

# ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

South West  
Healthcare

.....  
2014-2019







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## CEO MESSAGE

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South West Healthcare is firmly committed to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For many years we have not only strived to provide better services to Aboriginal people, but also to make our environment more culturally appropriate. Understanding Aboriginal culture, spiritual beliefs and physical health needs is pivotal to improving outcomes and there is no better way for this to occur than to have a strong Aboriginal presence in our workforce. Not only does this result in Aboriginal patients feeling more comfortable and being understood, it also provides a broader understanding of the needs of the Aboriginal community for non-Aboriginal staff.

It is our hope that one day we will have Aboriginal doctors, allied health, nursing and other professionals working throughout our wards, departments and programs. We have started to assist in this journey by creating a cadetship for Bachelor qualifications, with our first Nurse Cadet due to qualify mid-2014.

In 2006 SWH established the Aboriginal Programs unit. The aim of this unit is to develop a unified approach to meeting the needs of Aboriginal people by delivering targeted health services and health promotion initiatives. The unit has developed since this time to lead local initiatives in conjunction with local Aboriginal organisations including cultural awareness programs and strategies within SWH.

It is our aim that in the future Aboriginal people will achieve the same health status as non-Aboriginal people. Until this occurs SWH will continue to strive and develop initiatives to 'close the gap'. The development and implementation of this Strategy is pivotal to SWH increasing its Aboriginal workforce. We look forward to working with all our stakeholders to achieve its objectives.

**John Krygger**  
CEO  
South West Healthcare





# 1. INTRODUCTION

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As the major employer in Warrnambool, South West Healthcare is committed to providing a safe and diverse workplace.

South West Healthcare's *Aboriginal Employment Strategy* aims to develop and deliver increased employment opportunities for Aboriginal people across SWH services. The Strategy also acknowledges that through the provision of a culturally safe and respectful workplace, sustainable employment outcomes for Aboriginal people can be achieved. An increased Aboriginal workforce will also contribute towards improving the delivery of culturally responsive health care for the local Aboriginal community.

Reflecting the aims of the Department of Health's *Aboriginal Employment Strategy*, and SWH's *Human Resources/People & Culture Strategic Plan (2012-2015)* the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy* aims to:

- Recognise the skill, expertise and knowledge Aboriginal people can bring to the workplace.
- Be responsive to our workforce needs.
- Be responsive to the local Aboriginal community's needs.

The key objectives of this strategy are an increased Aboriginal workforce; an increased knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal culture across the organisation; and improved relationships with external Aboriginal organisations and the local Aboriginal community. This Strategy provides clear and measurable actions to address these objectives.

While the Strategy focuses predominantly on creating direct employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, SWH also recognises the ever increasing potential to engage with Aboriginal owned and operated businesses. Through encouraging participation in the competitive tendering process, Aboriginal businesses can vie and be considered for a range of service and product delivery opportunities. South West Healthcare also recognises that the commercial engagement of Aboriginal business can potentially lead to increased employment opportunities for Aboriginal people within those businesses.

This Strategy also contributes to the broader goals of Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Australian Government's Closing the Gap initiatives, in particular "to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade". Through increased employment and economic development opportunities Aboriginal people, families and communities will experience improved social and economic outcomes.

In implementing actions under the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy*, SWH is committed to an approach founded on the following principles:

- Provide an environment where Aboriginal employees are supported and encouraged to achieve their full potential.
- Celebrate the knowledge, skills and history of Aboriginal peoples and recognise the cultural diversity this knowledge brings to the workplace.
- Provide a workplace where cultural, social and spiritual systems practiced by Aboriginal people are respected.

South West Healthcare will adhere to these guiding principles by:

- Supporting the aims of the Strategy.
- Ensuring accountability for the Strategy's outcomes.
- Ensuring stakeholder ownership of the Strategy.
- Ensuring an ongoing commitment to the Strategy from senior management.
- Ensuring all SWH workplaces are culturally safe spaces for Aboriginal people.
- Ensuring a continued effort in developing relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations.

## 1.1 THE LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

South West Healthcare services the local government areas of Warrnambool City and the Shires of Corangamite, Glenelg, Moyne and Southern Grampians. The main Aboriginal group in the region is the Gunditjmara people. However historical factors such as forced relocation of Aboriginal communities during European settlement has seen the area become home to many groups of Aboriginal people.

At the 2011 Census the Australian Bureau of Statistics measured a total of 1,398 Aboriginal people living in the south-west region of Victoria or 1.43 percent of the total population (100,295) of the region.

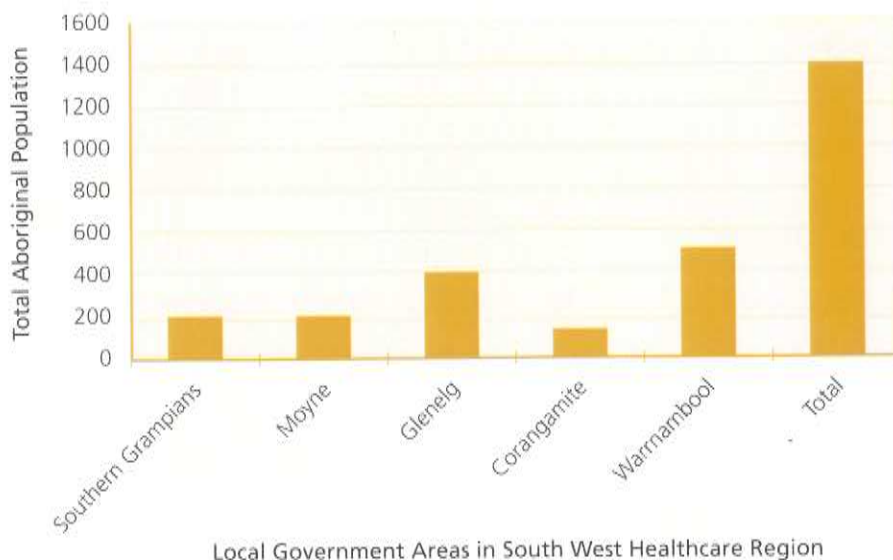
In Warrnambool, the main population centre in the region, the number of Aboriginal people in the labour force, as at the 2011 Census, was 160, with 39 reporting they were unemployed or 24.3 percent of the local Aboriginal labour force. Given the youthful age profile of the Aboriginal community, with the median age of Aboriginal people in Warrnambool being 18 (the non-Aboriginal median age is 38 years)<sup>1</sup>, this figure is likely to increase in coming years.



<sup>1</sup> ABS 2011 Census



CHART 1: ABORIGINAL POPULATIONS IN SOUTH WEST HEALTHCARE REGIONS



The youthful age profile of local Aboriginal communities provides an opportunity for SWH and the community to develop an ongoing dialogue which seeks to provide training and employment opportunities for young Aboriginal people interested in a career in the health sector.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

A series of consultations were undertaken to collect feedback on the development and implementation of the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy*.

Consultations were undertaken with:

South West Healthcare Staff

- Chief Executive Officer.
- Director of Primary and Community Services.
- Aboriginal Programs Manager.
- Aboriginal Liaison Officer.
- Indigenous Nursing Cadet.
- Cultural Diversity Committee.

Aboriginal Community

- CEO, Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative.
- Program Manager Kirrae Health Service.
- CEO, Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Cooperative.
- Members of the Framlingham community.

Other External Stakeholders

- Indigenous Customer Service Officer, Centrelink.
- Job Services Australia in Warrnambool.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

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The following objectives reflect the outcomes of the consultation analysis. Each objective is accompanied by a set of strategies which outline how the objective will be achieved. Following this section is the AES Action Plan, which provided detailed actions and areas of responsibility for each objective and strategy.

### OBJECTIVE 1

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**ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE LOCAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS OF THE ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY.**

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#### STRATEGIES:

- Identify key stakeholders of the strategy.
- Establish Aboriginal Consumer Committee (ACC) and ensure that the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy* and its progress is an ongoing agenda item of this committee;
  - ACC to develop Terms of Reference for the committee.
- Recognise and participate in cultural events such as NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week.
- Promote procurement opportunities to Aboriginal owned and operated businesses.

### OBJECTIVE 2

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**ESTABLISH INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS.**

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#### STRATEGIES:

- Promote and increase awareness of SWH's *Aboriginal Employment Strategy* to community and other stakeholders.
- Develop opportunities for Aboriginal employees to speak with Aboriginal students and community groups about their experiences working for SWH.
- Develop relationships with education and training providers i.e. local TAFE and Registered Training Organisations.
- Promote careers in health professions through encouraging students to consider relevant degree courses.
- Continuation of support for Aboriginal students participating in SWH's Aboriginal Cadetship and/or Scholarship programs. Subject to funding.



## OBJECTIVE 3

### PROMOTE AND INCREASE ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.

#### STRATEGIES:

- Aboriginal Programs Manager to be a point of contact for Aboriginal people seeking employment with SWH where appropriate.
- Ensure that human resources, recruitment managers and line managers are aware of the *Aboriginal Employment Strategy*:
  - Develop a communications strategy that raises awareness of the Strategy internally;
  - Identify a dedicated human resources contact officer for all Aboriginal employment enquiries;
  - Ensure the human resources contact officer has cultural proficiency to manage enquires or Aboriginal people.
- Mainstream employment opportunities be promoted to Aboriginal jobseekers.
- Identified positions to be promoted in relevant Aboriginal media i.e. Koori Mail, National Indigenous Times, relevant LinkedIn pages.
- Aboriginal Programs manager to be provided with job specification for all Identified positions, for dissemination through network.
- Engage specialist employment agencies to identify suitable Aboriginal candidates for employment opportunities.
- Ensure all staff involved in recruitment programs, including selection panel members, have undertaken cultural education program;
  - Ensure selection panels include an Aboriginal representative where the position is for an Identified position, or other relevant positions.

## OBJECTIVE 4

### INCREASE RETENTION OF ABORIGINAL EMPLOYEES.

#### STRATEGIES:

- Provide professional mentoring to Aboriginal employees to provide career and workplace support.
- Support the career development of Aboriginal employees by identifying training and learning needs and opportunities.
- Explore flexible workplace arrangements to support cultural and community commitments by developing a cultural and ceremonial leave policy.
- Develop and undertake Aboriginal employee survey annually to obtain data on workplace experiences, needs and recommendations.
- Hold Aboriginal Employees Forum annually with the aim to improve workplace experience, explore issues affecting Aboriginal employees, challenge Aboriginal employees to contribute ideas and strategies to mitigate any retention risks and to discuss ways in which Aboriginal employees can network and support each other.

## OBJECTIVE 5

ENSURE SWH IS A CULTURALLY SAFE PLACE FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TO WORK AND VISIT.

### STRATEGIES:

- Develop a cultural education plan to build awareness of Aboriginal culture.
- Provide coaching and mentoring to managers of Aboriginal employees to build their cultural competency skills.
- Display Aboriginal flag and local Aboriginal artwork in public areas.
- Develop Statement of Intent and display in public areas.

## OBJECTIVE 6

ENSURE EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY.

### STRATEGIES:

- Develop mechanisms for reporting and monitoring Aboriginal employment outcomes;
  - Identify current number of Aboriginal employees.
  - Develop and undertake Aboriginal employee survey annually to obtain data on workplace experiences, needs and recommendations (as above in Objective 4).
- Develop *Aboriginal Employment Strategy Action Plan* identifying;
  - Key activities
  - Required resources
  - Key personnel and related responsibilities
  - Success indicators
  - Benchmark data
  - Data sources
- Prepare annual report on Aboriginal Employment Strategy outcomes for SWH Board and management and other key stakeholders.









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