

SA Health Aboriginal Workforce Reform Strategy



2009 - 2013



Government
of South Australia

SA Health

Building a stronger, larger, more dispersed Aboriginal health workforce





Statement of Commitment

SA Health is committed to improving Aboriginal health and wellbeing. Providing a more culturally responsive, culturally accountable and culturally safe service for Aboriginal people and communities is at the forefront of this commitment.

By building a stronger, larger, more dispersed Aboriginal health workforce we work towards achieving this outcome.

Through the development and subsequent implementation of the *SA Health Aboriginal Workforce Reform Strategy 2009-2013*, we will see larger numbers of Aboriginal people trained, recruited and retained throughout SA Health.

This, in turn, will influence the way we promote, market, engage and service Aboriginal people and communities.

In addition, SA Health is committed to creating a culture of respect and value for Aboriginal people and communities. This includes the growth and development of non-Aboriginal employees across SA Health, in areas such as cultural awareness.

To achieve the goal set before us, it is important that all staff across SA Health take ownership of this strategy. It is for all to implement.

We must work in partnership with Aboriginal people, both employees and in the wider community, to ensure the growth and development of the Aboriginal health workforce is a shared responsibility.

Importantly, as SA Health moves towards achieving the objectives outlined in this document, the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in South Australia will improve. This will be achieved by:

- > encouraging mutual recognition and respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
- > increasing Aboriginal participation in decision-making
- > acknowledging and understanding Aboriginal culture and heritage
- > recognising the importance of Aboriginal peoples' connection to country, and so acknowledging the essential role that Aboriginal people play in determining their success.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. K. Sherbon" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Tony Sherbon
Chief Executive
SA Health

Background

On 20 December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a partnership between all levels of government to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve the target of 'closing the gap' between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians on life expectancy, educational achievement and employment opportunities within a generation.¹ While Australian governments had previously committed to raise the standard of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health to that of other Australians, this latest commitment is historic in that it is the first time that Australian governments have agreed to be accountable for reaching this goal by placing its achievement within a time-frame.²

The provision of culturally appropriate and responsive services for Aboriginal³ people and communities is pivotal in closing the gap. As the main service provider for health and well being in this state, SA Health is committed to changing the way it does business, including building a workforce dedicated to better servicing Aboriginal people and communities across South Australia.

On 23 April 2008, SA Health launched its policy commitment to increasing Aboriginal employment and development within the Department of Health and across all regions of SA Health.

The *SA Health Aboriginal Employment Policy* requires that:

- > Each region and division within SA Health develops an Aboriginal Employment Strategy in collaboration with the Aboriginal Health Division (AHD) Workforce Support & Development Unit to address recruitment and retention issues specific to their portfolio responsibilities.
- > The development of strategies will be closely linked and guided by Regional Health Service Agreement processes and the *SA Health Aboriginal Workforce Reform Strategy 2009 - 2013* and will be central to the development of Aboriginal Health Improvement Plans.
- > The development and implementation of Aboriginal Employment Strategies will be an integral element of Executive Performance Agreements.
- > An Aboriginal Health Impact Statement is prepared for any workforce development, reform and planning in regions and divisions.

The *SA Health Aboriginal Workforce Reform Strategy 2009 – 2013* and accompanying action plan forms the next level of the commitment by putting policy into action.

1 Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, 13 March 2008 and Close the Gap Indigenous Health Equality Summit Communiqué, Canberra, 20th March 2008.

2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and the Steering Committee for Indigenous Health Equality Close the Gap: National Indigenous Health Equality Targets Outcomes from the National Indigenous Health Equality Summit Canberra, March 18–20, 2008 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney, 2008.

3 Please note that for the purposes of this document, the use of the term 'Aboriginal' is also a reference to Torres Strait Islander peoples.



The South Australian government, through *South Australia's Strategic Plan 2007*, commits to a number of targets that influence the priorities and direction of Aboriginal employment, health and wellbeing.

These include:

- > **T1.26 Aboriginal unemployment:** reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal unemployment rates each year.
- > **T2.5 Aboriginal healthy life expectancy:** lower the morbidity and mortality rates of Aboriginal South Australians.
- > **T5.7 Aboriginal leadership:** increase the number of Aboriginal South Australians participating in community leadership and in community leadership development programs.
- > **T6.1 Aboriginal wellbeing:** improve the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal South Australians.
- > **T6.24 Aboriginal employees:** increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the South Australian public sector, spread across all classifications and agencies, to 2% by 2010 and maintain or better those levels through to 2014.⁴

In particular, SA Health is the lead agency for T2.5 Aboriginal healthy life expectancy. In order to develop a workforce that supports this target, those areas across the portfolio that are identified as being of greatest workforce need will be required to meet an Aboriginal employment target that exceeds 2%.

This will include a specific focus on areas that deal directly with primary health care, mental health, child and maternal health and alcohol and substance abuse as well as those areas within the Department of Health that develop and implement policies that determine the attraction and engagement of Aboriginal people to employment opportunities that will lead to health improvements for Aboriginal people and their communities.



The *SA Health Aboriginal Workforce Reform Strategy 2009-2013* was developed as a partnership between the Department of Health, through the Aboriginal Health Division and the Aboriginal community. It identifies areas in which SA Health has a responsibility to implement national strategies and commits the health portfolio to achieving strategic priorities and initiatives that lead to improved Aboriginal health and wellbeing outcomes.

This strategy also defines the roles of key stakeholders, including the Aboriginal Health Division, who will provide the necessary strategic advice, monitoring and reporting role in this reform process.

The strategy outlines six objectives which inform SA Health of the key areas for action in relation to Aboriginal employment and workforce development.

The areas for action are:

1. Systemic Reform

- 1.1. Redefine the way SA Health systems impact on the engagement, recruitment, retention and development of Aboriginal people.
- 1.2. Develop accountability across mainstream SA Health for Aboriginal health improvement, including a culture of respect and value for Aboriginal peoples' contribution and commitment to providing better outcomes for their people.

2. Engagement

- 2.1. Create partnerships across public, private and community sectors to provide a more holistic approach to workforce development.
- 2.2. Create partnerships with Aboriginal people, communities and community organisations to ensure Aboriginal perspectives are captured and are prominent in all of SA Health's planning processes.
- 2.3. Develop techniques and tools that appropriately and sensitively engage Aboriginal people and communities in career opportunities within SA Health.

3. Attraction and Recruitment

- 3.1. Attract Aboriginal people to SA Health as an employer of choice by developing culturally appropriate promotional and marketing campaigns that connect with and engage Aboriginal job seekers.
- 3.2. Develop culturally appropriate recruitment and selection toolkits.
- 3.3. Develop workforce initiatives that capture Aboriginal people throughout their career planning and at each stage of the learning journey.
- 3.4. Attract Aboriginal males to health related professions.

4. Retention

- 4.1. Develop a range of programs and opportunities for Aboriginal employees that will engender retention of the Aboriginal health workforce.
- 4.2. Collect and analyse qualitative and quantitative data on Aboriginal employees across SA Health.
- 4.3. Encourage participation of both Aboriginal males and females by creating opportunities for coaching and mentoring with Aboriginal leaders within SA Health.

5. Aboriginal Leadership and Development

- 5.1. Provide opportunity for Aboriginal people to grow into leadership roles through access to learning and development programs, mentoring and work shadowing.
- 5.2. Establish mechanisms and opportunities for Aboriginal employees to access learning and development opportunities to enable them to become further qualified to undertake professional positions.

6. Monitoring and Reporting

- 6.1. Monitor and evaluate the progress of SA Health towards meeting the objectives of this strategy.



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