Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**
Aboriginal Health

WA Health Aboriginal Cultural Learning Framework



Delivering a **Healthy WA**

Acknowledgment of Country

WA Health acknowledges the people of the many traditional countries and language groups of Western Australia. It acknowledges the wisdom of Elders both past and present and pays respect to Aboriginal communities of today.

A commitment to learning together: Introduction from the Director General

Aboriginal people comprise only about three per cent of the Western Australian population, yet have the greatest health needs of any group in this State.

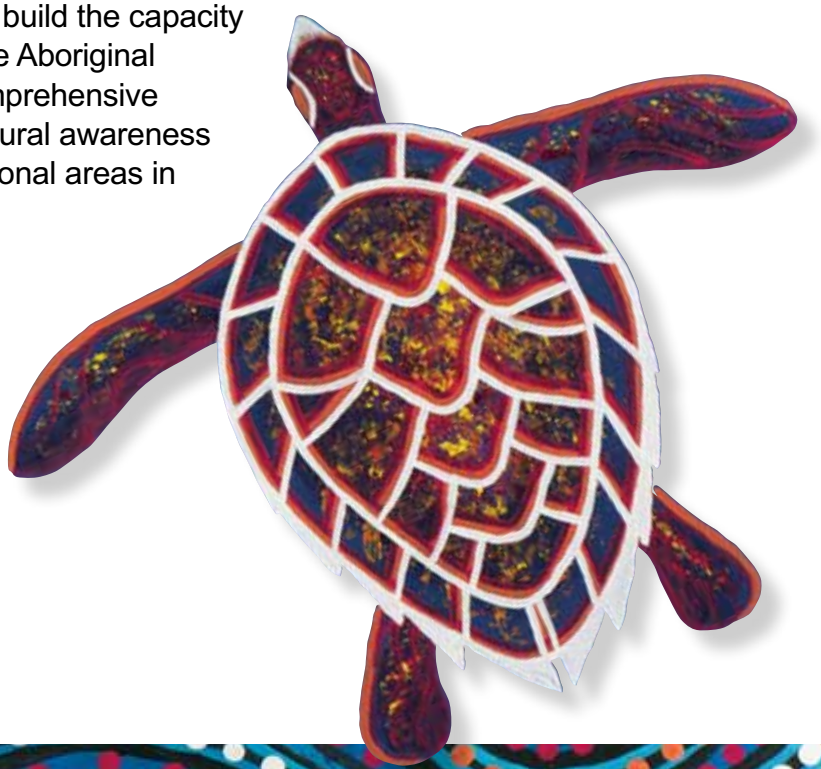
WA Health is committed to closing the health gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Western Australia and recognises the complexity of this task. As experience has shown, the answer is not as simple as providing more health services to Aboriginal people. What is needed, first and foremost, is a broader understanding of the cultural and historic reasons why Aboriginal people view health needs, outcomes and services differently to the general population, so that this can be included in the design and delivery of more effective programs.

Our services must take into account the importance of country, family and community to Aboriginal people, the diversity of cultural practices across different communities, and the history of difficult relationships between Aboriginal people and governments that has discouraged many individuals from accessing health services.

Employing more Aboriginal people in the health workforce – and supporting them to develop their skills and leadership potential – is an important way of incorporating Aboriginal cultural perspectives into our health services. At the same time, we need to develop a non-Aboriginal workforce that understands and respects these perspectives and reflects this in their day-to-day involvement with Aboriginal clients and colleagues.

This document outlines the joint learning partnerships that WA Health is continuing to develop that will build the capacity of the system to respond to the needs of the Aboriginal communities in Western Australia. This comprehensive approach builds on the more local level cultural awareness programs and strategies established in regional areas in partnership with local communities.

Kim Snowball
Director General



Background

WA Health's Aboriginal Cultural Respect Implementation Framework was released in 2005 in response to the National Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council in 2004. This Framework established WA Health's plans for creating strategic partnerships to improve the development and management of health services for Aboriginal people.

This Aboriginal Cultural Learning Framework acknowledges work completed since the release of the 2005 Framework and provides direction for the period 2012-2016. It builds on past efforts and activities to encourage all areas of WA Health to work together to make Aboriginal health everyone's business. Implementation of the Framework will be supported by Aboriginal Health.

WA Health understands that each health service has its own organisational structure, capacity, models of care, and client demographics. The Framework broadly identifies opportunities for individuals and work units to respond to Aboriginal communities through strategic partnerships and planning.

Purpose and scope of the Framework

The Framework aims to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people and is underpinned by the following principles:

- Every person in Western Australia has the right to receive high-quality health care, regardless of their cultural background.
- A workforce that understands and addresses cultural links will provide improved health care for Aboriginal people.
- Embedding cultural learning within WA Health is a practical strategy to close the gap in Aboriginal health outcomes.
- Increased Aboriginal consumer, carer and community involvement will enhance the delivery of health services.

The Framework also establishes an Aboriginal Leadership Network to promote cultural learning within the WA Health workforce.

Cultural learning will increase WA Health's capacity to communicate and engage effectively with Aboriginal people and communities by contributing to:

- increased access to health services for all Western Australians
- improved consumer knowledge of the health system and reduced delays in seeking health care and treatment
- better compliance with recommended treatment
- clearer expectations and improved patient journey
- reduced medical errors and adverse events
- improved attendance at follow-up appointments
- improved consumer satisfaction
- reduced hospitalisation rates.

Focus areas

The Aboriginal Cultural Learning Framework draws together three focus areas in which to prioritise activity:

- Aboriginal workforce
- Cultural learning
- Leadership.

Policies, programs and practices will be designed to:

Aboriginal workforce

Attract, upskill and retain Aboriginal staff within the health workforce, especially in areas where they have been traditionally under-represented. A primary focus is to develop the expertise of all staff to respond to Aboriginal health issues.

Cultural learning

Encourage the WA Health workforce to foster a workplace culture that supports and respects the knowledge of its Aboriginal staff, leading to an improved understanding of Aboriginal perspectives.

Leadership

Identify and develop the leadership potential of Aboriginal staff and use their profile and expertise to increase WA Health's response to the health needs of Aboriginal people.

Implementation

Planning for cultural learning within WA Health could include:

- development of a cultural learning plan by each division, including clear strategies, outcomes and evaluation
- identifying cultural learning as part of strategic planning, quality improvement, and accreditation processes
- targeting improved or increased activity in other priority areas where a health service has already undertaken considerable work in one priority area.

Getting started

There are a number of ways your work area can implement the Framework, including:

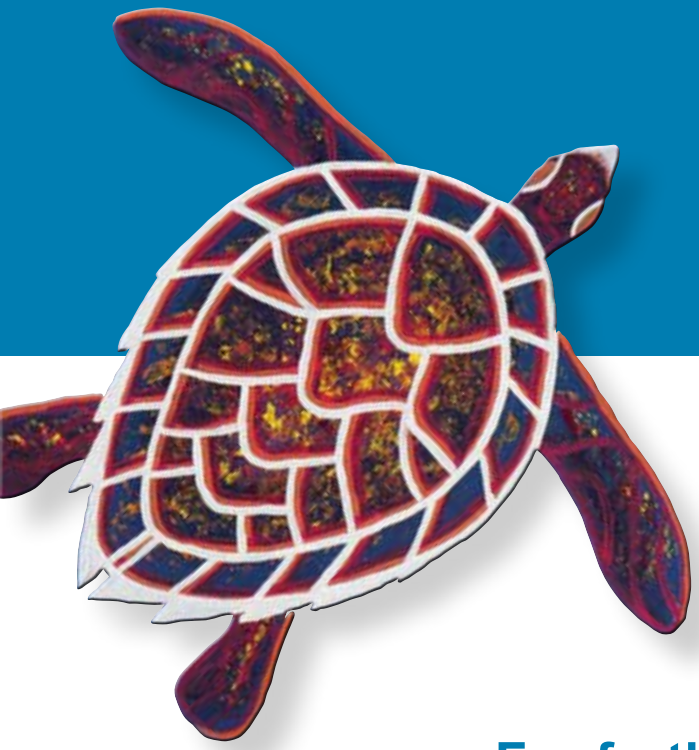
- Map your health service against the three focus areas and review your current workforce development and retention strategies to identify achievements and challenges.
- Develop a cultural learning plan aligned to your strategic planning process.
- Identify the support and resources required to develop a cultural learning plan.
- Discuss cultural learning with relevant internal and external stakeholders, including Aboriginal community controlled health organisations.
- Support the implementation of a whole of WA Health approach to responding to the needs of Aboriginal communities.

Implementation support

To support work areas and individuals to adopt a cultural learning approach, consider the following range of tools and partnerships:

Focus area	Support
Aboriginal workforce	Aboriginal Employment Framework 2008–2013
	Aboriginal Workforce Statement of Intent: next steps for WA Health's Aboriginal Employment Framework
	Relationships with employment agencies, such as Aboriginal employment providers
	Aboriginal Cadetship Program (managed through Workforce)
	WA Health scholarships – opportunities available across the department
	School based and general traineeships
Cultural learning	Cultural E-learning package
	Cultural awareness training
	Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Guidelines
	Cultural Learning panel of consultants (coordinated through Aboriginal Health)
	Development of Models of Care that include Aboriginal health considerations
Leadership	Aboriginal Leadership Network (managed through Aboriginal Health)
	Aboriginal health advisory committees and/or Aboriginal regional planning forums
	Emerging Leaders Program
	Aboriginal Leadership Strategy

Note: The use of the term "Aboriginal" within this document refers to Australians of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



For further information:

Aboriginal Health
Aboriginal.Health@health.wa.gov.au
Telephone: 08 9222 2478

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