



# It's a RAP

Highlights from our Reconciliation Action Plan 2020-2021

## Cultural Disclaimer:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain images or content referring to deceased persons. It may also contain words or descriptions that may be deemed culturally insensitive. Whilst we take every effort to ensure we use the term Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, there may be instances where we use the term 'Indigenous' to refer to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, for example, in reference to a specific program or organisation.

## Acknowledgement of Country:

St Vincent's Health Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where we live and work. We respect their historical and continuing spiritual connections to country and community and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. As a health and aged care ministry, we commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.



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# Reconciliation is OUR core business

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the oldest living culture in the world but there is a significant gap with non-Indigenous Australians in life expectancy and health outcomes.

Reconciliation, therefore, is core business for our hospitals and we are actively engaging the hearts and minds of our staff and patients to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people in our care.

Equity, service excellence and community connection underpin the ongoing Reconciliation journey of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and St Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne through our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and commitment to Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation.

We recognise that colonisation and past practices of governments and institutions have resulted in intergenerational trauma for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who do not always feel welcome when accessing health services.

Reconciliation is a shared responsibility for all Australians and must go above and beyond symbolic gestures to deliver meaningful, tangible change across all aspects of society.

Our hospitals are working collaboratively to deliver the actions and targets in the St Vincent's Health Australia RAP and our Cultural Safety Plan for the Victorian Government.

The theme of Reconciliation Week 2021 – "More than a word. Reconciliation takes action." – resonates strongly. Our hospitals are committed to addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, families and staff. We are creating

more welcoming spaces, raising cultural awareness, improving communication and reforming our processes to ensure cultural safety and sensitive care.

We have also launched a three-year project to create a culturally safe organisation in partnership with key Aboriginal community partners.

Reconciliation reminds us to look compassionately at the underlying social and emotional factors that impact on health. Patient-centred care should always be culturally safe and trauma informed.



**Margaret Stewart**  
*Executive Director Mission,  
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne*



**Toni Mason**  
*Manager Aboriginal Health,  
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne  
Co-chairs, Cross-Campus Reconciliation  
Action Plan Steering Committee*



# EQUITY FOCUS

## for RAP committee

A high-level steering committee has been established across St Vincent's Health Australia's two Melbourne hospitals to oversee the local implementation of the national Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The RAP Steering Committee has members from St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) and St Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne (SVPHM).

It is co-chaired by Margaret Stewart, Executive Director Mission, SVHM and Toni Mason, Manager Aboriginal Health, SVHM and includes leading Aboriginal health professionals, medicine and emergency clinicians, researchers, mental health experts, governance, quality and workforce representatives.

The committee has a focus on equity and encourages innovation. Its role is to amplify, support and oversee current and evolving initiatives that deliver on actions in the RAP and the Cultural Safety Plan.

Consultation, listening to and acting on the recommendations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a key principle of the steering committee.

"We have an accountability role to St Vincent's Health Australia for our work in Reconciliation, through action, leadership and governance of key activities, to ensure that across our organisation the very specific RAP targets are on course and will be met in a timely way," co-chair Margaret Stewart says.

Julie Wain, Mission Integration Manager, SVPHM, said the creation of the steering committee is an opportunity for St Vincent's Health Australia's Victorian health services to come together. "In numbers, we have strength, rather than parallel journeys," Julie says.

The committee will also monitor the implementation of key actions in the Cultural Safety Plan and report on outcomes to the Victorian Department of Health.



## Committee Members:

**Margaret Stewart**, Executive Director Mission, Co-Chair

**Toni Mason**, Manager, Aboriginal Health, Co-Chair

**Julie Wain**, Mission Integration Manager, SVPHM

**Diana Smith**, Quality and Risk Consultant, SVPHM

**Jacqui Bilo**, General Manager Medicine and Emergency

**Luke McLaughlin**, General Manager Quality and Risk

**Tam Nguyen**, Deputy Director Research Governance Unit

**Aaron Stork**, Decision Support Unit Manager

**Clynt Bernhardt**, Operations Manager Specialist Clinics

**Jade Murphy**, Acting General Manager Education and Learning

**Eliza Short**, Communications Coordinator & Executive Officer Good Samaritan Fund

**Jayne Lewis**, Manager Service Development, Mental Health and Addiction Medicine

**Christopher Delamont**, Indigenous Recruitment Coordinator

**Deborah Barnes**, Aboriginal Health Services Coordinator

**Noel Herbert**, Mental Health Clinician, St George's Hospital



# How WE are tracking

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne has a long-standing history and commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The number of Indigenous patients attending St Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne each year continues to grow each year, with total admission numbers increasing from 71 in 2018, 107 in 2019 and 140 in 2020.

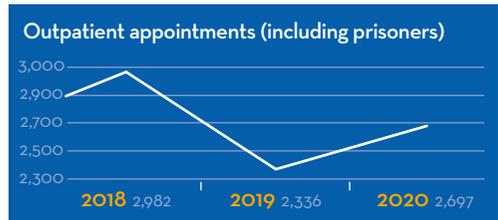
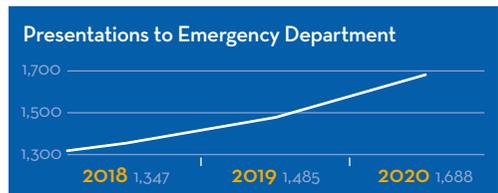
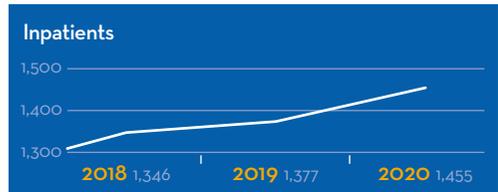
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne is committed to enhancing staff education on cultural awareness for Indigenous patients. In October 2020, the Aboriginal Health Unit introduced training sessions delivered on Microsoft Teams, titled *Aboriginal Health - A Trauma Informed Perspective*. So far, the team have delivered 15 sessions to 169 participants.

**91** SVHM  
Indigenous  
staff members  
(as at May 2021)

**6** SVPHM  
Indigenous  
staff members  
(as at May 2021)

## Presentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Patients for 2019-20

### St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne



### St Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne





# WOMINJEKA to the Emergency Department

The Emergency Department is one of the busiest places in any hospital and often the first port of call for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne aims to be a centre of emergency care excellence and cultural safety for Indigenous people. With this in mind, it established a multidisciplinary working group to improve the experience of care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

The Indigenous Health Equity Working Group reached out to staff in the Emergency Department using a strengths-based approach to capture existing knowledge and expertise and identify barriers and gaps in service delivery.

The Aboriginal Health Unit, and a team of doctors, nurses, allied health practitioners, patient service clerks, patient service attendees and security officers brainstormed and researched new assessment procedures, a more consistent identification of Indigenous patients, staff education about holistic, culturally safe and trauma-informed care, and physical improvements including signs saying 'Wominjeka', the Woi wurrung word for 'Welcome'.

Toni Mason, Manager Aboriginal Health, SVHM, says there is now more emphasis

on the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous patients in communication and health assessment.

"Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait people needs to be trauma-informed; we need to see the person, not just the health problem the person is presenting with," she says.

The percentage of Indigenous patients leaving the ED after triage but before being seen by a doctor is significantly higher than for non-Indigenous patients, so St Vincent's ED now uses its Rapid Assessment Team for early assessment and to explain procedures to Indigenous patients. The Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer is also available as the patient's advocate.

*We know from our work that if we can see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as quickly as possible, this will make a difference in their care," says Dr Georgina Phillips, working group project lead and senior ED physician.*

#### **Pictured above:**

Dr Georgina Phillips and Dr Jennie Hutton (left)/Toni Mason, Manager Aboriginal Health and Deb Barnes, Aboriginal Health Services Coordinator (right)

# Seamless career start with SCHOLARSHIP

Just months into her first job as a registered nurse, Lauren Miodragovic is delighted daily by her colleagues' consistent acts of kindness.

*"I notice all the time that the nurses are very kind to the patients. They show empathy to every patient and always check back to ensure no patient is worried or alone or afraid," Lauren says.*

The supportive environment of St Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne (SVPHM) has eased the nerves Lauren felt before she started in February and every day she says she is learning and growing in confidence and independence. "The hospital community is like family," she says.

Lauren was a recipient of the annual scholarship awarded by SVPHM to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander undergraduate nursing or midwifery student at the Australian Catholic University (ACU). She studied at ACU Ballarat, where she grew up, and is a descendant of the Palawa people of Tasmania.



"Lauren's love for nursing started early as a child."



Lauren Miodragovic, Graduate Nurse

The scholarship has been awarded for the past 11 years, with many recipients the first in their family to go on to tertiary education. It provides funding for three years of university study and direct entry into SVPHM's Graduate Nurse Program.

For Lauren the scholarship covered the costs of expensive textbooks, a study desk, and travel and accommodation for student placements.

"I highly recommend ACU students to apply for this scholarship. It's given me great support and a very good start to my nursing career," Lauren says. "It alleviated a lot of stress and I'm now able to relocate to Melbourne and start this new chapter of my life."

Lauren's first rotation in the Day Procedure Unit will be followed by a stint in the Cardiac Unit. Her eyes are open wide to the many opportunities in nursing and she is interested "down the track" in specialising as a nurse practitioner.

# A YARN and a CUPPA



Toni Mason, Manager Aboriginal Health and Deb Barnes, Aboriginal Health Services Coordinator in the Aboriginal Health Unit

Indigenous patients are welcome to drop in for a yarn and a cuppa or use a private room to meet with hospital staff in the Aboriginal Health Unit at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's Fitzroy campus.

The unit in the Healy Wing was recently renovated to be a welcoming and culturally safe meeting place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families.

Artworks by Indigenous artists from different parts of Australia now line the unit's walls, reflecting the diversity of the community cared for by the hospital. Each year St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and St Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne register more than 5,000 episodes of care for Indigenous patients.

The Aboriginal Health Unit also runs the Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer Program and cultural awareness training for all staff.

## Aged care connection to Country

The Aboriginal word 'Berengarra' was chosen as the name for the new aged care facility in Kew to recognise the connection to Indigenous culture, place and identity.

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne wanted a traditional name for the 90-bed facility at St George's Hospital to align with the overall aim of our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients in our care.

Berengarra is a Woi wurrung word meaning "the land around Kew". Wurundjeri Elders and community groups

were involved in the naming process, along with the Aboriginal Health Unit at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne.



Berengarra, located in Kew, welcomed its first residents in March 2021.

# EMPLOYMENT milestone for INDIGENOUS STAFF

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne is now the largest employer of Indigenous staff across the Victorian metropolitan health service.

Chris Delamont, Indigenous Recruitment Coordinator, SVHM, says a focus on retention and ongoing support has played a big part in attracting more Indigenous staff to areas ranging from clinical and allied health, to administration and environmental services.

"The message out there is that St Vincent's is genuine about closing the gap in education, training, employment and, ultimately, the health outcomes of our Aboriginal community," Chris says.

As of May 2021, there are 91 Indigenous staff at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, four at St

Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne, and two at St Vincent's Residential Care Services.

St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and St Vincent's Residential Care Services will later this year offer up to 15 Certificate III traineeships to Indigenous staff in Health Service Assistant and Individual Support roles.

*"St Vincent's has shown we're committed to developing a deeper understanding of what it means to be an Aboriginal person and is now being recognised in the Aboriginal community as an employer of choice," Chris says.*



Dr Sam Burrell, Dr Yasmin Manahan and Dr Beau Wilson, who in 2020 became St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's first Indigenous medical interns.



## Staff spotlight: NURSING GRADUATES

Eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing graduates started at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne this year – the highest single intake so far.

To help sustain the boost in numbers and assist with professional development, a new Clinical Support Nurse role has been established to provide Indigenous graduate nurses with valued and essential clinical, cultural and social guidance.

Ruby Tribe, who joined St Vincent's in 2017 as an Aboriginal nursing cadet, gained a graduate nurse position in 2018 and later worked in the hospital's Aboriginal Health Unit as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduate and Cadetships Network Coordinator, says she was excited to be appointed to the role.

*"I see it as another important step St Vincent's is taking towards bridging the gap," Ruby says.*

Ruby's role in St Vincent's Education and Learning Unit includes working alongside the graduate nurses in a clinical setting and offering them cultural mentorship.

She will work closely with Nurse Unit Managers to create a friendly environment for Indigenous staff, and identify opportunities in the hospital for the nurses to expand their experience. The role also includes developing closer ties with universities to attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing graduates.

**Pictured above:**

Ruby Tribe, Clinical Support Nurse

# Celebrating ABORIGINAL ART



Djarnbi artwork created by artists Peter Waples-Crowe and Bronwyn Razem



Emerging artist, Luke McNally.

Indigenous artists created a stunning art installation featuring the dingo to brighten up the Cancer Centre at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne and improve cultural safety for patients and visitors.

Artists Peter Waples-Crowe and Bronwyn Razem collaborated on the installation they titled *Djarnbi*, which means friend.

"I use the dingo in my work a lot," Peter says. "People love dogs and the dingo is our native dog. It has also almost been treated like a nuisance, which for me is a representation of the treatment of Aboriginal people, in general."

For Bronwyn, the artwork is an important symbol of Reconciliation.

"When we reconcile with all that has occurred in the past, we can move forward into the future," she says.

"Dingoes were my ancestors' best friends. In pre-colonisation times, dingoes accompanied people from one place to another when they went hunting, and they protected them at night time if there was any danger. They were a very important part of Aboriginal culture."

The collaborative project with the artists, the Aboriginal Health Unit, Cancer Centre staff and Art Curator Monique Silk was made possible by a Cultural Safety Grant from the Department of Health's Cancer Services program.

St Vincent's Private Hospital Melbourne's National Reconciliation Week Art Show has gone from strength to strength in recent years with the most recent showcase featuring emerging artist, Luke McNally, who brought colour to the hospital's East Melbourne campus.



Plant boxes in the courtyard at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

Plant boxes at St Vincent's Hospital's Fitzroy precinct have had a splash of colour. Each box displays a design by Aboriginal Artist Vicki Couzens that also features in our Reconciliation Action Plan. The artwork incorporates the names of the Victorian tribes and an acknowledgement to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



# Care that meets CULTURAL NEEDS

As part of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's (SVHM) commitment to better serve and care for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the health service's Cultural Safety Plan will help all staff understand the cultural, physical and spiritual needs of Indigenous patients.

The Cultural Safety Plan is about partnerships – with staff, local Indigenous communities and Aboriginal health organisations – to ensure that staff, who are educated, and trauma-informed, across all services, deliver culturally appropriate care.

The Cultural Safety Plan brings together the commitments, strategies and work underway within our Reconciliation Action Plan, including for leadership, workforce representation, engagement and partnerships, and identifying

the health needs of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families.

The Aboriginal Health Unit is recognised as a leader in Indigenous healthcare and research in a hospital setting, bringing together the Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer program, expertise in cultural safety and quality improvement, and cultural awareness training. All staff undertake training in cultural awareness and cultural safety.

Toni Mason, Aboriginal Health Unit Manager, SVHM, said being located in Fitzroy – where many Aboriginal organisations were founded – helped relationship building with Indigenous patients in the community.

**Pictured below:** ALERT ED Care Coordinator Kendra Keleher (left), with patient Jean Mason.



# Calendar of national ABORIGINAL CELEBRATIONS

There are a number of significant events for Aboriginal people. Some document the Aboriginal community's struggle for rights, land and recognition, while others mark a history of sadness, loss and denial.

**13** February

The Anniversary  
of the National  
Apology

**18** March

National Close  
the Gap Day

**26** May

National Day of  
Healing (National  
Sorry Day)

**27** May -  
**3** June

National  
Reconciliation  
Week

**3** June

Mabo  
Day

**1** July

Coming  
of the Light

**4 - 11** July

Victorian  
NAIDOC  
Week

**4** August

National Aboriginal  
and Torres  
Strait Islander  
Children's Day

**9** August

International Day  
of the World's  
Indigenous  
People



Partnerships

Country

Sharing

Toward

STEP

FRIENDSHIPS

