the team means that the treatment I am provided is delivered in a more culturally appropriate and friendly manner by people who really understand me and my needs,' she said.

DHSV is thrilled that the program is helping to improve access to services and to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Priority area

Growing the number of Aboriginal people employed in Victorian public health services

Outcome

A total of 32 Victorian public health services with 500 staff or more will have implemented an Aboriginal employment plan by 2017, maximising every opportunity for increasing the number of Aboriginal people employed by a public health service or receiving career development opportunities

Actions

- 2.1 Support up to 32 public health services to implement their Aboriginal employment plans
- 2.2 Support health services to strengthen culturally responsive recruitment and retention processes and procedures
- 2.3 Support health services to strengthen workforce partnerships with the local Aboriginal community
- 2.4 Support health services to broaden the provision of career development pathways into employment
- 2.5 Support health services to create a more culturally safe, engaging and responsive patient environment and workplace
- 2.6 Support employment opportunities across a broad range of clinical and non-clinical roles and levels

‘For Ambulance Victoria, the development and implementation of an Aboriginal employment plan supports our strategy to build strong links with the Aboriginal community. Stronger ties through employment will enhance mutual understanding and respect in local communities and deliver improved health outcomes.’ – *Greg Sassella, CEO, Ambulance Victoria*

Priority area

Strengthen the human resources capability of Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations to support recruitment and retention initiatives

Outcome

Victorian Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCHOs) will have enhanced human resources (HR) systems and structures that will strengthen recruitment and retention of the health workforce

Actions

- 3.1 Support ACCHOs to implement a number of measures including enhanced HR capabilities to increase recruitment and retention
- 3.2 Allocate a total of 8.0 effective full time (time limited) HR project officer and HR administrative positions across 11 ACCHOs based on an assessment of need to build HR capacity
- 3.3 Facilitate the development of HR systems and structures that strengthen the capabilities of the workforce
- 3.4 Enhance culturally appropriate supervision structures
- 3.5 Facilitate HR systems that support recruitment and retention initiatives across 27 ACCHOs
- 3.6 Support HR leaders to develop a community of practice

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is leading the HR 'community of practice' network, with participant feedback so far including: 'Great forum – will be able to use a lot of the learning back in the workplace'.

'I am really excited to be working on an HR project, funded by the Department of Health, focused on developing great HR practices and knowledge across our members. This will involve the recruitment of a number of HR staff members across our member ACCHOs, developing HR resources, sharing knowledge and creating an HR network.' – *Paula Jones-Hunt, HR Consultant, VACCHO*

Priority area

Implementation of a Victorian Aboriginal nursing, midwifery and allied health cadetship program

Outcome

A total of 60 Aboriginal students over four years will be supported to participate in a nursing, allied health or midwifery cadetship

Actions

- 4.1 Create a supportive environment for Aboriginal nursing, midwifery and allied health students to transition from study into employment at selected health services
- 4.2 Provide students with supported, paid work placements through 60 cadetship places over four years in selected health services
- 4.3 Improve student engagement through a targeted cadetship program
- 4.4 Provide increased opportunities to transition into early graduate programs and into employment in nursing, midwifery and allied health
- 4.5 Support cadets to complete health workforce qualifications and receive mentoring

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's (SVHM) Aboriginal Nursing Cadetship Program involves Aboriginal nursing students (cadets) participating in up to 12 weeks of paid clinical placements. The program serves as an additional opportunity for the cadets to build their confidence and skills in nursing, identify possible future specialty interest areas, and assist with their adjustment to the clinical environment and future working life as graduate nurses.

'What I'm hoping for is that Aboriginal nursing is synonymous with excellent nursing.' – *Sye Hodgman, Aboriginal Nurse and Co-ordinator, Cadetship Program, SVHM*

Monash Health has developed an Aboriginal career development pathway in nursing and midwifery, and another in allied health. The pathway provides opportunity for Aboriginal students to gain part-time employment within Monash Health whilst they complete their studies, and progress their career in their chosen health profession. In 2014 Monash Health had four nursing and midwifery students, two allied health cadets and one Aboriginal school-based trainee.

The pathway affords Aboriginal students the opportunity to commence as a student trainee (Year 11 or 12 student), student cadet (undergraduate nursing/midwifery or allied health student) or a graduate nurse/midwife.

'The cadetship has allowed me to be exposed to a variety of services that are on offer to the wider community; and, in particular, the Indigenous community of the Mornington Peninsula. One experience that will always stay close to my heart [was] visiting the local gathering place in Hastings. During my first visit to the gathering place I felt a spiritual connection; it truly felt like home.' – *Mahatia Minniecon, Nursing Student Cadet, Monash Health*



Priority area

Implementation of the Aboriginal nursing and/or midwifery graduate program

Outcome

A total of 30 nursing and midwifery graduates over four years will be selected and supported to participate in the early graduate year

Actions

- 5.1 Support the recruitment and retention of nursing and/or midwifery graduates
- 5.2 Provide a solid base in the early graduate year for transitioning to ongoing employment in the health sector

Priority area

Provide supervision the culturally appropriate way

Outcome

Increase employer capabilities in mainstream public and Aboriginal health services to provide a culturally competent supervision workforce that is responsible for developing Aboriginal learners in clinical and non-clinical career development roles

Actions

- 6.1 Expand the supervision, training and development capacity of mainstream public health services to provide dedicated supervision to Aboriginal learners through the Aboriginal Health Workforce Supervision Program for People Managers
- 6.2 Support the development of broader supervision capabilities among people managers overseeing Aboriginal learners in non-clinical as well as clinical roles
- 6.3 Identify culturally appropriate supervision models for people managers overseeing Aboriginal health workers in ACCHOs



Workforce plan monitoring and evaluation

The Department of Health's Health Workforce branch will oversee the implementation of the Victorian *Aboriginal health workforce plan* as a suite of initiatives.

The Departmental Working Group on Aboriginal Health will oversee the implementation of *Koolin Balit* initiatives, reporting against *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012–2022*.

Evaluation

The Health Workforce branch will undertake a review of the *Aboriginal health workforce plan* in 2015 and at the completion of the plan in 2017. The evaluation will assess the following areas:

1. Consideration of the key priorities: Are the key priorities appropriate for advancing the health workforce outcomes necessary for meeting Victoria's economic, employment and health objectives?
2. Evaluation of program implementation: Are the key priorities adequately implemented in the sector and have the key learnings necessary for moving forward been achieved?
3. Effectiveness of the plan: Are the outcomes achieved in regard to meeting workforce growth, increased service provision and better health outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and communities?



