

Health Directorate Reconciliation Action Plan 2012 – 2015



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Message by the Director-General



I acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, traditional custodians of the ACT and surrounding region and pay my respect to their elders both past and present. I also recognise the valuable contribution made by the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to the work of the Health Directorate, in particular, the development of our Reconciliation Action Plans.

Guidance by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and the members of the Health Directorate's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group have helped us to maintain focus and commitment to our Reconciliation journey that officially began in July 2010.

As a provider of healthcare and health services in the ACT and surrounding region, the Health Directorate is in a unique position to further strengthen relationships and make a positive contribution to closing the life expectancy gap that exists between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

I am extremely proud that in the past twelve months the Health Directorate has delivered on a number of actions of our previous plan and the key lessons learnt are now incorporated into meaningful actions for the future.

In endorsing this plan, I would also like to pay my respects to the Reynolds family in acknowledgement of the contribution the late Mr Michael (Mick) Reynolds (6 March 1948-14 April 2012) made to the work of the Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group.

Reconciliation and Closing the Gap is an ongoing journey for the Health Directorate and its many staff as we work towards making a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Brown'.

Dr Peggy Brown

**Director-General
Health Directorate
MB, BS (Hons) FRANZCP**

Our Vision for Reconciliation

'For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the ACT and region to enjoy a quality of life, life expectancy and health status equal to all Canberrans'.

To help achieve this we will continue to:

- Acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people;
- Acknowledge the gap in life expectancy that exists between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians and contribute to Closing the Gap;
- Acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'health' is recognised by communities, and in particular, by community controlled health services as the physical well being of an individual and the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community;
- Meet our commitment to improving the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT and surrounding region;
- Increase awareness within the Health Directorate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their histories, cultures, customs and traditions;
- Acknowledge the diversity and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly within the ACT and surrounding region;
- Recognise and contribute to annual events and celebrations of significance that are important to the cultural and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- Enhance our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, leaders and peoples, through a journey of Reconciliation that ensures mutual benefits and efforts are shared and acknowledged;
- Recognise the outstanding contribution of staff and community health service delivery organisations to Reconciliation and Closing the Gap; and
- Understand the importance creating a future means to the United Ngunnawal Elders Council in its journey of healing and how this relates to Our Vision for Reconciliation.

'We need to come together to create our future – one in which everyone has a place where they can feel proud, have dignity, and feel they belong' (United Ngunnawal Elders Charter 2003).

Our Business

The Health Directorate has the responsibility to deliver the best possible healthcare and health-related services in Australia, through a range of services and partnerships.

The Health Directorate delivers public sector health services to both ACT residents and residents in the New South Wales surrounding region. Approximately 1.2% of the total ACT population are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, with an additional 3,000 (approximately) living in the surrounding region.

Our Corporate Vision, 'Your health our priority' and the organisation's core values of: 'Care, Excellence, Collaboration and Integrity' are the foundation from which our Reconciliation Action Plans are developed.

Our organisation employs in excess of 5,000 staff who have committed to our core values and a code of behaviour that includes honesty, respect, confidentiality, professionalism and fairness. Increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the health workforce is a longer term commitment within our Reconciliation Action Plans.

Our business is focused on programs that will extend life and diminish health risks for the entire community. We achieve this by the provision of a broad range of health services including: primary care; teaching and learning for a healthy life; illness prevention in the community; and acute care services in our hospitals.

Our health system is modern, well equipped, aware and responsive to the changing healthcare environment.

Our commitment to the combined effort to close the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health is captured in the range of initiatives that are being implemented through two Council of Australian Government's National Partnership Agreements: 'Closing the Gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Outcomes' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Development'.

Our commitment to improve health care delivery and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of the ACT and surrounding region is reflected in our vision for Reconciliation.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan Journey

On 1 July 2010 during National Aborigines and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week the Health Directorate committed to develop its Reconciliation Action Plan 2011–2012. Our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group are staff from the clinical and administrative portfolios, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients of our hospital systems. Representative bodies such as the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, United Ngunnawal Elders Council, ACT Torres Strait Islander Corporation and Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service are also members of the Working Group. In 2011, the Health Directorate's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Coordination Group, chaired by the Director-General with Executive Director membership, was re established to provide high level advice, support and guidance to the Working Group.

Responsibility for the implementation of the actions of our Reconciliation Action Plan 2011-2012 involved five separate Branch's of the Health Directorate. The respective Branch's assigned a dedicated staff member to report quarterly on implementing the actions. A Reconciliation Action Plan Coordinator provided administrative support to the Working Group and coordinated progress within the Health Directorate.

Key achievements of our Reconciliation Action Plan 2011–2012 include:

- Inviting key representative bodies, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, United Ngunnawal Elders Council, ACT Torres Strait Islanders Corporation and Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service to the membership of the Working Group;
- Establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Support Network;
- Developing a guide for staff on engaging and consulting with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the ACT;

- Delivering a Cultural Awareness and Skills Development Program to clinical and clinical support staff that places emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and the patient experience;
- Displaying 'Welcome to Country' plaques with a message from the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, and paintings by Ngunnawal artists in the Reception foyer at the Canberra Hospital; and
- Involving the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the opening of the new Adult Mental Health Unit, including, a Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremonies as well as an ongoing display of a Ngunnawal Welcome to Country plaque and artwork in the new facility.

Several lessons were learnt in the first year of our Reconciliation journey, including the need to allow sufficient time to fully implement actions and recognising the initiative, commitment and support of staff as well as community health service delivery organisations to Reconciliation and their contribution to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Committing to a new three year Reconciliation Action Plan 2012–2015 involved promoting a draft of the plan to all Health Directorate staff through a Director-General's News Bulletin inviting comment and ideas.

All Executive Directors were invited to contribute comments and to encourage an awareness and understanding of the intentions of the draft plan within their respective Branch's. Over 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations located in the ACT and surrounding region were invited to provide comment on the draft plan and to participate in a community presentation workshop on 18 May 2012 at Boomanulla Oval, Narrabundah. All comments received on the draft plan have been extremely valuable and important to our recommitment and focus over the next three years.

Relationships

The Health Directorate's core business is delivering healthcare and health related services in the ACT and surrounding region. Strengthening our relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will allow for better collaboration and understanding that can result in improving our ability to provide appropriate and necessary healthcare.

FOCUS AREA: Improved communication and collaboration.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1 The Health Directorate implements the Reconciliation Action Plan and ensures that it is refreshed each year.	Director-General	Review annually in July	The Plan is implemented and refreshed and a report to Reconciliation Australia is completed annually.
2 The Health Directorate supports and encourages the participation of staff and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan.	All Executive Directors	Review annually in July	<p>Actions of the Plan are supported, monitored and guided by the Working Group and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Coordination Group. A RAP Coordinator is identified.</p> <p>Membership of the Working Group is reviewed annually to allow an opportunity for all staff to participate and make a contribution. Membership to include community members and representative bodies: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, United Ngunnawal Elders Council, ACT Torres Strait Islanders Corporation, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Support Network.</p> <p>Executive Directors to raise awareness and encourage staff support and participation in the Plan.</p>
3 The Health Directorate develops and circulates an eNewsletter that reports on the progress of actions in the Reconciliation Action Plan.	Director, Communications and Marketing	Biannually in June and December	<p>Two eNewsletters are developed each year and circulated to all staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks (representative bodies and organisations) and all ACT Government Directorates.</p> <p>The eNewsletter is uploaded onto the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Portal.</p>
4 The Health Directorate extends the membership of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Support Network to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples working in the ACT health workforce.	Executive Director, Policy and Government Relations Executive Director, People, Strategy and Services	Review annually in July	<p>The Network meets regularly to provide support to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.</p> <p>The Network is invited to membership of the Working Group and involved in providing advice on actions relating to employment and retention plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and trainees.</p>
5 The Health Directorate introduces Reconciliation Recognition and NAIDOC awards that recognise outstanding initiative and commitment to Reconciliation and achieving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Executive Director, Policy and Government Relations	Review annually and in July 2015	Health Directorate staff including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and community health service delivery organisations who have shown significant commitment to Reconciliation and Closing the Gap are recognised through the presentation of an annual Reconciliation award and NAIDOC award.

Respect

The Health Directorate values and respects the traditional custodians of the land the Ngunnawal people, their culture and history and recognises the valuable contribution the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can make to achieve better health outcomes.

FOCUS AREA: To create a culturally aware and sensitive healthcare environment that contributes to closing the unacceptable gaps.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1 The Health Directorate develops protocols and guidelines to ensure that relevant Health Directorate events appropriately include: an acknowledgement of traditional custodians; and/or 'Welcome to Country' speech; and/or Aboriginal 'Smoking Ceremony'.	Director, Communications and Marketing	Review annually in July	The Protocol Policy and guideline underpins the ACT Government Welcome to Country protocols and is used in appropriate ways. A meaningful response to a Ngunnawal Elder's 'Welcome to Country' is provided. The policy is posted on the Health Directorate Policy and Plans Register. The policy is referenced in cultural awareness training for all staff.
2 The Health Directorate delivers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training to all staff including an annual face to face forum for Senior Executive staff.	Executive Director, Policy and Government Relations Executive Director, People, Strategy and Services	Review annually in July	Monitoring systems are in place to capture the number of training sessions, the number of staff completing training, the number of Senior Executive forums held and the number of Senior Executive in attendance. Clinical and clinical support staff are provided with training in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and the patient experience. Cultural awareness training is offered to all staff through Capabiliti and is included in staff ELAPS at all levels.
3 The Health Directorate displays the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag with the Australian flag at key Health Directorate and healthcare sites.	Executive Director, Business and Infrastructure	Review annually in July	Options to display the flags at key buildings are explored further and an appropriate explanation of symbols and meanings are provided. The flags are flown or displayed at key Health Directorate and healthcare sites during significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events such as Reconciliation Week, Mabo Day and NAIDOC Week.
4 The Health Directorate distributes effective social marketing and health promotion resources that are culturally sensitive and appropriate for use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.	Director, Communications and Marketing Director, Health Promotion	July 2015	All areas to identify and implement this action in the development of health promotion resources in consultation with Health Promotion. Health Promotion resources include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, adults and Elders. All areas make use of the guide for staff on engaging and consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the ACT which is located on the Health Directorate Policy and Plans Register.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
<p>5 The Health Directorate considers naming rooms in the new Canberra Hospital and Health Services buildings with appropriate local Aboriginal language names including ways to give recognition to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<p>Executive Director, Business and Infrastructure Deputy Director-General Canberra Hospital and Health Services</p>	<p>July 2015</p>	<p>An agreed specification is developed for the naming of rooms. The Chair of the Artworks committee has responsibility for naming. An appropriate explanation of the language names to be displayed in the relevant rooms. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have made a significant contribution to the local area are recognised.</p>
<p>6 The Health Directorate includes a 'Welcoming Entrance' in newly established and appropriate existing Health Directorate buildings which includes Ngunnawal and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork.</p>	<p>Executive Director, Business and Infrastructure</p>	<p>July 2015</p>	<p>An agreed specification of allocated and dedicated spaces. The Chair of the Artworks committee has responsibility for artwork. Welcoming Entrances are established with an appropriate explanation and acknowledgement of Ngunnawal Country and artwork is displayed.</p>
<p>7 The Health Directorate contributes to and participates in key events and significant dates on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Calendar.</p>	<p>Executive Director, Policy and Government Relations Director, Communications and Marketing</p>	<p>Review annually in July</p>	<p>A Calendar of Events that includes: National Apology Day, National Close the Gap Day, National Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week, Mabo Day, Coming of the Light and NAIDOC Week is promoted throughout the Health Directorate. All staff are encouraged to participate in events through notification in the Director-General's News Bulletin and other promotional opportunities. Events that develop and strengthen working partnerships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are identified.</p>

Opportunities

The Health Directorate recognises the mutual benefit to all if we enhance our investment and commitment to Closing the Gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by developing programs and strategies that recruit, employ and develop skills in the health workforce.

FOCUS AREA: Employment, recruitment and development.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1 The Health Directorate commits to increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in the Health Directorate and public health sector in the ACT.	Executive Director, People Strategy and Services	Review annually in July	Work towards increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the Health Directorate and public health sector to meet the Council of Australian Government's target of 2.06% of the health workforce and maintain relevant data to inform future development. Work with the Community Services Directorate to provide opportunities for the placement of ACT Public Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees. Involve members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Support Network in staff selection panels where there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants.
2 The Health Directorate is promoted as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by marketing to secondary school students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university programs, Canberra Institute of Technology and community events.	Executive Director, People Strategy and Services	Review annually in July	Promotional material is developed that encourages applicants for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Enrolled Nursing Scholarships and Medical Scholarship for distribution to secondary schools, Canberra Institute of Technology and the universities. The Inclusions Officer works with the ACT Education and Training Directorate's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Student Education to identify and encourage work experience and work placement opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students.
3 The Health Directorate provide specific programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees that support professional development, education and training opportunities in the health care sector.	Executive Director, People Strategy and Services	Review annually in July	The Inclusions Officer works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to assist in identifying clear career pathways and appropriate mentors.
4 The Health Directorate's Service Funding Agreements and Grant Applications include requirement for community initiatives to contribute to Reconciliation and improving local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes.	Executive Director, Population Health	July 2015	Service funding and grants processes are reviewed to reflect a requirement in Funding Agreements and Grant Applications for initiatives that contribute to Reconciliation and Closing the Gap. Funding recipients that contribute to Reconciliation and improving the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are considered for the Reconciliation Recognition and NAIDOC awards.

Tracking Progress and Reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
<p>1 The Health Directorate to report annually on the progress of the Reconciliation Action Plan.</p>	Director-General	Annually in July	<p>The Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group develops an annual report with support and guidance from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Coordination Group.</p> <p>The Annual Report is submitted to and published on the Reconciliation Australia website.</p>
<p>2 The Health Directorate refreshes the Reconciliation Action Plan.</p>	Director-General	July 2015	<p>The Plan is refreshed with input from external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.</p> <p>The Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group oversees the refresh of the Plan with support from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Coordination Group.</p> <p>The refreshed Plan is endorsed by Reconciliation Australian and the Health Directorate and published on respective websites.</p>

