

The Font



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE

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by
You*

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Cultural care and support at St V's



Lynette Briggs is a proud Yorta-Yorta woman who has been visiting St Vincent's as a patient for many years. Sitting in her room on 9E, Lynette gets a little teary talking about the exceptional care she receives at St Vincent's.

'My family has been coming to St Vincent's for the past 70 years and I've seen the health of our people improve here.' Lynette says. 'From the cooks to the cleaners, the doctors and especially the nurses, everyone goes above and beyond the call of duty.'

'I've always received the best of care from everyone... and they don't discriminate at this hospital, whether you're black, white or brindle. They treat everyone, and every culture, with the utmost dignity, respect and love.'

However Lynette saves her greatest praise for Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers (AHLO) Fay Halatanu. AHLOs have a deep understanding of community and cultural needs and ensure that a patient's social and emotional wellbeing is considered, in addition to their physical wellbeing.

'Since AHLOs have been employed here, they have bridged the gap a lot as far as our community is concerned,' Lynette says. 'Before that, we were too afraid to tell doctors what was wrong with us. I have found that since the girls such as Fay have been working here, they have really helped Aboriginal people here.'

Fay has been providing support to aboriginal patients for three years, but still finds it hard to define her job, such is the breadth of her role.

'We just do whatever we can do to help improve the health outcome of a patient and provide patients that bit of emotional and cultural support,' Fay says. 'The AHLOs are a presence that can support and relate to patients.'

'We can refer and advocate on behalf of patients when we need to, as well as link them into services out in the community.'

Fay believes that St Vincent's is doing a lot to help improve Aboriginal patient experience and care.

'People feel safe here. Patients walk in and the first thing they see is Aboriginal artwork on the walls and if they walk around they see more signs of culture,' Fay says.

Lynette agrees and has found her experience to be rewarding and uplifting.

'I've always received the best of care from everyone... and they don't discriminate at this hospital, whether you're black, white or brindle. They treat everyone, and every culture, with the utmost dignity, respect and love.'

St Vincent's Aboriginal Health Unit



Sonya Parson, Toni Mason and Fay Halatanu, part of the Aboriginal Health Unit at St Vincent's.

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne has a long and proud history of caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. We established the first program to employ Aboriginal staff to liaise with our aboriginal patients, ensuring they felt culturally supported while they were here.

Toni Mason, the Manager of the Aboriginal Health Unit at St Vincent's says we have consciously employed Aboriginal artists, and prominently displayed their works, so that patients are aware of our commitment.

"Positioned as we are in Fitzroy, where many social and political Aboriginal and Torres Strait organisations were founded, St Vincent's has actively sought to identify with Aboriginal patients in the community, who experience poorer health overall than other Australians.

The Aboriginal Health Unit positions St Vincent's as a leader in Aboriginal healthcare and research in a hospital setting, bringing together the Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer (AHLO) program, and quality improvement, cultural awareness, training, and cadetships.

Toni Mason, says the unit builds on the successes that have contributed to a better experience and outcome for Aboriginal patients, in particular the AHLO program, which was founded in 1982.

'Our Liaison Officers work with patients by providing cultural safety while they are here having treatment,' Toni says. 'We don't just look at a patient's physical health – we also address their social and emotional wellbeing as well.'

Past policies where Aboriginal people were treated differently or even refused hospital treatment have made many in the Aboriginal community untrusting of health services, but our Liaison Officers help to patients overcome the barriers that could prevent them from seeking out and completing treatment.

'Aboriginal people tend to be a lot more cautious about what information they will give to medical staff,' Toni says. 'Our AHLOs often find that after a doctor has left the room, patients will tell them something, and then the AHLOs will say "it's ok, you can tell that information to the doctor.'"

'It's just having that presence that makes people feel more calm and welcome. We understand social circumstances in the community, so we will work with that patient to ensure a better health outcome.'

'The AHLOs don't work in isolation but very much alongside the treating team. It increases understanding and creates an environment where Aboriginal health is everyone's business, which has laid the foundations for new projects and research in cardiac and cancer care.'

'Everyone knows that they can feel trusted. Not to say they automatically trust everyone, they may still feel a bit sceptical, but if a family member or friend has a good experience here, that can speak volumes in the community.'

'Everyone knows that they can feel trusted... If a family member or friend has a good experience here, that can speak volumes in the community.'

Building trust among complex patients

In 2015, almost two per cent of patients arriving at our Emergency Department (ED) were Aboriginal, and at least one-hundred of these visited the ED more than ten times that year.

Aboriginal Health Care Coordinator, Kendra Keleher, says the hospital identified an opportunity to work with this client group with the intention of building trust, addressing health and psychosocial needs through a community outreach model.

'We targeted these frequent ED patients with complex chronic health issues which also included mental health, drug and alcohol dependence and homelessness,' Kendra says.

Kendra Keleher says this focus has paid off. 'The growth in trust has led to an increase in the number of Aboriginal patients successfully engaging with and completing their episodes of care.'

The Aboriginal Health Care Coordinator (AHCC) role was made possible thanks to 'Koolin Balit Aboriginal health strategy' funding from the Victorian government. In the first 12 months of the AHCC role the average length of Health Independence Program (HIP) episodes for Aboriginal clients improved 48% from 104 to 154 days.

'Before my role was established, clients didn't have anyone who was Aboriginal within HIP, and it created barriers in terms of engaging with them and building rapport,' Kendra says.

'The people in this group feel more comfortable having someone of their own background,' Kendra says. 'Patients feel like another Aboriginal person can understand them better and won't judge them on their complex history or current family situation.'

'We are dealing with a complex group, not just because they are Aboriginal, but because they have other chronic health issues – there is often a lot more going on behind the scenes. There's not going to be one quick fix, it's a matter of allowing that time to understand the complexity of what is going on.'

After a two year government funded pilot position, the role is now permanently embedded into HIP. Kendra has recently begun in a non-Aboriginal identified role within the HIP team, and a new Aboriginal Health care Coordinator will soon be appointed to join Kendra and the team.

Consumer feedback from Aboriginal clients has demonstrated that this creative and individual approach has dramatically improved health and welfare outcomes and perceptions for Aboriginal clients.

'Without Kendra, I would not have had my procedure.'

A young mother with dependent children, in urgent need of a medical procedure

'I was at breaking point when Kendra arrived, on the verge of a breakdown. It was good to know another Aboriginal woman to turn to, not just for health but other things. I was angry at services at the time... She took the pressure off the appointments, organising and helped me understand the medical side. She breaks down the language used.'

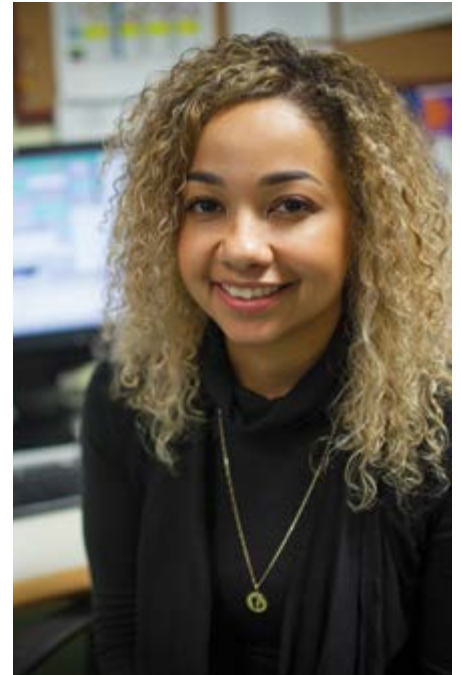
A young and unwell client, now studying at University

'My view on hospitals has always been tainted with bad experiences. Kendra gave me some confidence in dealing with a hospital service again.'

A client from the country

'I am now in a better place. I am seeing family now again, taking my tablets... Without Kendra... I would be living on the streets, cold with a blanket... I would have to beg and possibly even be dead.'

A homeless, elderly man who frequently attended the SVHM ED



44
clients



403
interventions



52%
female clients

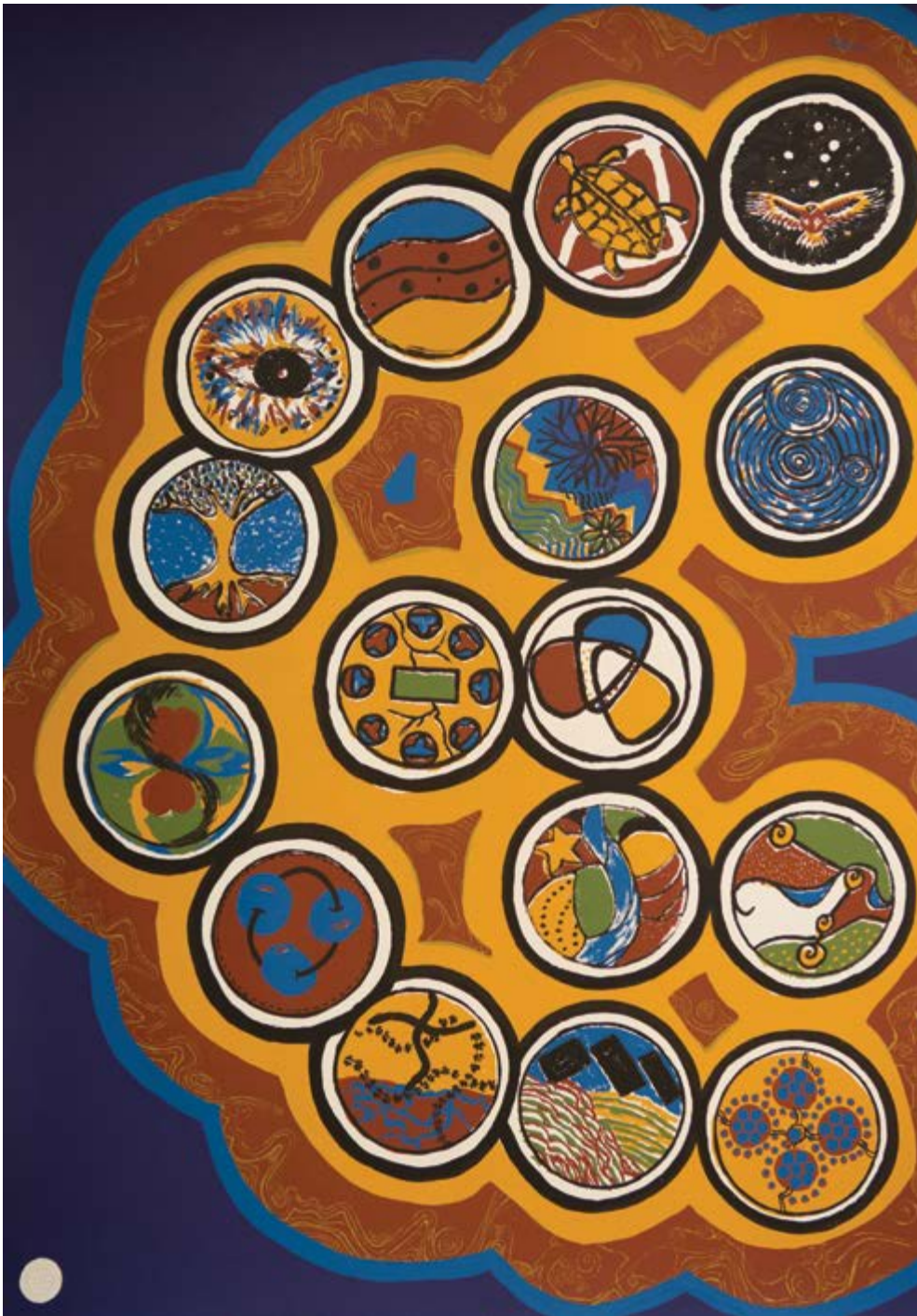


48%
male clients



20%
clients initially
identified as
homeless





Bianca Beetson, Vicki Couzens
and Jeffrey Samuels in
collaboration with 48 SVHA staff

*Reconciliation: Towards
excellent Health, Happiness and
Equality, 2016*

Silkscreen on magnani paper,
3 panels, edition of 55

100 cm x 73 cm

St Vincent's is extremely proud of the Collaborative Art Project, undertaken as part of our Reconciliation Action Plan, which represents the breadth of SVHA's vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our care as well as in the wider community.

Three leading contemporary Aboriginal artists were asked to conduct a workshop in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland with 48 leaders and staff members across our health service. The artists invited participants to create a small circular artwork that was symbolic of what reconciliation means to them.

With the assistance of a master print maker each participant was able to create an individual artwork with up to six layers of colour. Following the state workshops, the three Aboriginal artists collaborated to bring the 48 small artworks into one cohesive design.



Their aim was to arrange the individual circles into a single united artwork as a symbol of people coming together to focus on our shared vision for reconciliation. Once the circles were arranged into the final layout, the three artists painted around the circles with bands of black, red, yellow, blue and purple.

Each artist then added their own "mark" to one panel by scratching into the red lines their own symbols, signs or words associated with reconciliation. Vicki Couzens represents Victoria in the left panel, Jeffrey Samuels represents New South Wales in the centre panel

and Bianca Beetson represents Queensland and Torres Strait Islands in the right hand panel.

The resulting three part panels have now been silk screened and an edition of 55 triptychs have been printed. One complete artwork is on display at each facility across St Vincent's Health Australia. It is a vibrant symbol of our Reconciliation Action Plan, our own reflections and of our collective experience of the reconciliation journey we are all on.

The participants' art works have been mixed up so that Victorian, New South Wales and Queensland and Torres Strait Islander staff are integrated across the three panels. This is done deliberately to represent movement both across our organisation and also people moving all across our country.

Aboriginal Employment Opportunities

St Vincent's is a great place to work, and we would like to actively encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to join our workforce. St Vincent's is currently looking for 60 Aboriginal people to become part of the team.

SVHM currently employs 33 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members, which represents 0.56% of the total workforce of more than 5,500 people. With a stated target of 1% of staff to be Aboriginal, by 2018, we are currently 60 employees short.

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) is committed to improving the employment experience and opportunities of Aboriginal Australians. With our parent company, SVHA, we have adopted the Prime Minister's Employment Parity Initiative, which aims to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the health sector to 3% by 2020.

To help achieve this, SVHM has developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy.

The emphasis within this plan is on the introduction of new career pathways for these employees; pathways that are sustainable and rewarding for both the individual and organisation.

Supporting this strategy, our Executive has set performance indicators in the areas of Aboriginal employment, projects and cultural safety training.

60

Aboriginal employees
by 2018

1%

of 5,700 strong
workforce aboriginal



Glenn Milliken
Grade 1 Physiotherapist

'I'm the first Aboriginal physiotherapist at St Vincent's and I'm proud to be able to pass on my cultural knowledge to the hospital. When I started in January 2016, everybody welcomed me with open arms. I find it a very supportive and culturally accepting workplace. I'm very excited to further my career here.'

Achievements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment

At the start of 2012, St Vincent's employed 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. In the years since, St Vincent's has successfully employed an additional 26 Aboriginal staff across multiple disciplines including Nursing, Allied Health, Social Work, and Support Services.

St Vincent's now employs 30 Aboriginal staff. The number of applications received has also increased from an occasional application to an average of three per month in 2015-16.

SVHM has continued the Aboriginal Nursing Cadetship Program that was started in 2012 and has successfully supported five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses through to completion of their nursing degrees and into Graduate positions.

The Aboriginal Graduate Nursing Program, piloted in 2014, has seen five Aboriginal graduate nurses complete their graduate year and has successfully recruited four more for the 2017 graduate program.

SVHM has also employed an additional 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff through the new HR & Aboriginal Program Specialist role, the Aboriginal Health Unit and Koolin Balit Training Grants.

SVHM has successfully delivered accredited cultural safety training to 39 staff through the VACCHO Cultural Safety Training Program. Cultural Safety Training is a priority across the hospital and interest continues to grow across the organisation.

Nurse leadership in action



Nursing leaders at St Vincent's are developing a pilot career day at St Vincent's for Aboriginal high school students, to encourage them to think of becoming nurses.

Director of Nursing Education Deanne Riddington and Undergraduate Nurse Coordinator Jade Murphy both have a passion for training and developing St Vincent's significant nursing workforce.

Deanne started nursing at 17 years of age and after decades in the industry, is still passionate about nursing, and the role it can have in Aboriginal health. Jade oversees the clinical school

'It's our hope that this type of program will be taken up by every hospital in the country, so that there's far more choice for Aboriginal nurses, and an increase in participation in nursing, as well as other healthcare professions, in the future.'

St Vincent's shares with Australian Catholic University, which is currently training its first Aboriginal students. Deanne and Jade hope that these Aboriginal nurses will one day become the future leaders of the Aboriginal Graduate Program.

'Healthcare organisations must be aware that many Aboriginal people who come in to hospital still have a fear of entering 'the institution', Jade says. 'It's been demonstrated that Aboriginal people experience better clinical outcomes when Aboriginal people are involved in the delivery of their care. And that's one of the reasons why it's so important to have greater Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander representation in our healthcare professions.' Deanne was awarded a Winston Fellowship in 2015 to travel overseas to build upon St Vincent's Aboriginal Graduate Nurse Program. Deanne visited hospitals, universities, community groups, government and nursing organisations in New Zealand, Canada and Hawaii to see firsthand what health services can be doing now and in the future to enable growth of employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in nursing.

'Because I'm not an Aboriginal person, I travelled overseas to spend time with nurse leaders – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to see first-hand how they work together to enhance opportunities for Aboriginal nurses,' Deanne explained.

'It convinced me and gave me the confidence that we have a role to play in introducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to a career in nursing, and that hospitals have a much larger role to play in engaging high school students – to connect them with the idea of pursuing a career in health.'

'When I first came to work, I saw my gender and my culture represented throughout the hospital,' Deanne says. 'I could see critical aspects of my identity reflected in the vast majority of my work mates.' 'If you can't see your culture in an organisation, in a health service, or represented in the clinical workforce, then how on earth can you aspire to pursue nursing as a career? So the idea that 'you can't be what you can't see' has really driven us to this point in the program.'

'Importantly, we have had other health services approach us, saying they were interested in pursuing the model as well,' Jade says. 'It is both affirming and extremely encouraging to have the support of our peers operating in the wider sector.'

'It's our hope that this type of program will be taken up by every hospital in the country, so that there's far more choice for Aboriginal nurses, and an increase in participation in nursing, as well as other healthcare professions, in the future.'

Thanks to a \$2,000 grant from Catholic Health Australia, Deanne and Jade are developing a pilot career day at the hospital for Aboriginal high school students, with the aim of increasing the number of Aboriginal clinicians across the health service, so that it is more in line with the number of Aboriginal patients seen at St Vincent's.

The Aboriginal Health Cadetship program

Aboriginal nursing students drop out of their degree courses at twice the rate of other nursing students. Research shows that two in three enrolled Aboriginal nursing students will not make it to graduation.

St Vincent's has established an Aboriginal Cadetship Program that offers second and third year nursing and allied health students paid employment above and beyond their clinical training.

'We are hopeful these cadets come back to us through the graduate nursing program and build a career here... We want to give them exposure so they know what to expect.'

'The idea is to bring Aboriginal students in and give them exposure working in a hospital environment in order to better prepare them for the workplace,' says Toni Mason, Manager of the Aboriginal Health unit.

During their time, cadets work alongside nurses and the entire multidisciplinary team to help deliver care to patients, within a defined scope of practice. This builds comfort and familiarity with the work place, offers networking opportunities, and allows the cadets to improve their professional and communication skills and knowledge in patient care.

The program aims to expose cadets to the wide variety of work within the nursing field and potentially spark some interest for future career paths.

'We are hopeful these cadets come back to us through the graduate nursing program and build a career here,' Toni says. 'We want to give them exposure so they know what to expect.'

The placements are tailored to the self-identified learning needs of the cadets. Cadets are also supported to complete their university requirements through paid study days. All Cadets' study leave, flights, accommodation and registration fees are covered to attend the annual CATSINaM conference along with the Cadetships Coordinator.

Cadets in their final year of study also receive extensive support with job applications for graduate nurse positions including tips on building resumes, writing cover letters and mock interview practice.

St Vincent's is one of eight hospitals across Victoria that takes part in the Cadetship program.

The Aboriginal Nursing Cadetship Program has successfully supported nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student nurses through to completion of their nursing degrees and into Graduate positions.

Sonya Parsons



Sonya Parsons is a Yorta-Yorta woman and Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer working within St Vincent's Mental Health. Sonya works with Aboriginal patients who enter the inpatient unit and advocates on their behalf.

'I'm an Aboriginal woman, and my mother was non-Aboriginal,' Sonya says. 'I always say that I walk in two worlds.'

'I love that I can bring both worlds together and be proud of both of them. I feel very blessed to be able to work in a great organisation like St Vincent's because it is an organisation that recognises the health struggles that our communities had.'

'This hospital has put a stamp on what I think is talking the talk and walking the walk. For that, I really take my hat off to St Vincent's.'

'I love that I can bring both worlds together and be proud of both of them.'



'You and your co-workers are doing a great job Sonya, and I'm speaking from experience! Looking good there too Sis! Keep up the good work...'

Denis Atkinson

'Great work Sonya proud of you and your co-workers who give so much to all patients and families at St Vincent's. Awesome job!'

Campbell Heather

'My heart is with you and all those at St Vincent's who walk the talk Sis, I salute you all.'

Robyn Almond

Supporting our Aboriginal graduate nurses

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne has had a dedicated Aboriginal Graduate Nurse Program since 2014. The program ensures a seamless transition into nursing for Aboriginal Graduate Nurses, and involves two six-month rotations.

Aboriginal graduate Nurse Kaely Kennedy began the Aboriginal Graduate Nurse Program at the start of 2017. Kaely chose St Vincent's due to the strong reputation of the program and has been working in the Emergency Department for the past six months.

'My colleagues in ED treat me like a key part of the team, which is really nice' Kaely says. 'If I have an issue about my patient I feel comfortable going to them and talking to them about it.'

While Kaely is glowing in her praise of her ED colleagues, Kaely saves her highest praise for Practice Development Nurse Sye Hodgman.

'Sye has been amazing,' Kaely says. 'Other Aboriginal graduate nurses and I often talk about how great he has been for us this year.'

'Sye comes down to emergency once a week and asks if I'm ok, if there's anything I want to discuss, or if I had a difficult patient. He sends me text messages or calls me on the way home to see if there is anything I need to talk about.'

'Sye will even offer me advice on things like salary packaging and super; I know that I have someone right there that I can go to.'

'I always wanted to be a nurse, it was always my dream. But now working as a nurse, in an environment where everyone loves what they are doing and is so supportive, it makes me feel like a better person.'



'He's even given me advice on how to deal with a late-early shift, and how to build better sleeping habits.'

After six months at St Vincent's, Kaely believes she made the right choice. 'It's been challenging, but it's also been one of the best things I've done,' Kaely says.

'I always wanted to be a nurse, it was always my dream. But now working as a nurse, in an environment where everyone loves what they are doing and is so supportive, it makes me feel like a better person.'

Kaely will soon be rotating to Cardiac Care on 4 East and is bracing herself for a new challenge. 'I'm a bit nervous, because it's going to be completely different. But I'm excited and looking forward to it.'

And of course, Sye will be there to support Kaely as she takes on that challenge.

Our vision for reconciliation

Our vision for reconciliation is a community where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians work together in a spirit of trust and openness to bring about hope, healing, love, justice and peace in our world. This is a community that

acknowledges and respects the unique cultures, histories and spiritualities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This community will create a shared sense of place through equity, inclusion and provision of opportunities for all people.

This will ensure facilities are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and confirm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have equal access to healthcare services.



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