

Improving Cultural responsiveness of Victorian hospitals

Summary of key findings

Evaluator: Social Compass

Aim: To examine Victorian hospitals' efforts to improve cultural responsiveness and cultural safety for Aboriginal people.

Approach: The voices of Aboriginal people are at the centre of the findings and drawn from:

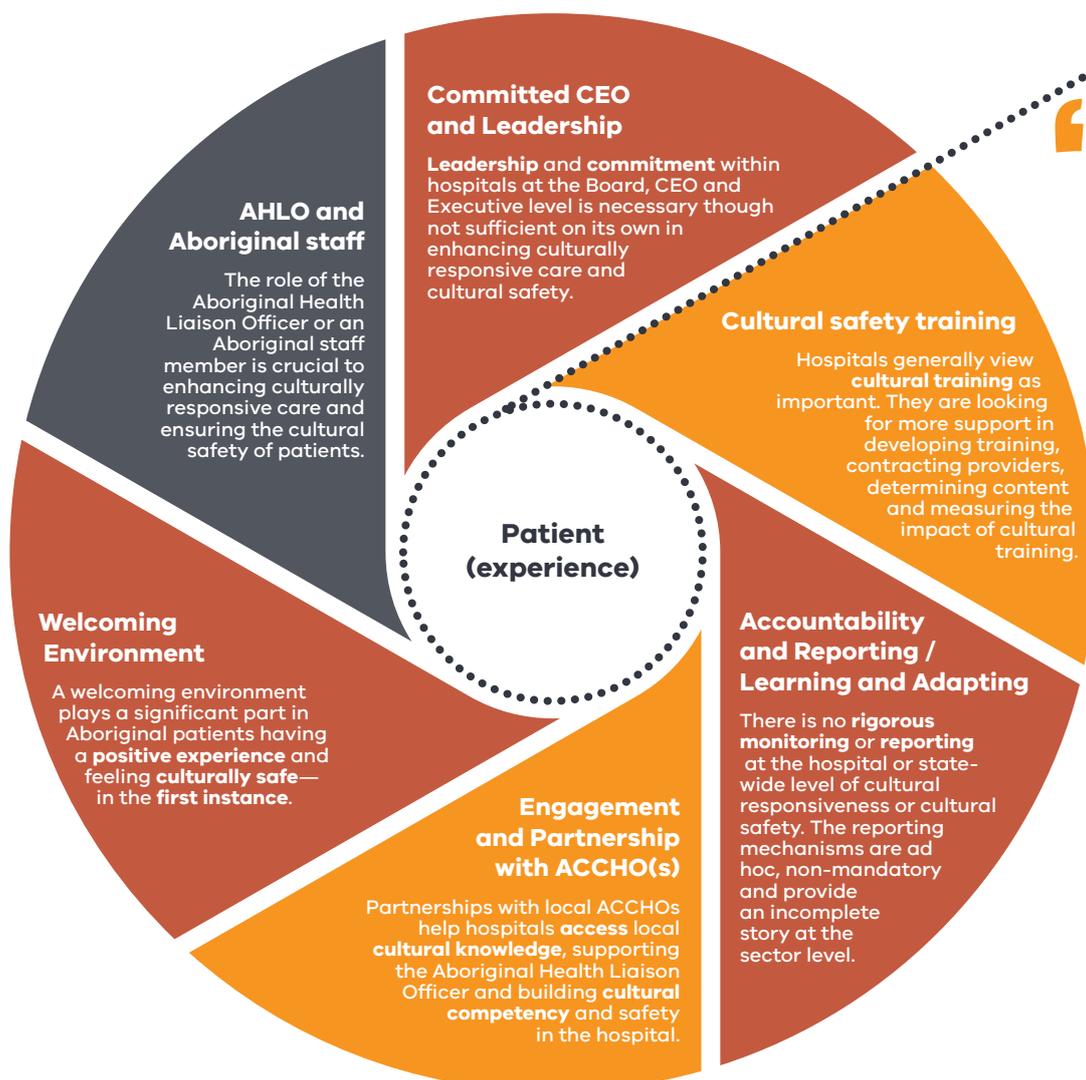
- Case studies of seven Victorian hospitals - interviews with hospital CEOs, staff and Board members, local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), patients, community members and other key stakeholders

- Surveys of Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers (AHLOs) and Koori Maternal Health Liaison Officers
- Data review of over 200 documents—CQI reports, Quality of Care reports, Statement of Priorities, Aboriginal Employment Plans, Victorian Healthcare Experience Survey results, previous evaluations and academic literature.

'Cultural Responsiveness' and 'Cultural Safety': What do they mean to Aboriginal community members?

- **Cultural responsiveness** refers to how the **SERVICE acts**—meaning how health services listen to and understand patient needs and demonstrate empathy. Staff will know and respect community Elders, their land and their culture and they will work alongside Aboriginal people.
- **Cultural safety** refers to how the **PATIENT feels** when accessing hospital services—that there will be no loss of identity or dignity and being Aboriginal will not lead to feelings of otherness, being an outsider or feeling unwelcome.

Six themes impacting on cultural safety



“ It takes a lot for me to walk into a hospital... even more to stay but seeing our flag and an acknowledgement of who we are makes a huge difference. Just a small thing like that. Every hospital can do that.

(Elder)



The evaluation report is available on the health.vic website. In your search engine, type 'Koolin Balit evaluations'

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Here's what we heard from some of the study participants

“ The hospital system is often very hard for Aboriginal people to understand. We live in a holistic environment and that is quite often not understood. Aboriginal culture is quite often not known by hospital staff and it is important when considering the journey of the patient in hospital and importantly the healing. Aboriginal people quite often face stereotypes, stigma and racism and this can put many barriers up from prior experience. There is a need to make sure the patient completely understands what is happening. Communication is quite often lacking. We need to understand all aspects to enable us to close the gap. As an Elder I am quite often asked for advice and assistance, I think every hospital should have Aboriginal advisors. ”

(Wurundjeri Elder, Aunty Di Kerr)

Community meaning for Cultural Responsiveness and Cultural Safety

Cultural Responsiveness	Listening	Understanding	Empathy	Respect
	Love Cultural knowledge Responsive	Equality Involved Caring	No racism Acknowledged Genuine	Consideration Trained staff
Cultural Safety	Comfortable	Friendly	Artwork	Control
	At ease Family friendly Not different	AHLOs / Aboriginal staff Flags Not the same	Still on my country Engaged Welcome	Culture acknowledged At home

“ It's not always about money... culture doesn't cost much ”

(Community member)

The Aboriginal Health Workforce

I want to know why they don't employ our people and when they do it is always as gardeners or maintenance. We want our people being doctors and nurses and then we get to see them and they understand us

(Community member)

High level commitment

[The CEO] is a lovely person! Makes us feel very welcome. Always says hello. Before, it wasn't like that, never!

(Community member)

[The CEO] is excellent... and brought great change

(ACCHO staff member)

Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers (AHLOs)

The AHLO is great. She communicates constantly and always calls to remind me of appointments, but the overall service probably isn't culturally responsive

(Community member and Elder)

We need an AHLO to walk us through all the steps... what are our rights and what are the processes and why and why not things happen while we are in the hospital

(Community member and Elder)

It's good that we've got an AHLO. They make you feel comfy, and less stressed. The other side don't understand us

(Community member)

The physical environment

I think more can be done in a visual sense with the environment... it makes me feel safe

(Community Member)

We're now seeing more and more cultural recognition through artwork etcetera, and all the Acknowledgement of Country

(Community member)

Engagement and partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs)

We could not have a relationship with the [the ACCHO] if it was not for the connection our AHLO has with them. Well at least it would be harder but we recognise this is an extra and sometimes difficult addition to [names AHLO] job

(Executive Manager)

I work hard at building the relationship between the hospital and [the ACCHO] but this is critical to building competence and understanding

(AHLO)

The ACCHO relationship is a hell of a lot better than ever before. Multiple specific services are running now too. This is all my work

(AHLO)

We are working really hard on our relationship [with local ACCHO] but it's not easy. We thought we were going well and then the CEO changed and that changed everything. Then the CEO changed again and it got better. We need to work harder and make the relationships stronger and sustainable but they are pretty good... for now

(Hospital Executive)