

# CONNECT

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# with RESPECT

Artwork by Shakara Montalto, Gunditjmara

## FAMILY SPORTS DAY FUN



**BETTER TOGETHER:** It was all smiles at this year's Closing the Health Gap Family Sports Day.

**Eastern Health's Closing the Health Gap Family Sports Day was a great success, with the Community team taking out the football match and Eastern Health team winning the netball in a well spirited competition.**

Many families enjoyed the day taking the opportunity to learn, participate and explore Aboriginal culture through the activities including interactive information stands, native animal exhibit, art and craft. Our younger attendees, loved the chance to participate in the running races led by Olympian Kyle Vander-Kuyp. Some even tasted their first wallaby burger.

While it was a fun day out for all involved, the impact events like this has on the community is vital.


"Our sports day is part of our broader commitment to Closing the Health Gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-indigenous Australians," Jo Voce, Eastern Health's Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer said.

Eastern Health has a range of initiatives in place to help Close the Health Gap, and have been working towards improving health outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for a number of years.

Our focus has been on creating a welcoming and culturally appropriate environment, and engaging the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community actively in decision-making regarding initiatives to help Close the Health Gap. Eastern Health has also committed to the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan.

"We are proud of the progress we have made so far, and excited to continue this work to ultimately improve the health status of our Aboriginal community."

This wonderful day couldn't have been possible without the generosity of event sponsors including the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) through the Yarning Straight Out Program, Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA), Local Aboriginal Network (LAN), and Bupa.

Much-needed support was also provided by a range of government groups such as the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, Department of Education, Aboriginal Victoria and the Victoria Police. 

## a moment with SHANNON WIGHT



**FULLY DEDICATED:** Eastern Health's Shannon Wight has a sincere passion to Close the Health Gap.

I grew up in Gippsland with many Aboriginal families around me, with Morwell and Lake Bunga home to many of our Aboriginal communities. This upbringing permitted me not only to understand some of our cultural differences, but also learn that **the respect between us was, and always should be, the norm.**

My role at Eastern Health as the Executive Director of Acute and Aged Medicine, Specialty Medicine and Ambulatory Care, Pathology, Pharmacy, Patient Access and Allied Health (ASPPPA) is an absolute privilege. I am inspired every day when I walk into work to see and hear our people delivering extraordinary care to the members of our community who are so vulnerable.

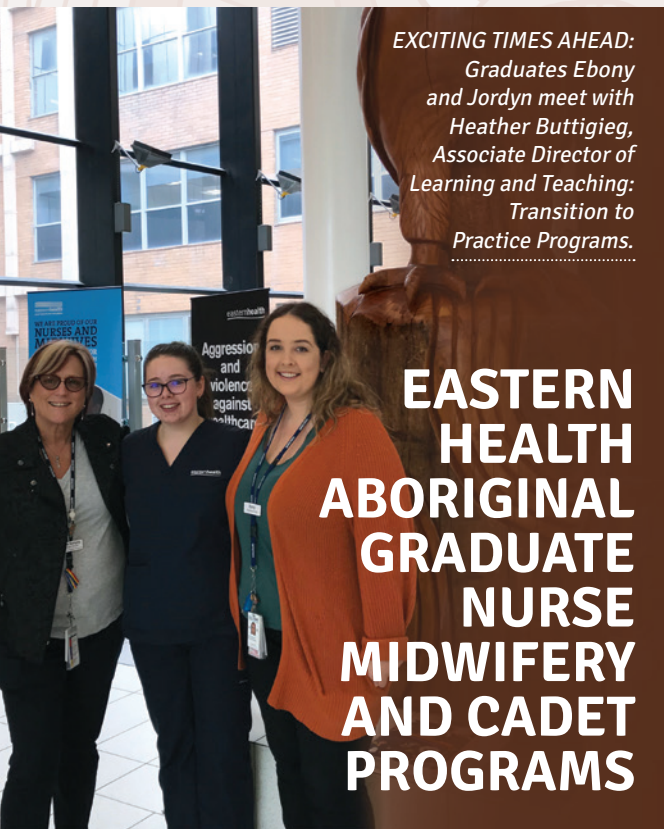
As the Executive responsible for partnering with the community and our staff to Close the Health Gap, I hold this accountability close and will ensure that we deliver on our commitment with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to get this right.

Closing the Health Gap is a commitment not just from me but everyone who works at Eastern Health, and our Closing the Health Gap Committee understands that in order to meet our responsibilities and to make a difference we must engage with the members of our Indigenous community. 



Eastern Health is committed to achieving equality in health status between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-indigenous Australians.

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**EXCITING TIMES AHEAD:**  
*Graduates Ebony and Jordyn meet with Heather Buttigieg, Associate Director of Learning and Teaching: Transition to Practice Programs.*

## EASTERN HEALTH ABORIGINAL GRADUATE NURSE MIDWIFERY AND CADET PROGRAMS

**This year Eastern Health initiated an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate Nursing and Midwifery Program (AGNMP) to further grow our Indigenous workforce, a commitment of our 'Closing the Health Gap' initiatives.**

At the commencement of the application process, this fantastic new program offers students guidance with everything from cover letters and CVs, to site tours and guaranteed interviews. In their graduate year, students will be provided with additional mentoring support and opportunities to collaborate with fellow Aboriginal staff.

Eastern Health has two Aboriginal graduates this year, Ebony Keenan and Jordyn Pearce. Ebony feels the new program has been a great pathway to begin her career in healthcare.

"The extra support will allow me to be involved in a social network that I wouldn't ordinarily have, and will open up a network of clinical supervision with other Aboriginal staff and students," Ebony said.

Another initiative Eastern Health has commenced this year is the Aboriginal Cadetship Program (ACP), where selected candidates or 'cadets' are funded for 40 shifts across the year to work within the clinical environment as Health Assistants in Nursing.

The ACP is open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying health professional courses in Victoria and this year. Four Bachelor of Nursing students have been successful in obtaining positions and will begin the program in the coming weeks. 🍷

### WARM WELCOME:

*A wonderful addition to the Eastern Health team, Marilyn has hit the ground running.*



## MEET MERILYN DUFF, EASTERN HEALTH'S NEW INTEGRATED ABORIGINAL SERVICES MANAGER



### Q How will your role help the community?

I will raise the profiles of our Aboriginal staff and highlight the great work of our Aboriginal Health Team. I will support cultural safety through community consultation and collaboration.

### Q What inspired you to start a career in healthcare?

My sister and niece work in the healthcare industry across a few different areas.

My mother inspired me to look out for less fortunate, vulnerable people. Often it's these people who need the most attention in healthcare, so the connection felt obvious.

### Q What experience and qualities do you have that will help you in your role?

Being a proud Aboriginal woman from Palawa Country in the Huon Valley of Tasmania, I understand the importance of strong connection to culture and the community. I have over 30 years' experience working in the community sector, the last 12 of which I have been working with

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In the past I have led mental health outreach teams, worked as a case manager, managed national Reconciliation Action Planning and led many different Aboriginal community projects. I am a skilled public speaker, trainer and facilitator.

I have travelled extensively and worked in many different Indigenous cultures throughout the world, and the knowledge I have gained from all of these experiences enables me to understand broad perspectives around Aboriginal culture, community, human rights and social justice issues. I look forward to being a strong leader and advocate for the Aboriginal Community within Eastern Health.

### Q What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Seeing better health outcomes within the community is definitely the most rewarding part. I enjoy seeing our staff in the health sector learn and develop their knowledge of cultural safety to help Close the Health Gap and understand Aboriginal health issues better. 🍷

## ABORIGINAL HEALTH TEAM

**Eastern Health's Aboriginal Health Team is a community-based service based in Healesville that is accessible to Aboriginal people and their families living in Eastern Health's catchment.**

It provides a range of services that are available on-site in Healesville and through home visits and outreach support. These include:

- 🍷 **Primary health care:** health checks, nursing support and general health information and education.
- 🍷 **Social and emotional wellbeing:** counselling services, school-based programs and education support.
- 🍷 **Case management and advocacy:** care planning, case management, referral and advocacy for other services.
- 🍷 **Home and community care:** domestic assistance, property maintenance and social events.

🍷 The Aboriginal Health Team is located at 377 Maroondah Highway, Healesville and is open Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm. Phone **5957 1100** or email [AHTIntake@easternhealth.org.au](mailto:AHTIntake@easternhealth.org.au)



Explore Aboriginal cultures, histories, ideas, opinions and Treaty in Victoria. Visit: [deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au](http://deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au)

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