



Eastern Health
Aboriginal
Employment Plan
2016-2019

Artwork and Artist

About the Artist, Mandy Nicholson

Mandy Nicholson was raised in Healesville and belongs to the Wurundjeri-william (Warundjeri-baluk patriline) clan of Melbourne. Mandy's style consists of traditional motifs of southern-eastern Australia, blended with her own contemporary interpretation. These comprise of symmetrical lines and fine linear works. The stories behind Mandy's designs all revolve around nature, animals, people, personal experience and her family. She always incorporates traditional imagery into her pieces with a detailed story for each.

About the Artwork, Wominjeka (Welcome)

The graphic design work used in this renewed plan is from the original Eastern Health 2012-15 Aboriginal Employment Plan and comes from one of a series of artworks by Mandy Nicholson, displayed at various Eastern Health sites entitled Wominjeka (meaning welcome in Wurundjeri). This particular artwork is displayed in the Emergency Department at Maroondah Hospital.

The leaves represent the manna gum leaves that are used in Welcome to Country ceremonies, where they are placed on the hot ashes to create smoke. Visitors are then encouraged to pass through the smoke to be cleansed, which then also cleanses the surrounding area. The circles within the leaves show moisture (water) to show that only young leaves should be used in the ceremony.

The connected circles that flow through the work represent people's journey through life and the times when their lives intertwine with local Aboriginal culture and ceremony. The larger circles are healing circles which represent the hospital. This is to show that when people come to the hospital's Emergency Department, they learn about the local Wurundjeri culture by studying the painting and reading its story. It is brightly painted to brighten up what usually would be not such a positive place to be.

Acknowledgement of traditional custodians

Eastern Health acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land upon which our health service is built, the Wurundjeri people, and pays our respects to their elders past and present.

Note:

Throughout this plan the term **Aboriginal** is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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Chief Executive Foreword

Eastern Health is committed to growing and developing a talented and versatile Aboriginal workforce. We need Aboriginal people employed across our organisation in a range of roles to help us provide services for Aboriginal communities in the east and ensure culturally responsive care resulting in better health outcomes. Improved employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people is an important way in which Eastern Health can contribute to Closing the Health Gap.

Our commitment to Closing the Health Gap and reducing inequalities in health status and outcomes was strengthened by signing a Statement of Intent in August 2012 with the Victorian Minister for Health and co-signed by Aboriginal Elders at our inaugural breakfast meeting with members of the Eastern Health Board and Executive, and Aboriginal community members.

We continue to develop cultural awareness through a range of activities, including annual NAIDOC Week celebrations, cultural competency training completed by over 80 per cent of our employees, representation at the NAIDOC Ball and improvements in Eastern Health environments including flags and Aboriginal artworks at major sites to make them more welcoming. We have also held an annual sports day at Healesville since March 2013 with football and netball teams fielded by the Aboriginal community and Eastern Health staff.

Aboriginal people are accessing Eastern Health services in increasing numbers as evidenced through our recent patient data. Aboriginal workforce numbers have increased during the last two years, which is very encouraging. However, more work needs to be done to make Eastern Health an employer of choice for Aboriginal people and a provider of great healthcare to Aboriginal communities in the east.

Eastern Health Executive Committee is pleased to endorse the *Aboriginal Employment Plan 2016-19*, developed with community engagement. The Plan builds on our past achievements in developing and implementing key employment and training initiatives. Eastern Health remains committed to growing and developing a talented and versatile Aboriginal workforce and we will ensure our policies, support structures and cultural awareness training continue to realise our Aboriginal employment objectives and ultimately, Closing the Health Gap.

David Plunkett
Acting Chief Executive

August 2016

Background

Eastern Health provides a comprehensive range of high-quality acute, sub-acute, palliative care, mental health, drug and alcohol, residential care, community health and statewide specialist services to people and communities that are diverse in culture, age, socio-economic status and healthcare needs. Eastern Health covers the municipalities of Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges, the largest geographical area of any metropolitan health service in Victoria.

Eastern Health is a significant employer within the Victorian public sector employing more than 9000 staff and volunteers. Eastern Health is committed to enhancing the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people and reducing inequality in healthcare status and outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

The Eastern Health *2012-2015 Aboriginal Employment Plan* (The “Plan”) was developed in response to the Victorian Government’s *Karreeta Yirramboi* employment framework which was released in 2010 to increase Aboriginal [people’s] participation in the Victorian public sector workforce to 1 percent. *Karreeta* is the Gunditjmara word for “grow” and *Yirramboi* is the Taungurung word meaning “tomorrow”.

In August 2012, Eastern Health signed the Closing the Gap Statement of Intent. It has also developed and implemented various initiatives to achieve the Closing the Health Gap objectives and to successfully deliver on the Eastern Health *2012-2015 Aboriginal Employment Plan*. Data and feedback suggest these initiatives are working and there is a real sense of optimism and enthusiasm to continue with these efforts.

The Eastern Health *2012-2015 Aboriginal Employment Plan*, included specific strategies to:

- Expand, up-skill, support and retain our Aboriginal workforce
- Develop better education and training pathways to build Aboriginal community capability and career progression
- Strengthen cultural awareness across the health service so it is culturally responsive and able to implement culturally safe practices.

The key objectives of the Aboriginal training and employment activities undertaken so far have been to increase employment participation of Aboriginal people in the mainstream health workforce and to enhance the cultural awareness of Eastern Health employees. The efforts in these areas have improved the cultural responsiveness of employees across the organisation, enabling Aboriginal people to receive respectful and high-quality care at Eastern Health. These objectives are aligned with *Koolin Balit – Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health - 2012-2022* and the Department of Health and Human Services’ *Aboriginal employment strategy 2016-2021* and *Moondani: Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan 2015-2018*.

With the Eastern Health *2012-2015 Aboriginal Employment Plan* concluding in 2015, Eastern Health embarked on the Plan’s renewal for another three-year period. Renewal of the Plan has been undertaken by evaluating the key initiatives implemented so far in order to build and sustain the

successful initiatives; and to focus on new areas for meeting the employment and training objectives. Community consultation has been undertaken with Aboriginal community organisations and Eastern Health employees including Aboriginal employees and their managers. It has been important to ensure that the renewed Plan continues to meet the expectations of the Aboriginal communities of Melbourne's east.

Governance

Eastern Health established a governance structure to enhance the development and delivery of the Aboriginal training and employment activities.

The implementation of the Plan has been led by the Director, Organisational Development and Workforce Planning, under the sponsorship of the Executive Director, Human Resources and Communications and the Executive Director, Continuing Care, Ambulatory, Mental Health and Statewide Services. An Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator was appointed in May 2014 to support the Plan's implementation under the guidance of the Director, Organisational Development and Workforce Planning. The Co-ordinator also sought cultural guidance from the Senior Aboriginal Services Development Officer and the Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer and community networks to involve the community for successful implementation of the Plan.

An Aboriginal Employment Advisory Group chaired by Director, Organisational Development and Workforce Planning, was established in April 2014 and included representatives from various professional groups and clinical programs within Eastern Health. The Advisory Group meetings have been held every alternate month to provide input into the development and implementation processes and to monitor the progress and delivery of various training and employment activities. The Advisory Group reports to the Closing the Health Gap Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the Executive Director, Continuing Care, Ambulatory, Mental Health and Statewide Services. Quarterly reports were provided on the implementation of the *2012-2015 Aboriginal Employment Plan* as well as progress in key result areas on a monthly basis was discussed at the Closing the Health Gap Advisory Committee meeting.

This governance structure will continue to operate under the renewed Plan and the Aboriginal Employment Advisory Group will be expanded to include a community representative.

Achievements

Eastern Health has made pleasing progress in Aboriginal employment and training objectives over the past three years. It is important that the renewed Plan builds on the achievements of the *2012-2015 Aboriginal Employment Plan*.

Some of the achievements include:

Cultural Awareness Training

- To enhance staff understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal history, culture and health needs, Eastern Health designed, developed and implemented an online Aboriginal cultural awareness training package. All employees are encouraged to undertake this training which also includes training related to “Asking the Question”.
- Since June 2015, 80 per cent of Eastern Health employees have completed the training.
- New employees are assigned the online training as part of their induction and orientation requirements.
- Face-to-face one-day cultural awareness training was also organised for Eastern Health employees in 2013 and 2014 through Koolin Balit training grants. Over 800 employees attended this training.

Eastern Health Aboriginal Workforce

- As a result of extensive work to implement the Aboriginal Employment Plan since May 2014, the number of identified Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees within Eastern Health has grown from five to twenty-six employees in June 2016. This includes:
- Thirteen existing staff members who asked to record their Aboriginality, a testament to increased cultural safety within Eastern Health.
- Twelve Aboriginal employees who joined Eastern Health between May 2014 and April 2016.
- Of the twelve employees who commenced work:
 - Five were employed as trainees, four completed their traineeships at Eastern Health and three continue to work at Eastern Health
 - Four were employed in casual roles and three continue in this capacity
 - One was employed in a one-year fixed term role as a Clinical Nurse Consultant chronic disease in Aboriginal Health
 - Two were recruited to mainstream positions through standard recruitment processes.
- Processes have been implemented to encourage voluntary identification of Aboriginality by existing employees, with more focus on a word of mouth approach.

Identifying Potential Candidates

- Since May 2014, over 40 Aboriginal people have expressed interest in working at Eastern Health. A database is maintained with potential candidates’ contact details. Relevant job opportunities are promoted to this group on a regular basis.
- From January 2016, improvements to recruitment system processes were undertaken and resulted in the Aboriginal Employment Coordinator being informed of any applications for employment from an Aboriginal person.
- In January 2016, 7 job applicants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Six were from outside Eastern Health and one was an existing staff member.

- The Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator has established a process to follow up with job applicants in a structured manner and offer support, if required.

Eastern Health Recruitment Policy

- In support of the Aboriginal Employment Plan, the Recruitment Policy was revised to specify that “all applicants for vacancies who identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background and who meet the selection criteria for the role should be invited for a selection interview”.
- When there are Aboriginal applicants to be interviewed for a position, efforts have been made to include a senior Aboriginal employee or a community Elder on the selection panel whenever possible.

Employee Development and Retention

- Professional development workshops are held bi-annually for Aboriginal employees to provide a culturally affirming forum to meet and network with each other and reflect on their career development and aspirations.
- Workshops were held on 27 July 2015 and 7 March 2016.
- Advice and guidance have been provided to Aboriginal employees on a one-on-one basis in relation to resume preparation, interview practice, study options and career progression.
- Two casual clerical employees appointed by Eastern Health have received extra support and training during orientation. Additional one-off funds of \$1500 were sourced internally to facilitate extra training days for them.

Promoting Eastern Health as an Employer of Choice

- Career opportunities are promoted at the Closing the Gap Sports Days hosted by Eastern Health in Healesville each year.
- Eastern Health participated in the Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA) Careers Expo on 13 October 2015. While the community participants at this inaugural event were low, four young people expressed interest in participating in the work experience program. Two people expressed interest in employment opportunities at Eastern Health and three people participated in an introduction to nursing workshop.
- Employment opportunities at Eastern Health have been promoted through community networks and organisations. Key opportunities were advertised through the Koori Mail in addition to usual recruitment channels.
- Eastern Health co-hosted a book launch on 22 September 2015 for *Shattering Stereotypes: Experiences of Australian and Canadian First Nations General Practitioners and Family Doctors* compiled by Dr Aleeta Fejo with both internal and external attendees. Eastern Health partnered with Monash University Clinical School to co-host the launch and to promote the event to the junior medical workforce.
- Partnerships have been developed with HICSA and other community employment organisations such as Indigenous Prospects Training and Recruitment, MEGT to provide mentoring support for people new to their roles or for Aboriginal employees who may need additional cultural support.

Work Experience Program

- Eastern Health work experience opportunities are promoted via existing staff networks and social media. In addition, tailored programs for Aboriginal students were offered each year.
- Work experience programs for Aboriginal students have also been run since 2014. Two students from Worawa Aboriginal College participated in a work experience placement from November 10-14, 2014. One Aboriginal student from Upper Yarra Secondary College participated in a week's placement at Eastern Health from November 30 to December 4, 2015. A three-day work placement was undertaken by six Aboriginal students of Year 10 at Worawa College from April 26-28, 2016.

Koolin Balit Traineeships

- The following four traineeships were completed in 2015:
 - Drug and Alcohol trainee at Wellington House - Certificate IV in Community Services (Mental Health) through Odyssey House
 - Two Theatre Technician trainees at Box Hill Hospital - Certificate III in Health Service Assistance (Operating Theatre Technician) through Chisholm Institute
 - Mental Health trainee at Child and Youth Mental Health Service - Certificate IV in Mental Health through Swinburne University of Technology
- Nine applications for Koolin Balit training grants were received from across Eastern Health for the 2015-16 Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) funding round. Four applications were shortlisted and submitted to DHHS as per their submission requirements. Two submissions were partially funded. The table below shows all funding applications received, those forwarded to DHHS and the outcome.

Koolin Balit training grant applications submitted to DHHS in November 2015:

Business area	Qualification to be acquired	Amount funded	Amount requested
Nursing	Certificate III Health Service Assistance (Nursing)	\$7,500	\$17,000
Wellington House	Diploma of Community Services (Alcohol, Other Drugs and Mental Health)	\$11,200	\$17,000
Maroondah Hospital Emergency - Clerical Team	Certificate IV Business Administration	Not funded	\$17,000
Child and Youth Mental Health Service	Certificate IV Mental Health (to continue existing trainee)	Not funded	\$17,000

Eastern Health is reviewing the grant applications that were not funded or submitted for the Koolin Balit training grants to secure alternative funding to enable these initiatives to progress further. An opportunity to secure support through philanthropic organisations is being progressed by the Eastern Health Foundation.

2016-2019 Aboriginal Employment Plan

A thorough review of the *2012-15 Aboriginal Employment Plan* identified what needs to be included and focused on in the renewed Plan for the next three years, with the aims of continuing to strengthen the initiatives that have been implemented and are working well and introducing new practices and ideas to assist in furthering Aboriginal employment.

Eastern Health is committed to Closing the Health Gap and enhancing the health and wellbeing of all Aboriginal people. It recognises that increasing its Aboriginal workforce across all health professional groups will help improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal people in the communities of Melbourne's east. Establishing culturally safe practices that recognise and respect Aboriginal cultural identities and safely meet their needs, expectations and rights continues to be the driving force behind this renewed Plan.

Eastern Health aims to increase the representation of Aboriginal employees at all levels of the organisation and across different professional groups thus contributing to the development and delivery of positive health experiences and effective health outcomes and services for Aboriginal people.

Following a consultation process with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees, as well as key external Aboriginal partner organisations, the renewed Aboriginal Employment Plan has been formulated to further the goals of the 2012-15 Plan, which are:

- Expand, up-skill, support and retain our Aboriginal workforce
- Develop better education and training pathways to build Aboriginal community capabilities and career progression.
- Strengthen cultural awareness across the health service so it is culturally responsive and implement culturally safe practices.
- Enhance staff understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal history, culture and health needs.

The *2016-2019 Aboriginal Employment Plan* is based on the most significant recurring themes featured throughout the consultation. It sets out the following five areas of focus to achieve the Plan goals within its three-year timeframe:

- 1. Governance and Leadership**
- 2. Community Partnerships**
- 3. Recruitment and Career Pathways**
- 4. Induction, Development and Retention**
- 5. Workplace Culture**

Focus Area 1: Governance and Leadership

Eastern Health is committed to supporting the implementation of this renewed Plan. The existing governance structure will continue, enabling effective management, monitoring and accountability for the Plan.

1.1 Executive Sponsorship and Leadership

The Executive Director, Human Resources & Communications and the Executive Director, Continuing Care, Ambulatory, Mental Health and Statewide Services will continue to be the executive sponsors providing direction and vision for Aboriginal employment and enabling the development of cultural competency within Eastern Health. The Director, Organisational Development & Workforce Planning is responsible for leading and ensuring the Plan continues to meet the key objectives and leading the development and implementation of the initiatives. Processes will be established for seeking feedback and reviewing the initiatives. The Senior Aboriginal Services Development Officer role will continue to provide leadership and support for the development and implementation of the planned initiatives.

1.2 Linkage with the Statement of Priorities and annual Improvement and Innovation Plan

Eastern Health commits to being accountable for the delivery of this Plan through its inclusion in the Statement of Priorities signed with the Department of Health and Human Services, and ensuring that the Plan is monitored through Eastern Health's annual Improvement and Innovation Plan.

1.3 Aboriginal Employment Advisory Group

The Aboriginal Employment Advisory Group which was established in 2014, with representatives from across the professional groups, will continue to support the implementation of this Plan. This group provides input into the development, delivery and evaluation of the various initiatives in the Plan. The Advisory Group members facilitate the creation of training and job opportunities across the organisation including new traineeships for Aboriginal employment.

1.4 Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator

Eastern Health will continue to invest in an Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator for another year who will further the important connection between the community and employment outcomes. The Co-ordinator will establish strong relationships with Aboriginal employees and Aboriginal employment agencies. This is to ensure that employment and training opportunities and programs offered are attractive to Aboriginal people and job vacancies are widely publicised to attract Aboriginal people to apply for roles.

Eastern Health aspires to be an employer of choice for Aboriginal people and this role initially is integral to achieving this aim. The role will be involved in the development, delivery and evaluation of the employment and training initiatives in the Plan, including offering cultural and career development support and coaching for existing Aboriginal workforce. The Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator will work in partnership with other key Aboriginal roles within Eastern Health such as the Senior Aboriginal Services Development Officer and the Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer to enhance Aboriginal leadership and provide cultural guidance and support across the organisation.

1.5 Reporting

Quarterly progress reports will be provided to the Closing the Health Gap Advisory Committee. The report will include details about the implementation of the Plan and any challenges. This committee's role is to provide oversight and direction on initiatives and programs to close the health gap for Aboriginal patients and their families and to support the organisation to provide culturally-appropriate care.

Written reports will also be provided on an annual basis to the Executive Committee and to the Department of Health and Human Services, as required. Such reports will include details of implementation, successes, progress, challenges and strategies for continuing to achieve the Plan's objectives.

A copy of the written reports will also be provided to the Aboriginal employees participating in the network meetings that are held on a six-monthly basis to demonstrate the organisation's commitment to the success of the Plan.

1.6 Aboriginal Recruitment Standard

Eastern Health is committed to developing an organisational policy specifically for Aboriginal Recruitment that is culturally responsive, ensuring that the recruitment processes adapt to community expectations and are aligned with Eastern Health's commitment to Aboriginal employment. This Standard will be widely communicated to managers and potential Aboriginal employees, as well as the Aboriginal community to demonstrate Eastern Health's commitment and enhance the possibility of increasing the candidate pool for Aboriginal employment.

Focus Area 2: Community Partnerships

The success of the Plan relies heavily on the strength of key partnerships to support the identification and implementation of employment and training initiatives. Any employment and training opportunities need to suit the needs and career aspirations of Aboriginal people.

Through the Closing the Health Gap Advisory Committee members' community involvement and the relationships developed while implementing the *2012-2015 Aboriginal Employment Plan*, various networks have already been developed with Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal Elders. These relationships have helped refine Eastern Health's approach through advice and guidance on how best to work with Aboriginal people in the development and delivery of identified initiatives.

Further partnerships and continued interactions will be sought to strengthen these relationship and develop new alliances to support Eastern Health's efforts to achieve the initiatives outlined in the Plan.

Our key partners for effective delivery of the Plan are:

1. Aboriginal Community (through Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place, Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA) and local indigenous networks)
2. Vocational Education and Training providers - Box Hill Institute, Swinburne University of Technology
3. Registered Training Organisations
4. University partners – Deakin, Monash, LaTrobe
5. Local Learning and Education Network (LLEN)
6. Secondary schools (through Koori Education Support Officers)
7. Aboriginal employment and training agencies
8. Aboriginal Health Managers Network
9. Contractors such as ISS Facility Services

Some of these have provided input into the development of this renewed Plan and responded positively to the commitment and efforts made so far, as well as extending their support for successful implementation of the Plan. Consultation will be ongoing throughout the duration of the Plan. Eastern Health looks forward to working with these key partners as it now commences the implementation phase.

The Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator will work within the communication protocols established to partner with these key stakeholders. Regular meetings as mutually agreed will be organised with their representatives to progress the Plan's initiatives.

Eastern Health leaders and relevant employees will actively participate in community events to increase networking opportunities, build relationships and improve their understanding and appreciation of community needs.

Focus Area 3: Recruitment and Career Pathways

The main aim is to assist Aboriginal people in the community and Aboriginal secondary students to gain a better understanding of health service environments to increase their interest in health professions as a career. Eastern Health aims to increase its Aboriginal workforce and efforts in this area will drive employment and training opportunities across various levels within a range of health professions.

3.1 Aboriginal Candidates Pool

Eastern Health will establish, screen and manage a candidate pool using applications from Aboriginal people interested in working at Eastern Health. This will involve a streamlined selection process that supports merit-based selection of candidates who will be matched to vacancies as and when they arise. This strategy has helped increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal people as positions are regularly flagged for consideration. This has enabled selection covering all employment status types from casual to permanent, part-time or full-time and in different career streams including clinical roles, support roles and management roles. Career guidance and work experience opportunities will be provided to interested candidates on request to enhance their knowledge of health environments and health professions, and to strengthen their job applications.

3.2 Identified Positions

Identified Positions are positions, such as Aboriginal Health Worker, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer, Aboriginal Midwife and Aboriginal Nursing Cadet, that require an Aboriginal person to perform the duties. Additional positions will be identified to help cater for the Aboriginal community's needs for accessing healthcare and based on organisational service gaps and requirements. There is also a great opportunity to consider identified positions in various additional roles such as personal service assistants, theatre technicians and health assistants in nursing at the redeveloped Healesville District Hospital.

3.3 Targeted Positions

Targeted Positions will be those positions that contribute to aligning the Plan by prioritising Aboriginal employment to the advertised role. Such positions could be at all levels and will be identified in consultation with the recruiting managers across clinical, professional and administrative areas. These positions would fulfil the Closing the Health Gap organisational requirements. To create a career pathway for interested Aboriginal people by starting at entry level positions such as health assistant in nursing, allied health assistant, laboratory assistant, pharmacy assistant, administration assistant in Triage/Emergency Department and theatre technician positions could also be targeted. Creating such opportunities for Aboriginal people as a planned initiative would enhance their chance to commence a career in health.

Since the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (the Act) took effect in August 2011, employers are no longer required to seek an anti-discrimination exemption through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to advertise and reserve a position for Aboriginal candidates. Under the Act's Special Measures, positions may be earmarked by organisations such as Eastern Health that have planned employment initiatives to reduce a disadvantage. A special measure is not an exemption because the activity undertaken is deemed not to be discriminatory. Special measures allow employers to

impose reasonable restrictions on eligibility criteria on the basis that the measure is “promoting or realising substantive equality for members of a group with a particular attribute”.

These positions will generally be advertised through local newspapers, the *Koori Mail* and local community networks, with a notation that Eastern Health supports Aboriginal employment and equal employment opportunities. Eastern Health will develop relationships with government funded providers specialising in Aboriginal employment to increase its applicant pool for positions. Unsuccessful applicants will be encouraged to be part of Eastern Health’s Aboriginal candidates pool.

Eastern Health will work closely with Eastern Health’s major contractors such as ISS Facility Services to enable creation of targeted opportunities for Aboriginal candidates in the support services areas within Eastern Health that ISS Facilities Service provides.

3.4 School-based Employment Programs

Eastern Health considers school-based employment programs crucial for community and social responsibility and engagement. It believes that early engagement with students will create a talent pipeline for students to consider health professions as they complete their secondary studies.

- 3.4.1 Work Experience Programs: Eastern Health will continue to encourage Aboriginal secondary school students to apply for its mainstream work experience program which is offered on an annual basis. Eastern Health will also facilitate a specific Aboriginal work experience program as required to encourage Year 10 students to learn more about Eastern Health and the varied employment and career opportunities available.
- 3.4.2 School-based Traineeships: This area has not been explored previously. Consideration will be given to setting up school-based traineeship programs in partnership with Vocational Education and Training providers and secondary schools in the east. Student placements, as required, will be facilitated to support acquisition of specific skills and knowledge in the health environment.

3.5 Traineeships

Eastern Health will continue to actively access the Department of Health and Human Services’ Koolin Balit Training Grants to create new traineeships and/or encourage existing Aboriginal employees to up-skill or work towards career change. Evaluation of the traineeships implemented will be undertaken on an ongoing basis to learn from the undertaking and identify the support needed by the trainees and their managers.

The Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator will work closely with Eastern Health managers to create and support internally-funded traineeship opportunities in the areas of nursing, medical, allied health, administration, patient and clinical support. This will assist Eastern Health to achieve the Closing the Health Gap goals.

3.6 Cadetship and Graduate Programs

The Nursing Cadetship roles at Eastern Health have been funded by the Department of Health and Human Services to enable student nurses of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent to work part time as Health Assistants Nursing whilst completing their Bachelor of Nursing studies. One cadet has been appointed in 2016 following an extensive marketing and recruitment campaign.

Aboriginal graduates in nursing, allied health, medical and other professional areas will be encouraged to apply for Eastern Health graduate positions by communicating the various educational support structures including cultural support available during their graduate year.

Eastern Health is working closely with funded health services to attract and recruit Aboriginal applicants for the Graduate Nursing & Midwifery programs. Four applications have been received for 2017 programs.

3.7 Casual and Volunteering Opportunities

Entry level positions enable a pathway for Aboriginal applicants who do not hold formal qualifications to join the health service and commence a formal career pathway.

Aboriginal people will be encouraged through information and support provided, to consider casual and volunteer positions available for different services within Eastern Health. These entry level positions have been successful in increasing understanding of the way health services operate and improving employees' confidence when applying for regular employment in large healthcare services.

3.8 Cultural Resources to assist with Employment of Aboriginal People

Specific recruitment tips and fact sheets will be developed to increase the understanding of Eastern Health managers regarding specific considerations when attracting Aboriginal people to employment opportunities. This will help increase their cultural competence.

3.9 Leadership Development

Information will be made available to existing Aboriginal employees about relevant leadership development programs within Eastern Health and/or any external opportunities to pursue their career aspirations. Interested Aboriginal employees will also be encouraged to take up on-the-job leadership development such as chairing meetings or running professional development sessions. Wherever possible, opportunities for project work and specific short-term secondments designed to increase knowledge and understanding of other areas within Eastern Health will be identified and Aboriginal employees will be encouraged to participate for developing their leadership capabilities.

3.10 Aboriginal Scholarship Program for Tertiary Studies

Eastern Health will investigate how best to provide scholarships to Aboriginal students studying health-related subjects in universities. These scholarships could be cash or in kind through the possibility of placements in their area of study within an Eastern Health clinical or other programs.

3.11 Participation in Careers Expos

Where possible, Eastern Health's recruitment team, in consultation with the Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator, will attend careers expos at local schools and universities to connect with local community and improve Aboriginal students understanding of various health professions and career opportunities, with the aim of increasing their interest in a health-related career.

Focus area 4: Induction, Development and Retention

4.1 Induction and Skill Development

Many new Aboriginal employees face significant work-life balance challenges due to family and community responsibilities that are unique to their culture. Aboriginal employees will be provided with professional support, especially at the beginning of their health career, or when re-joining the workforce. They may also benefit from an extended orientation program to ensure they acquire the knowledge and skills to undertake their new role effectively and safely. A thorough induction process will be provided that will assist in building a two-way relationship between Eastern Health and the Aboriginal employee and their community.

4.2 Buddy Arrangement

Traineeships that provide a structured support program (including supervision and cultural support) and offer the trainee ready access to a “Buddy”, who supports their smooth assimilation into Eastern Health, have the best prospect of success. Mentoring arrangements through internal and external partnerships will also be considered for provision of ongoing cultural support, as required.

4.3 Aboriginal Staff Network and Development Days

Aboriginal staff will be encouraged to participate in development planning activity at the Aboriginal staff network and development days which are held twice a year. These days have been held since 2015 and offer staff a paid work day to network with other Aboriginal staff in a culturally safe and appropriate environment. The days have a particular focus and previous events have focused on health service updates, career progression and development, cultural training and appreciation. The days also include acknowledging, sharing and celebrating the successes and achievements of Aboriginal employees. The staff involved report that they feel supported and have commented that these activities ensure the organisation’s goal of becoming an employer of choice for Aboriginal people is achieved.

Aboriginal employees will be supported to attend the State network development days and events organised by the partner providers.

4.4 Focused Development

All Eastern Health staff including Aboriginal employees are required to have goals and accountabilities that support the organisation’s strategic directions. Over and above feedback provided regularly on performance and development, employees participate in annual performance feedback and development discussions with their manager. Work plans and learning plans that detail the operational activities required to successfully complete their work and the need for capability development are established at these review sessions. Learning and development identified as required by the Aboriginal employees in common could be considered for inclusion in their bi-annual network and development days.

4.5 Mentoring

Eastern Health intends to offer increased support for its Aboriginal workforce by introducing mentoring support for them. Mentoring will provide opportunities for experienced staff wishing to support new or more junior staff members, or alternatively, staff members who may be able to benefit from acquiring mentoring skills.

Consideration will also be given to involving community Elders as mentors to support Aboriginal employees. Matching of mentors and mentees will examine factors such as geography, career stage, service and occupational group. Mentees will be asked to explain what they are seeking in a mentor and what they hope to gain from the experience. Similarly, mentors will be asked to explain what they can offer mentees and what they will gain from the experience. These factors will assist in establishing suitable and effective mentor/mentee relationships.

4.6 Staff News

Aboriginal staff stories and their work will be acknowledged and publicised to increase their profiles. Regular publicity of such success stories will assist Eastern Health employees to better understand the importance of their contributions across the health service. Such staff news will become part of the “*Connect with Respect*” newsletter which is about to be launched at Eastern Health for internal and external stakeholders as part of its community engagement. It will include regular updates on the Plan’s progress and report Aboriginal news and events at Eastern Health and in the community, fostering connection to the Aboriginal community.

4.7 Career Guidance

Career development opportunities improve retention rates for Aboriginal employees. Performance review discussions and support from managers will identify the development needs and career aspirations of Aboriginal employees. Managers of Aboriginal employees will be supported to enhance their skills and perform their roles in a culturally respectful manner.

Eastern Health will continue to support existing Aboriginal employees by seeking to understand their career aspirations and facilitating their learning and growth through career counselling and guidance. Assistance will be provided to map each employee’s career pathway.

Appropriate personal and professional development opportunities will be provided to equip Aboriginal employees with the skills and confidence they need to work in the area of their choice. Aboriginal employees will continue to be supported by their line managers while undertaking formal studies including tertiary qualifications in fields that link to their career development.

4.8 Accessing External Training Grants and Subsidies

Managers of Aboriginal employees will be responsible for engaging with Aboriginal employees to understand their training and development needs, and ascertain likely challenges or barriers to up-skilling and expanding their capabilities. External funding in the form of training grants and subsidies, including Koolin Balit Training Grants, will be explored by the Director, Organisational Development & Workforce Planning in consultation with the Aboriginal Employment Advisory Group to support their learning.

Focus Area 5: Workplace Culture

Successful implementation of the Plan will be assured by encouraging staff across the organisation to welcome Aboriginal people and support Aboriginal employment. This will occur by increasing staff understanding of cultural responsiveness and demonstrating culturally safe practices.

5.1 Aboriginal cultural awareness training

Eastern Health has developed an online Aboriginal cultural awareness training requirements for all employees that aims to ensure culturally competent staff are delivering culturally sensitive service to Aboriginal people, their families and communities. The content of this training will be reviewed in November 2016 including any assessment requirement, frequency and course completion expectations. The refreshed approach will then be implemented for course assignment in 2017.

Further face- to-face training will be valuable to disseminate cultural information and cement the learning. The Closing the Health Gap Advisory Committee will provide advice on how best to meet this training need. Eastern Health will consider provision of face-to-face training that incorporates both general cultural information and localised specific service delivery content. To deliver such training a provider will be engaged to deliver content in a “blended” method (i.e. co-facilitation with an internal resource). The Aboriginal Employment Advisory Group will have carriage of course co-ordination and logistics, optimising enrolments and content management based on feedback from Aboriginal employees. Such training will be monitored and evaluated as the rollout progresses.

5.2 Manager Support Training

A training program for managers will be developed to enhance managers’ skills in understanding and supporting Aboriginal employees to provide a culturally safe workplace. This is important to ensure Eastern Health provides a work environment that is free from harassment and discrimination and facilitates the provision of appropriate and safe clinical care.

5.3 Aboriginal Employment Intranet Page

Eastern Health will produce an Aboriginal employment-specific intranet page which will be linked to the Closing the Health Gap intranet page. The content will include categories linked to those detailed within this Plan. The page will also feature stories and narratives from Aboriginal staff and community members. Approved Aboriginal artwork and graphics will feature on the page to facilitate a warm and positive connection with the community, supporting the objective of Eastern Health being an employer of choice for Aboriginal people.

5.4 Cultural audits of work environment

Cultural audits will continue across all hospital facilities to ensure these are culturally welcoming, in particular the areas where Aboriginal employees work. The audit will examine factors including visibility of artworks, totems and/or iconography promoting access for Aboriginal people. Such artworks will enhance a sense of place for Aboriginal employees, while promoting a distinct character that reflects Aboriginal traditions and cultures.

5.5 Cultural Space/Garden

Eastern Health will continue to explore the production of artworks in partnership with local schools to create cultural spaces in its buildings and/or a garden with native plants. School students within the catchment area will be invited to produce relevant artworks that can be displayed prominently in facilities across Eastern Health for example, entrance halls, corridors and public spaces.

5.6 Acknowledgement of Country

Eastern Health will continue to ensure that acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the land is regularly undertaken at significant staff events and forums. Employees across the organisation will also be encouraged to adopt “Acknowledgement of Country” as part of their own smaller meetings. This can be done by a non-traditional owner or a non-indigenous person and helps to increase awareness among employees and enhance appreciation of Eastern Health’s commitment to Aboriginal people and their culture.

5.7 Cultural and Ceremonial Leave

On application, Cultural and Ceremonial Leave will continue to be granted to Aboriginal employees from their accrued annual or other leave, to enable them to attend Aboriginal community meetings and/or for ceremonial purposes.

Conclusion

The renewed *2016-19 Aboriginal Employment Plan* sets out Eastern Health's commitment to enhance employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people and will form part of Eastern Health's Closing the Health Gap priorities.

The key initiatives will be implemented across Eastern Health within its various clinical programs, departments and facilities. As undertaken for the *2012-15 Aboriginal Employment Plan*, Eastern Health will develop an evaluation strategy to ensure the Plan's implementation is regularly monitored and aligned to the overall objectives of the Closing the Health Gap strategy.

Thanks to the Contributors to the Plan:

- Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association
- Indigenous Prospects Training and Recruitment
- Consumer representative of Closing the Health Gap Committee
- Closing the Health Gap Committee members
- Aboriginal Employment Advisory Group members
- Aboriginal Health Team members
- Aboriginal Health Team Manager
- Senior Aboriginal Development Officer
- Aboriginal Employment Co-ordinator
- Aboriginal Liaison Officer
- Acting Chief Executive
- Eastern Health Executive Committee
- Associate Program Director, Ambulatory and Community Services
- Associate Program Director, Surgery
- Manager, Drugs & Alcohol Services
- Director, Communications
- Director, Organisational Development and Workforce Planning
- Organisational Development and Workforce Planning Team