

St Vincent's Health Australia

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

2010 - 2011



Reconciliation
A U S T R A L I A
RECONCILIATION ACTION PLANS



FRONT COVER:

Mary Aikenhead recognised the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when she sent five Sisters to Australia aboard the *Frances Spaight* in 1838. The image on the front cover depicts the Black Cross which she sent to Australia with the Sisters. The cross is positioned in front of an artwork by Kathleen Wallace entitled: *Keringke (Kangaroo Tracks)*. Kathleen comes from Uyetye on the Todd River, with Santa Teresa and the Todd River area being the traditional lands of both her grandfathers. This picture depicts a story about the kangaroo that came in the dreamtime from the South East. *Keringke* is Mrs. Wallace's mothers' dreaming.

It was a big red kangaroo (aherre), he went behind Santa Teresa (Ltyentye Apurte), along the creek (Ihere). As he was going through the country he visited his cousin, the bellbird (kwepalepale). The place was really green, a smooth yellow vine (ayepe) was everywhere ankle high.

The kangaroo travelled along the creek, being careful so as not to get his feet caught in the vine. After he visited his cousin, he crossed a plain and got caught in the yellow vines, and his leg became tangled up. He was just about dragging himself up the gully, because it was a hot day, he could not go any further. He stopped in a clear area, but there were too many flies there. He used to get the dust and throw it over himself to keep them away. In doing so, he made a big hole and that became the rock hole. When the vine dried up, he was free and he hopped away to the North.

*That was the last time he made footprints on the rock and they can still be seen today. He then went to another place. After that, other kangaroos used to come down to drink at the rock hole, they were hill kangaroos, euros (arenge). To this day you can still see the tail tracks of the euros. There was a little pouch (apethe) near the rock hole, with two little shiny pink stones in it, representing baby kangaroos, there are only the remains today. After the big kangaroo left his footprints, the rock hole became *Keringke*, a sacred site.*

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OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

Our Vision for a reconciled Australia is that all our peoples and communities share in the health and prosperity that this nation has to offer.

St. Vincent's Health Australia, with its partners, makes a commitment to go forward together in the spirit of reconciliation and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to close the 11 year¹ life expectancy gap. We acknowledge our health, aged and research facilities are built on traditional Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander lands.

Acknowledging that many steps have been taken, we recognise that many steps still remain. As we walk the journey of learning and healing together we aim to establish relationships and demonstrate respect for our country and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritages. Through these foundations of respect and relationships we will discover and identify opportunities as we work towards justice and equity for all.

Through this plan we aim to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to foster and support equity and access to health care by: providing culturally safe environments; developing capacity within our facilities and in the community; and developing partnerships which aim to close the gap on health inequities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community.

Such programs will incorporate:

- building respectful relationships,
- providing educational opportunities,
- supporting employment opportunities, and
- developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training for staff.

¹ <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/dd0ca10eed681f12ca2570ce0082655d/c65f4c150dd0497aca2575be002656bc!OpenDocument>

OUR MISSION, OUR BUSINESS

“Working together for healthier communities...For the love of Christ”

St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA) together with its partners, is one of Australia's leading Catholic not-for-profit diversified healthcare providers. Our health and aged care services are founded on a firm commitment to our mission and values, based on the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching in the spirit of Mary Aikenhead, founder of the Sisters of Charity. Mary Aikenhead recognised the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when she sent five Sisters to Australia aboard the Francis Spaight in 1838. In acknowledgement she sent a black crucifix which today is proudly displayed in the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre and is used at significant Congregational occasions.

Our broad ranging health services span across the public, private and aged care health sectors in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria and include:

- state-wide services
- acute health services
- sub acute care, including rehabilitation and palliative care
- inpatient and community mental health
- diagnostic services including pathology and radiology services
- public and private emergency centres
- inpatient and community based palliative care
- correctional health
- community health
- aged care services, including residential and community care
- teaching & research

Jointly our facilities comprise 6 public hospitals, 8 private hospitals and 13 aged care facilities, totaling over 2,500 hospital beds across both the public, private and aged care sector. Additionally we provide around 1,100 aged care places throughout New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Our services employ approximately 13,000 staff, are affiliated with over 2,500 Medical Practitioners and Specialists, with over 1,300 volunteers also contributing support services. Each year our health services provide inpatient and day only admissions, with over a million episodes of care accessed through our outpatient services. These services are enhanced through medical, nursing and allied health education and a strong commitment to research and growth in both outreach services and social accountability programs.

As a mission based healthcare provider operating across the eastern seaboard of Australia, St Vincent's Health Australia has a firm commitment to our organisational values and bringing the healing ministry of Christ to all we serve. Fundamental to our healthcare services are our commitments to justice, respecting the rights of all and working with the poor and marginalised in our communities. These commitments call us into partnership with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop and foster initiatives which will lead our journey of healing for all.

OUR MISSION FOR RECONCILIATION

The heritage of St Vincent's Health Australia lies in the story of Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity. Our health service was founded in Australia in 1838 with a vision of providing high quality health care to our society, particularly the poor and marginalised. Whilst the healthcare environment may have changed since that time, our commitment to supporting those in society who are less fortunate and require assistance has remained.

The St Vincent's Health Australia Mission Framework is an important foundational document which is considered a key point of reference for all our work. It highlights four key areas of our mission by which we measure our performance and is founded on the strong base of our Catholic Identity and Catholic Social Teaching. The four (4) key areas provide a familiar backdrop and foundation in which to engage our work towards national reconciliation.

PROCLAIMING OUR MISSION

We advocate creating a place of welcome, in that providing a sacred space in all of our facilities welcomes those who come through our doors, making them feel comfortable in finding a place to be and to reflect. We acknowledge that there are many people from other cultures and religions who come to us for care and that we need to be ever respectful of their needs. These spaces may differ from place to place and be provided in the form of chapels, prayer rooms, artworks, religious symbolism or gardens which are created for patients, relatives, clients and staff. In supporting our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities we encourage the use of artwork by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.

DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS

We are committed to working collaboratively with groups in open dialogue to provide relevant health services for all Australians. We commit ourselves to entering into partnerships for mission with other church bodies, governments, non church bodies and research institutes, nationally and internationally. This also includes collaborating with Reconciliation Australia and working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies in order to develop meaningful partnerships that will benefit both groups. We believe that true collaboration means learning from each other in an equal and just manner.

WORKING FOR THE COMMON GOOD OF ALL PEOPLE ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE SOCIALLY EXCLUDED AND POOR

Our commitment to working for the common good of all people, and especially with those who are socially excluded, is central to our Catholic social teaching and gospel values. This firm commitment often presents us with challenges. In response, we continually examine our work practices, our ethical perspectives, our commitment to the socially excluded and our commitment to the environment. We are challenged to seek out those areas in the Australian health system which require our support. We advocate for those who need a stronger voice in our society and tender for government projects that are directed towards people who are socially excluded and poor. In particular we have a strategic commitment to working in the areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, mental health, correctional health and refugee and asylum seeker health projects.

STEWARDSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

We are required to use our skills and resources for the common good of all people according to our values of Compassion, Justice, Human Dignity and Excellence. Exercising our value of Unity, we believe that responsible stewardship of resources can best be accomplished by forming respectful relationships with others in dialogue with all levels of society. As a “just” health care system we are concerned with the promotion of equity of care, so that the rights of each person, no matter what their culture or creed, may be respected. This plan provides us with an objective means of demonstrating our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

BRINGING OUR PLAN TO LIFE

In light of our mission, the development of this Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is seen as a priority by the National Board and National Executive of St Vincent’s Health Australia. In developing this plan it has become apparent that our relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities varies from state to state and facility to facility. It is for this reason that our first year RAP aims to establish a national position of understanding and commitment to reconciliation through providing realistic preliminary opportunities for the whole of the organisation to engage in action. In doing this we aim to lay firm foundations to ensure we walk this journey together, sharing the successes and accomplishments and engaging the whole organisation along the way. It is important that we acknowledge, celebrate and share the significant achievements that have already been made towards reconciliation, and at the same time provide achievable goals and objectives to ensure we are all able to contribute. We see our plan as dynamic with reviews to be undertaken annually to refresh and energise our commitment.

The development of our plan was driven initially by a RAP Working Party consisting of ten (10) St Vincent’s Health Australia employees from across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, in a range of positions at all levels of the organisation. This Working Party is chaired by the National Director of Mission who is responsible for the integration of our Catholic identity, our values and our culture throughout the whole of our organisation. Three members of the working party identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians and contributed ideas, opinions and feedback from their respective communities. These individuals are seen as important links between St Vincent’s Health Australia and broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and are vital in ensuring the plan addresses the real needs and aspirations of these communities and is grounded in reality, respectful of culture and inclusive in nature.

In addition to our internal consultation this RAP has been circulated and reviewed externally by Community Elders in each state. The RAP was reviewed with pride and commended on its ability to “*touched the heart of our people*”. The consultation provided an opportunity to engage with Community Elders and commence the journey of “working at a plan to walk together”. Each of the Community Elders consulted indicated a willingness to be involved in future community representation.

To ensure our plan remains vibrant we have formally established the RAP Working Party as a subcommittee of the Directors of Mission (with a reporting line to the National Board through the National Executive). Known as the RAP Subcommittee this group will oversee the implementation of the RAP and provide quarterly reports to the organisation on the progress of the plan. In addition External Reference Groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders will be established in each state. Biannual meeting will be held between these External Reference Groups and local RAP Subcommittee members to ensure that our plan supports the needs and aspirations of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in which we work.

1. RELATIONSHIPS

We seek to work alongside our brothers and sisters in the community of the human family, striving to achieve an equitable and just society for all.

Our mission commits us to developing and maintaining relationships with one another, and with those we serve, working collaboratively with others in open dialogue to provide a relevant prophetic and dynamic health service. Strong relationships lead to better understanding and communication and result in enhanced patient experience and improved health outcomes. Our investment in relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will provide the foundations for our successful contribution to closing the gap through the provision of diversified health care services. These relationships are essential to the realisation of our mission and the future of our nation.

Focus area 1: Relationship Building

St Vincent's Health Australia has varying levels of engagement with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is aimed that through broadly raising awareness and encouraging development of strong foundations we will foster meaningful local relationships across the group.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1.1 We will identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners, Elders and community leaders within the local communities in which we work and seek to build relationships that are mutually beneficial and respectful – highlighting the need for inclusive and collaborative partnerships.	Executive Director/ Aboriginal Liaison Team	July 2010	Each state is able to identify Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners, Elders and community leaders within the local communities.
	Executive Director/ Aboriginal Liaison Team	December 2010	Each state has identified, in collaboration with the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners, Elders and community leaders, mechanisms to develop mutually beneficial and respectful relationships.
	Aboriginal Liaison Team	From July 2010	Each state will maintain a relationship management register and train all relevant staff in its use.
1.2 We will identify existing relationships, and foster new relationships with government and related agencies with a view to collaborating with local Indigenous peoples, to advocate and work towards improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	CEO/Executive Directors	December 2010	Each state will identify existing organisational relationships, opportunities for new relationships and identify opportunities for advocacy and collaboration.
	CEO/Executive Directors	December 2010	Each state will develop at least one new relationship with identified organisations.
	CEO/Executive Directors	December 2010	Record of meetings reported to Senior Leadership meetings and to the RAP Subcommittee.

	Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
1.3	We will develop relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health services and relevant Peak bodies (e.g Aboriginal Medical Service) to promote better communication and better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.	Clinical Service Director / Aboriginal Liaison Team	December 2010	Each state will develop at least one new relationship and identify opportunities for improved communication and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.
		Clinical Service Director / Aboriginal Liaison Team	December 2010	Record of meetings reported to Senior Leadership meetings and to the RAP Subcommittee.
1.4	We will develop and foster relationships with local schools and/or universities to establish programs providing scholarships/training/internships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical, nursing and allied health students, or secondary school leavers considering a career in health.	General Manager Human Resources	December 2010	Each region will develop a working relationship with a school or university and collaborate in development and implementation of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander scholarships/training/internship aimed to foster access to higher education, or a career in health. See Opportunities Action 3.2.2.



2. RESPECT

We strive for human dignity - respecting the uniqueness of each person created in the image and likeness of God and justice - respecting the rights of all.

Success in realising our commitment to ensuring a just healthcare system for all requires us to understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. To ensure we are able to engage, develop trust and deliver the most appropriate level of health care and support to community needs we will raise awareness and ensure our facilities, and places of business make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel welcome.

Focus area 1: Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Land

The delivery of a culturally sensitive Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Land is an important first step in developing a broad level of respect across the organisation. These words will be developed in consultation with the Traditional Owners in the communities in which we work, as a sign of respect and a means of starting a conversation with local communities.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
2.1.1 Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners protocols developed in consultation with the Traditional Owners of the areas in which we work.	Chair RAP Subcommittee	March 2010	Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners protocols are developed and launched at the Board & Executive Retreat.
	National DOM	April 2010	Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners protocols distributed to every facility Executive Director for implementation.
2.1.2 We will perform an acknowledgement of Traditional Owners as a standing agenda item at all National and Regional Board and Executive meetings.	CEO's	From April 2010	Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners is carried out at all National and Regional Board and executive meetings as documented in minutes.
2.1.3 We will prominently display the acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners at each facility or place of business.	Facility Executive	August 2010	All sites prominently display Acknowledgement of Traditional Land Owners, in accordance with the "Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners protocol".
2.1.4 We will invite Traditional Owners/community acknowledged Elders to conduct a Welcome to Country and display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags at all major public gatherings.	Directors of Mission	June 2010	Welcome to Country provided and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags displayed at all major public gatherings.

Focus area 2: Creating a Safe and Welcoming Sacred Space

Our Mission Framework clearly identifies a commitment to providing space to meet the spiritual and worship needs of all. Through developing sacred spaces we aim to ensure a respectful space is created at each facility to promote a quiet place for people to pray, gather, contemplate or just take time out to enjoy something of beauty. The inclusion of fully acknowledged local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artworks is one step towards providing a respectful welcoming environment for our patients, visitors and staff.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
2.2.1 We will create a safe and welcoming sacred space which is respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through the display of fully acknowledged art works commissioned by local artists.	Directors of Mission	December 2010	Every facility or place of business has a sacred space or quiet area that includes fully acknowledged local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artwork.

Focus area 3: Cultural Appreciation

In ensuring we are respectful of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures it is felt necessary that all staff require a level of training, appreciation and exposure to local Indigenous culture to ensure they are confident to engage meaningfully with Indigenous staff, patients and visitors.

2.3.1 We will develop a standard national Cultural Awareness Package with relevant local content added in consultation with our Regional Advisory Groups.	RAP Subcommittee/ Directors of Mission	October 2010	An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Package is incorporated into orientation and mandatory education sessions.
	National Director of Mission	December 2010	All Boards, executive and RAP Subcommittee receive the Cultural Awareness Package.
	CEO's	December 2011	50% of staff to have received the Cultural Awareness Package within its first year.
	CEO's	From December 2010	Staff who have completed the Cultural Awareness Package state that this has helped them to provided better patient outcomes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander patients.
2.3.2 We will either host or participate in significant events of cultural education and celebration with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These include NAIDOC week, Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week.	Directors of Mission	June 2010	Welcome to Country provided and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags displayed at all major public gatherings.

3. OPPORTUNITIES

In working together for healthier communities for the love of Christ we aim to stay innovative and strive for excellence in all aspects of our healing ministry.

Through investing in the commitment and talents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we continue to form relevant and strategic relationships that ensure our health service continues to grow, provide quality care for all and ultimately improving patient experiences and health outcomes. The opportunities provided in this section compliment our Respect and Relationship actions identified above, providing a holistic approach to ensuring we are able to make a meaningful contribution to closing the gap.

Focus area 1: Safe Working Environment

We aim to provide staff with a workplace that nurtures workplace spirituality and creates an environment that is conducive to healing and wholeness. We will ensure the needs of our Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff are being considered and support the development of a culturally safe work environment which will enhance our ability to attract and retain valued staff.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
3.1.1 We will collaborate with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to develop a strategy which articulates what constitutes a culturally safe working environment.	Director of Mission	July 2010	A culturally safe workplace strategy is developed to support Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff.
3.1.2 We will ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff have access to programs to ensure they receive adequate support in their first year of employment.	Human Resource Manager	September 2010	All new staff who identify as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander will be given the opportunity to take part in a mentor program for the first 12 months of their employment.
3.1.3 We will actively engage with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff supporting access to learning and development opportunities, including access to innovative programs supporting pathways for Indigenous people.	Learning and Development Manager	October 2010	In each region Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are engaged to assist in determining and developing appropriate support pathways/programs.
	Learning and Development Manager	December 2010	All Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff have a professional learning and development plan completed annually with their manager and is reviewed quarterly.

Focus area 2: Employment and Training

Make a long term investment enhancing our inclusive and diverse workforce through developing programs and strategies that employ and train Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
3.2.1 Develop a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment strategy to increase workforce participation to reflect local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representation.	Human Resource Directors / Aboriginal Liaison	December 2010	A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment strategy to be developed with local community targets.
	Human Resource Directors / Aboriginal Liaison	March 2011	"% of workforce identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" is included in all facility KPI's and is reported quarterly to the RAP Subcommittee.
	Human Resource Directors / Aboriginal Liaison	December 2020	Our workforce reflects local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representation.
3.2.2 Develop regional based scholarships/training/internships programs for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students aimed at increasing access to higher education in order to foster a career in health.	General Manager Human Resources	December 2010	Each region will provide at least one scholarship/internship/training to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student. See Action 1.4.

4. TRACKING PROGRESS AND REPORTING

As we progress, we will learn from our experiences and share these lessons across our businesses and with other companies.

	Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
4.1	The RAP Subcommittee made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non Indigenous staff representation from each region in a range of positions at all levels of the organisation, monitors and assists in the implementation and communication of the RAP.	National Director of Mission	March 2011	RAP Subcommittee meets at least 4 times annually.
		National Director of Mission	March 2010	RAP Subcommittee membership reviewed.
		National Director of Mission	March 2010	RAP Subcommittee Terms of Reference/ governance structure developed and implemented.
4.2	External Reference Groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders established in each state.	Nominated state RAP Subcommittee Representative	June 2010 & December 2010	State based External Reference Groups established and meeting biannually with state representatives from the RAP Subcommittee.
4.3	Report progress of the RAP implementation and share successes.	Chair RAP Subcommittee	March June September December	Progress Reports are provided quarterly to the National and Regional Boards and shared with all staff through the quarterly network newsletter.
		National Company Secretary/ Executive Officer	December 2010	Accomplishments of the RAP to appear in the SVHA Annual Report and to appear on the SVHA website.
4.4	We will undertake and submit an Annual Report assessing the progress of the RAP to Reconciliation Australia.	Chair RAP Subcommittee	April 2011	Annual RAP Report available on the SVHA and Reconciliation Australia website.
4.5	The RAP is refreshed annually to ensure it continues to meet the needs of SVHA and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in which we work.	Chair RAP Subcommittee	March 2011	The RAP is refreshed annually and new targets set, in collaboration with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community networks.
		Executive Officer	April 2011	Refreshed RAP is available on the SVHA and Reconciliation Australia website.

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