



Government of Western Australia
Department of Health

WA Health Aboriginal Workforce Strategy 2014–2024



Acknowledgement of Country and People

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

Using the term – Aboriginal

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may be referred to in the national context and 'Indigenous' may be referred to in the international context. Within Western Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. No disrespect is intended to our Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community.

Executive summary

WA Health is committed to build a sustainable, skilled Aboriginal health workforce from entry level to leadership roles, using a variety of career pathways and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. WA Health recognises the need to increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal staff and pledges a commitment to pursue Aboriginal employment opportunities despite the tight fiscal environment. WA Health will increase the representation and influence of Aboriginal people at all levels across WA Health's workforce.

The Senior Health Executive Forum (SHEF) and other key stakeholders have agreed to increase the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff, and acknowledge the value of employing an Aboriginal workforce within their respective service agreements.

The *Aboriginal Employment Framework 2008–2013* previously guided area health services in the development of Aboriginal recruitment, training and retention strategies. Many successes were achieved along the way, barriers to success identified, and lessons learnt. The *WA Health Aboriginal Workforce Strategy 2014–2024* renews WA Health's commitment and continues to recognise that Aboriginal people bring to the health sector a diverse range of skills including the ability to break down barriers to access, and bring cultural perspectives which help meet the needs of Aboriginal people. It is also important to develop a non-Aboriginal workforce that understands and respects Aboriginal people's perspectives and reflects this in their day-to-day involvement with Aboriginal people. Fostering a workplace culture that supports and respects the knowledge of its Aboriginal staff is paramount to the success of the *WA Health Aboriginal Workforce Strategy 2014–2024*.

Aboriginal people are greatly under-represented in the health workforce. Aboriginal people represent only 1.1 per cent of the 44,000-strong WA Health workforce. Yet, Aboriginal people comprise approximately 3.8 per cent of the Western Australian population and have the greatest health needs of any group in the State. More Aboriginal staff are needed to help address the significant health issues faced by Aboriginal people.

WA Health is focused on increasing Aboriginal employment and job pathways across the WA health sector by planning and implementing long-term Aboriginal employment initiatives which aim to improve health outcomes for all Aboriginal people living in WA.



Professor Bryant Stokes
A/Director General
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Introduction

The *WA Health Aboriginal Workforce Strategy 2014–2024* (the Strategy) aims to **develop a strong, skilled and growing Aboriginal health workforce** across WA Health including clinical, non-clinical and leadership roles.

The Strategy builds upon the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Framework Business Plan 2008–2013* and will continue to focus, direct and consolidate WA Health's Aboriginal workforce through initiatives that are sustainable over the long term.

Aboriginal staff play an integral role in assisting WA Health to achieve its workforce target by providing leadership and foresight. Working with Aboriginal staff, WA Health will enhance its reputation as an employer of choice that is progressive, inclusive and socially responsible.

The key priority areas of the Strategy are:

- attraction and retention
- workforce skill development
- workforce design
- workforce planning and evaluation.

Critical to the success of the Strategy is the shared responsibility for its implementation. To achieve measurable outcomes in these key priority areas, area health services will collaborate with a range of stakeholders relevant to WA Health including but not limited to the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Aboriginal communities and other health service providers.

WA Health Aboriginal Workforce Target

To align with the WA Public Sector Commission's Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2011–2015, WA Health is working towards a target of 3.2 per cent. To achieve this target, WA Health has set a goal of 100 additional Aboriginal staff each year.

Workforce culture and environment

A workforce that is culturally relevant and responsive to Aboriginal perspectives will create an environment where Aboriginal staff choose to stay and further their careers. WA Health is currently laying the foundation for a successful and sustainable workforce culture.

All WA Health staff have a responsibility for ensuring that the needs of the Aboriginal community have been considered. The *WA Health Aboriginal Cultural Learning Framework* outlines the importance of understanding cultural perspectives in the health sector to improve health outcomes. There are a range of tools that support the implementation of the *WA Health Aboriginal Cultural Learning Framework* and all WA Health staff have a responsibility to be familiar with its intent and desired outcomes.

Tools include:

- Aboriginal Health impact statement and declaration
- cultural learning information sessions
- cultural e-learning.

Workforce development is essential to strengthen and retain a skilled Aboriginal workforce. The *WA Health Aboriginal Leadership Strategy 2013–2016* provides direction for WA Health to develop and support strong Aboriginal leadership throughout its workforce. As part of this strategy, the WA Health Senior Aboriginal Leadership Group (SALG) was established to:

- provide high level strategic support and advice
- guide improvements in Aboriginal health outcomes
- build a coordinated and partnered approach to Aboriginal health service delivery.

Guiding principles

Aboriginal Health's key approach in leading Aboriginal workforce development will be underpinned by the following guiding principles:

- **Cultural respect:** ensure the cultural diversity, rights, views, values and expectations of Aboriginal people are respected in the delivery of culturally appropriate health services.
- **A holistic approach:** recognise that the improvement of Aboriginal health status must include attention to physical, spiritual, cultural, emotional and social wellbeing, community capacity and governance.
- **Health sector responsibility:** improve the health of Aboriginal people in the community; a priority for the health sector. It is important that all services are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.
- **Working together and sustaining partnerships:** combine the efforts of government, non-government, community controlled sector, and private organisations within and outside the health sector, and in partnership with the Aboriginal health sector provides the best opportunity to improve the broader social determinants of health.

- **Localised decision-making:** ensure decision-making about health needs and priorities is driven by local Aboriginal communities so that health needs will be met in a culturally appropriate way and promote collaboration between Aboriginal and other health services.
- **Professional development:** combine the efforts of government, non-government, community controlled sector and private organisations to provide pathways to employment and opportunity for Aboriginal staff to broaden their skill set and access professional development.
- **Accountability:** provide effective resources including funding, meaningful policy, inclusive planning and service development through genuine partnership with Aboriginal communities.
- **Substantive equality:** seeks to recognise that some policies and practices actively prevent particular groups of people from understanding or accessing services that others take for granted. Therefore, in order for people to be treated equally, it is necessary to treat people differently to cater for different needs.

Other state and national policies

The Strategy is informed by the current policy context to improve Aboriginal health outcomes. Key state and national policies include:

- *WA Health Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework (State)*
- *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2011–2015 (State)*
- *WA Health Workforce Retention Framework (State)*
- *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework 2011–2015 (National)*
- *National Aboriginal Health Plan (National).*



Key priority areas

Priority area: Attraction and retention of Aboriginal workforce within WA Health

Objective

WA Health will be an employer of choice for Aboriginal people

Actions

- Identify and implement initiatives that create pathways into the WA Health workforce such as cadetships/ graduate programs/ traineeships (including school based).
- Provide and support secondment opportunities within WA Health for Aboriginal staff.
- As part of the health system reform identify opportunities to recruit Aboriginal people to existing vacant and/or additional positions.
- Develop statewide Aboriginal workforce recruitment resources to support effective attraction, selection and induction into the workplace.
- Increase the number of permanent positions within WA Health and work towards substantive opportunities for fixed term contract employees.
- Utilise and enhance existing training opportunities to develop the skills of the current Aboriginal workforce.
- Promote opportunities for recognition of prior learning to support Aboriginal staff to gain health related qualifications.
- Work with area health services to ensure ongoing employment of the Aboriginal workforce within WA Health.
- Provide on the job mentoring and culturally secure support for the Aboriginal workforce.
- Ensure all WA Health staff have access to complete cultural awareness training and professional development including developing skills in the supervision of Aboriginal staff.

Priority area: Workforce skill development for Aboriginal workforce in WA Health

Objective	Actions
The Aboriginal workforce will have access to professional development, education, training and career pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Recruit for vacant positions by targeting the existing local skilled health workforce.■ Work with the secondary schools, universities and vocational education and training sector to develop pathways to support career development and progression in occupational areas.■ Provide education and training opportunities for the current and future health workforce through scholarship programs with universities, vocational education and training and the Aboriginal health training sector.■ Develop partnerships with universities and Aboriginal health training providers to promote careers in health.■ Identify funding and resources to support effective training and education opportunities for Aboriginal staff.■ Utilise flexible education and training approaches to address access issues.■ Expand and support Aboriginal Leadership programs for employees.

Priority area: WA Health Aboriginal workforce design

Objective	Actions
<p>Increased representation of Aboriginal people working in positions across WA Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide opportunities across WA Health for a sustainable workforce from entry level positions through to leadership. ■ Review and clarify roles and responsibilities for designated Aboriginal employment categories e.g. Aboriginal Health Practitioner/Aboriginal Health Worker/Aboriginal Liaison Officer. ■ Employ and retain an Aboriginal health workforce through the implementation of specifically designed Aboriginal identified and/or targeted recruitment and retention processes. ■ Realise opportunities in the health sector assistant workforce, e.g. quarantined positions for Aboriginal people in the assistant-in-nursing program, graduate nurse, graduate program and other allied health related roles. ■ Foster career structures and pathways to a range of disciplines/ professions that provide access for Aboriginal people. ■ Build cross-disciplinary teams (cross sector and within teams). ■ Encourage flexible approaches for Aboriginal staff to access professional development or qualification opportunities as a means of further developing their skills sets for other health related careers. ■ Undertake succession planning that creates opportunities for Aboriginal people.



Priority area: Aboriginal workforce planning and evaluation

Objective

Aboriginal employment is embedded within area Health Service employment strategies/plans

Actions

- Set achievable Aboriginal employment targets for each area Health Service and the Department of Health.
- Establish and maintain Aboriginal workforce data reporting systems.
- Ensure clear lines of responsibility for the implementation of the Strategy.
- Develop implementation plans by each area Health Service, aligned to the Strategy in consultation with key Aboriginal stakeholders.
- Develop partnerships with the Aboriginal community controlled health sector and other relevant stakeholders to assist in Aboriginal workforce planning and information sharing.
- Provide sufficient resources to support agreed initiatives outlined in local Aboriginal workforce implementation plans.
- Map the WA Health Aboriginal workforce by occupation, salary level and location to ensure workforce distribution matches community needs.

Governance and monitoring

WA Health is committed to the Public Sector Commission's Aboriginal Employment Strategy target of 3.2 per cent by 2015. The State Health Executive Forum (SHEF) will ensure that the targets for Aboriginal workforce are achieved across WA Health. This responsibility is reinforced through the WA Health Operational Plan and performance agreements for each Chief Executive.


Aboriginal Health will embed the strategy's performance indicators into the WA Health Operational Plan and report annually. This will include the progress towards:

- the target of 3.2 per cent Aboriginal staff (100 per year) within WA Health
- a sustainable Aboriginal workforce from the entry level through to senior leadership roles
- the implementation of targeted employment programs that attract an Aboriginal workforce including but not limited to the recruitment, retention and subsequent permanency of fixed term employees, school based trainees, trainees/cadets and graduates
- increasing access and opportunity to higher level career pathways for Aboriginal employees.


The SHEF has overall accountability to ensure the key outcome and objectives included in the strategy are achieved. All areas of WA Health are accountable for implementing the specific actions outlined in this strategy.

Working together, Aboriginal Health is committed to ensuring Aboriginal health is everyone's business.





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a person with a disability.



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