

Monday, 7 March 2022

Reconciliation Action Plan reflects commitment to meaningful gains in the health of First Nations people

A commitment to building respect and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve meaningful gains in the health of First Nations people, underpins South Western Sydney PHN's (SWSPHN) Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

SWSPHN is marking National Close the Gap Day next Thursday, 17 March with the official launch of its Innovate RAP. This is our second plan endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.

SWSPHN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Keith McDonald PhD, said the Innovate RAP demonstrated SWSPHN's commitment to the reconciliation journey.

"SWSPHN is dedicated to working towards closing the health and life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians," Dr McDonald said.

"Our relationships with First Nations people and increasing the cultural awareness of our own employees, and primary care clinicians and staff, is key to improving access to culturally appropriate care, and ultimately enhancing the health and wellbeing of individuals, their family and communities."

Reconciliation action plans aim to provide organisations with a structured approach to advance reconciliation. SWSPHN launched its first plan, the Reflect RAP, in January 2019.

Our Innovate RAP will enable SWSPHN and the individuals who work at SWSPHN to contribute to reconciliation by:

- Turning our good intentions into action by fostering and embedding respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and our communities
- Enabling staff to develop greater cultural competency and professional development practices which will strengthen relationships with internal and external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders
- Building and encouraging relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, organisations and the broader Australian community
- Working towards improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in South Western Sydney

Dr McDonald said SWSPHN was already turning "good intentions into action" by staff completing cultural competency training, facilitating and participating in National Reconciliation Week activities, and by updating our Code of Meeting Practice to include an expectation an Acknowledgement of Country was provided.

"We also have a strong focus on recruiting, retaining, consulting and supporting the professional development of our First Nations staff," he said.

"We've reviewed our HR policies to remove any barriers to participation in our workplace, and are more effectively advertising job vacancies to reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and increase the number of First Nations staff in our workforce."

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SWSPHN also:

- Enhances the cultural knowledge and understanding of GPs, nurses and others working within general practice to improve the access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to mainstream primary healthcare services
- Works with local Elders and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and other government and non-government organisations, to develop services tailored to our local community

“Our organisation is very proud to launch our Innovate RAP – our next big step towards reconciliation and a firm basis on which we can build towards improving the inequalities affecting the health of our First Nations people,” Dr McDonald said.

[Download SWSPHN's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan](#)

South Western Sydney PHN is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting general practitioners, practice nurses and other primary health providers to deliver the best possible care for their patients. Our aim is to improve access to quality local healthcare for all residents living in the Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee LGAs, areas which include but are not exclusive to the major traditional nations of Dharawal (Tharawal) and Gundangarra (Gandangara).

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the waters and lands on which we live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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