



Health
Barossa Hills Fleurieu
Local Health Network

BHFLHN Aboriginal Health Strategy

2022 - 2032



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Acknowledgement and deep gratitude to all that participated

BHFLHN and DS Consultancy would like to thank all community members, partners, and staff that contributed to the development of this strategy. BHFLHN is greatly appreciative of DS Consultancy's guidance and facilitation.

1. Acknowledgement to Country and Commitment to Reconciliation

At Barossa Hills Fleurieu Local Health Network (BHFLHN), we recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia. We acknowledge that the land on which our Local Health Network delivers health care services is the Traditional Lands for the Kurna, Ngadjuri, Peramangk and Ngarrindjeri / Ramindjeri Peoples.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a deep connection with their Land, Water and Communities. This is central to their cultural, spiritual, social, physical and emotional identity. We honour and pay our respects to all generations of the Kurna, Ngadjuri, Peramangk, and Ngarrindjeri Ramindjeri people. In particular, we honour and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders both past, present, and emerging.

BHFLHN acknowledges our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and workforce, who are from many Nations around Australia. We thank them for continuing to share their cultural knowledge. We also acknowledge our non-Aboriginal workforce for being brave and contributing to Reconciliation and truth-telling within our Local Health Network. We are all on this journey together.

BHFLHN is committed to working towards Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As a predominately non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, we acknowledge that we will never fully understand the historic impact of displacement from Traditional Lands, denial of cultural practices and other injustices that occurred contributing to the generational trauma still felt today. However, we do acknowledge that truth telling is important in understanding how the past continues to shape the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. We also know to act in genuine allyship, we will need to reflect on ourselves, our practices and ensure all that we do is focused on decolonising our services and systems and ensuring they do not replicate the hurts of the past.

We acknowledge and treat cultural safety with the highest regard and aim to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers and community feel welcomed and safe each time they access health care services.

2. About us

BHFLHN works on Ngadjuri, Kurna, Peramangk, and Ngarrindjeri Ramindjeri Nations. BHFLHN delivers a range of in-hospital, aged care, community, disability, and mental health services through public hospitals and other health and aged care service sites located at Gawler, Angaston, Tanunda, Eudunda, Kapunda, Mount Pleasant, Gumeracha, Mount Barker, Strathalbyn, Victor Harbor and Kangaroo Island.

BHFLHN is governed by a Governing Board, reporting to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, with its functions defined in the Health Care (Governance) Act 2018.

BHFLHN oversees country-wide mental health services through the Rural and Remote Mental Health Service, based at Glenside, and the state-wide borderline personality disorder service, BPD Co. We also host the Rural Support Service, which supports all six regional local health networks across the state with a focus on improving quality and safety.

As per Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, BHFLHN Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was 3151. The data highlights that 52% of the BHFLHN Aboriginal population are under the age of 25.

As at May 2023, the overall BHFLHN Aboriginal workforce population is 48, which is 1.80% of our overall workforce, against a workforce target of 4%, that we are committed to achieve.

A large proportion of our workforce are in positions within the Aboriginal Health Directorate, undertaking roles such as Aboriginal Health Practitioners, Aboriginal Maternal Infant Care Practitioners, project officers, and leadership. There is also a number of our Aboriginal workforce in positions that support mainstream service delivery.

BHFLHN vision

By 2025, we aspire to be acclaimed as a leading LHN, demonstrating courage in being innovative and creative as we continue to strive for excellence. Aristotle said: “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.” The initiatives outlined in this Strategy, demonstrate that in many ways as an LHN we are already living our vision. Over the coming four years we are committed to building on our existing strengths and making excellence a habit.

BHFLHN Strategic Plan

We will drive improvements in Aboriginal health, recognising the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers by:

Our Services

We will drive improvements in Aboriginal Health, recognising the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers by:

- 1.11 Providing respectful, culturally safe, high-quality services and care that meets those unique needs.
- 1.12 Actively promoting a culture of reconciliation and growing our Aboriginal workforce.

Our People

We will provide a dynamic environment that fosters learning excellence, and facilitates a positive, inclusive culture with high levels of leadership by:

- 2.7. Actively pursuing a recruitment and retention strategy to grow and empower our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce through initiatives that foster a sense of belonging and ownership.
- 2.8. Investing in the skills of Aboriginal people and actively facilitating higher levels of cultural awareness within the workforce.

BHFLHN Community and Consumer Engagement Strategy

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement

Commitment statement 1: We commit to stepping outside of our comfort zone by listening deeply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to empower and support self-determination in wellbeing and healing outcomes.

Overarching values

Respect – We stand for quality treatment and care that every person deserves, every time.

This means we will:

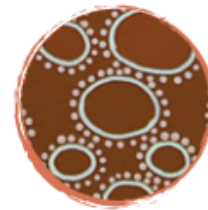
- Understand that everyone is on a different journey.
- Start where a person is at – knowing that they are experts of their health experience.
- Take time to learn and support each person's physical, cultural and wellbeing autonomy.



Integrity – We commit to own up, open up, follow up.

This means we will:

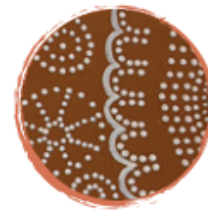
- Support people to speak up and be proud of who they are.
- Continually learn and adapt our practices to be inclusive of the people we journey with.
- Be transparent and take action in our decision-making processes.



Collaboration – We recognise that sharing improves our caring.

This means we will:

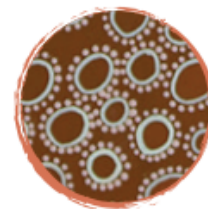
- Seek to learn continuously and deliver leadership excellence as individuals, and as an organisation.
- Come together to understand the wants, needs and aspirations of our consumers.
- Come together to create a safe environment for people to access our services.
- Listen and value the voices of the people that are in our communities.



Kindness – We give care and take care in providing care.

This means we will:

- Show compassion and empathy with all that we journey with.
- Show kindness in everything we do.



3. Message from the Governing Board Chair – Jim Hazel

As Barossa Hills Fleurieu Local Health Network (BHFLHN) Governing Board Chair, I am pleased to present the BHFLHN Aboriginal Health Strategy, which outlines our commitment to First Nations communities. We acknowledge the diversity and richness of these First Nations cultures and traditions, and value the important role they have in shaping our health services.

While we are proud to have made significant progress in our efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of First Nations peoples, we know that there is still much work to be done. As described in this strategy, we are committed to continuing to build on our successes and to working collaboratively with First Nations communities to ensure that their needs are met, and their voices are heard.

We believe that self-determination is key to improving the health outcomes of First Nations peoples, and this strategy commits us to supporting First Nations communities in their efforts to achieve this. Our organisation is committed to building strong, collaborative relationships with First Nations communities and to working together to create a health service that is more equitable, inclusive and culturally safe.

4. Message from the Chief Executive Officer – Rebecca Graham

The BHFLHN Aboriginal Health Strategy is a proud achievement; clearly articulating our commitment to ensuring the voices of First Nations communities are heard, and that the unique and local needs of each of these communities are met when accessing our health services.

As Chief Executive Officer, I am personally committed to lifelong learning and allyship. As both an individual and leader of our local health network, I recognise the importance of my role in building strong relationships with First Nations peoples and communities, and modelling my allyship through active listening, speaking up and demonstrating a willingness to learn and be corrected.

I am particularly proud of the work undertaken by the Aboriginal Health Team at Gawler Health Service improving health outcomes for First Nations peoples. We are inspired by their dedication, expertise and passion in our plans to ensure communities right across our network area can come to expect that same level of cultural safety, respect and tailored service delivery.

To achieve this, we must continue to listen to the voices of First Nations communities, recognising that their needs and voices have historically been marginalized and excluded. We understand that this requires ongoing effort and accountability, and that we must embrace a deep understanding of the history of colonization and its ongoing impact on First Nations peoples.

Achieving the goals in this strategy will require change at many levels, and we are committed to doing this work in partnership with First Nations community. I thank all those who have been part of our journey so far, and I look forward to continuing our work together in seeing this strategy come to life.

5. Message from the Co-Directors of Aboriginal Health – Peter Taylor and Rebecca Kimlin

As the Aboriginal Health Co-Directors, we stand committed to the BHFLHN Aboriginal Health Strategy. We firmly believe that achieving true reconciliation requires a steadfast commitment to truth-telling, anti-racism, allyship, and privileging the voices of First Nations people. This strategy is our First Nations communities' truth-telling and sets the priorities that will guide us for the next 10 years.

This truth-telling journey has also been a journey of healing for First Nations and the ever-growing Allyship from non-Aboriginal work colleagues. In order to heal, we must confront the uncomfortable truths of our nation's history, acknowledging the dispossession, discrimination, and systemic marginalisation experienced by First Nations people. By acknowledging these truths, we can create a foundation of understanding that will guide our actions and decisions towards further healing and reconciliation.

As First Nation leaders we recognise the urgency in addressing the historical and ongoing injustices that our mob have faced. In partnership with our allies we are dedicated to dismantling racism in all its forms, recognising that it permeates every aspect of society, including healthcare. Our commitment is to build a culturally safe and responsive healthcare services for First Nations individuals and communities. To get there we need to work together, First Nations and our non-Aboriginal sisters and brothers. As well as continue to yarn and foster an environment of deep listening to First Nations communities. Cultural safety is essential to safe healthcare, we are committed to excellence within our First Nations workforce and by continuing to build capacity.

Lastly, we are deeply appreciative of everyone's voice that created this body of work. We see strength and resilience every day in our community. We know that healing starts when we feel safe to voice our health and wellbeing priorities and self-determination lies in the liberation of First Nations. This strategy maps out our priorities like our song-lines. It deeply embeds our ways of knowing, being, and doing into all BHFLHN Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing services.

6. About this strategy

The BHFLHN Aboriginal Health Strategy (the Strategy) is both a line in the sand and a map for our journey to walk alongside Aboriginal communities as they determine their own health and wellbeing. We know we have a great responsibility in this to provide high quality services that are culturally aware, safe, and responsive in partnership with Aboriginal peoples.

This Strategy was developed through many conversations with community through Aboriginal Yarning Circles and Nunga Lunches where unique local stories were told, and priorities shared.

We also learnt from consultations with staff across BHFLHN about what they see as the priorities for our staff and services and in particular sub-regions and service areas.

We have learnt so much from all stakeholders and know now it is time to act. To respond to the priorities and issues raised by community members we have 7 Strategic Priorities:

- **Strategic priority 1: Culturally responsive, equitable and locally tailored services**
- **Strategic priority 2: Culturally safe and welcoming services**
- **Strategic priority 3: Supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal communities**
- **Strategic priority 4: Partnering with local Aboriginal communities**
- **Strategic priority 5: Partnering to provide holistic responses**
- **Strategic priority 6: Working with Aboriginal families and children**
- **Strategic priority 7: Leading & growing Aboriginal health knowledges & evidence**

We are committed to implementing these priorities in ongoing consultation with local communities, with courage and with humility.

7. Learning from community: what we heard

The Aboriginal peoples and community members of Barossa Hills Fleurieu represent the diversity, vibrancy, and resilience of First Nations peoples. Whilst there are some similarities in health and service need, each community is also unique in the issues the community are facing and the health response required.

These learnings were gathered from Aboriginal Yarning Circles in Gawler, Mount Barker, Victor Harbor, and Kangaroo Island. Whilst we spoke to several community members, we wanted to acknowledge that we have not yet reached all Aboriginal people across BHFLHN. We know reaching all Aboriginal people will not be easy, but we will strive to reach more and expand the reach of Aboriginal Yarning Circles.

Barossa (Gawler)

“Don’t make me feel like I’m dumb for my choices” (Community Member)

Whilst the community identified several key service priorities, many comments also focused on improving the practice of BHFLHN providers. In terms of service priorities, community members highlighted how positively they have found both the Aboriginal Health Team and access to the General Practitioner (GP) though they would like an increased GP service in the sub-region. Additional service priorities included wanting a specific focus on social and emotional wellbeing, a focus on bringing younger people and Elders together in health programs and wanting a focused effort on Aboriginal employment and education, particularly for young people. In relation to the practice of service providers, community members are asking for clear communication, respectful practice including for Elders, seeing people with “kind and happy faces”, and having interactions that lead to, “knowing what is going on”.

Whilst the community do seek improvements, they also feel very positive about services in general and speak highly of the Yarning Circle process and Aboriginal health services. One Elder mentioned feeling “like magic” after attending a Yarning Circle and attending the health service for another, “feels like home.”

The community identified the following service priorities:

- Increasing access to the Aboriginal Health Team General Practitioner.
- A greater focus on social and emotional wellbeing.
- Support with managing chronic conditions.
- Programs that provide health responses and support cultural maintenance, for example Elders and younger people learning from one another.
- Aboriginal employment and education with a focus on younger people.
- Exploring the use of telehealth with community; and
- Early intervention for children and young people including access to allied health services; and
- Not having to repeat their story multiple times.

To feel welcome, the community need practitioners who:

- Are helpful, particularly at reception.
- Communicate well and explain clearly and simply what is happening in their service journey including at discharge.
- Are kind and happy.
- Understand local community, Aboriginal culture, and respectful practice.

To feel welcome, the community need a service environment:

- Where there is clear signage and communication of all forms.
- Where there is a comfortable space for when they leave the hospital and transport to home.
- That is 'warm' has colour and lighting that is both comfortable and practical and represents Aboriginal culture in many forms.

Aboriginal Yarning Circles should continue and community would like to partner in the following ways:

- Having a joint meeting held by BHFLHN for community across BHFLHN.
- Having a First Nations Governance committee that involves Kurna people and local representatives.
- Aboriginal Yarning Circles specifically for younger people.
- Having greater school engagement through school visits and educational sessions.

Having heard from this community, we will:

- Work on the priorities identified by community and ensure these voices are woven throughout our work. As practitioners we are committed to reflecting on how we interact and work with community to improve these interactions and develop our cultural awareness and responsiveness.

Hills (Mount Barker)

“We're not just data, we are people with feelings, stories, families, knowledge.”

(Community Member)

Community members explained the challenges of accessing services in general, in Mount Barker as it is often considered by organisations as ‘close enough’ to Adelaide for community access and in general, it can be considered a more ‘well-to-do’ community. It can feel for community that they really need assistance, that “Mount Barker is not a priority.” An additional challenge for Aboriginal community members is a sense of “invisibility” in the area. Whilst there are Traditional Custodians (the Peramangk people) there are also many Aboriginal people that have come to Mount Barker and surrounding areas from other Nations and Language Groups. This has led to a diverse community that are also dispersed across the sub-region. Regarding service priorities, community identified the need for Aboriginal specific services that are locally accessible, a central place for Aboriginal people and programs, holistic service responses and support with service navigation and continuity of care.

The community identified the following service priorities:

- Access locally to Aboriginal specific health services that have Aboriginal staff including access to a General Practitioner regularly.
- Support with chronic disease management.
- Services for children including for autism, ear health and dental health.
- Supporting Elders, including with dementia.
- Access to programs including men’s, women’s, young parents’ programs.
- Holistic service responses including social and emotional wellbeing, sexual health, drug, and alcohol services allied health services and cultural support services.
- Services that can provide outreach.
- Services that are designed with a cultural framework (anti-racism/decolonisation/from a First Nations’ knowledge perspective).
- A focus on young people and leadership.
- Support with service navigation, liaising between community and services and continuity of care.
- Supporting and “building up” the community who are in the sub-region.
- Not having to retell their story, instead that this is on file and acknowledged.
- A central place for Aboriginal people to meet and access services.
- Services that include arts and wellbeing approaches.

To feel welcome, the community need practitioners who:

- Understand how to be an ally to community.
- Provide clear information so clients can make an informed decision and know what is happening next.
- Understand the unique and diverse community in Mount Barker and surrounds.
- Understand Aboriginal culture, strategic aims (like Treaty) and the process of truth-telling.
- Are warm, smile, are kind, listen and are genuinely interested in the needs of the person in front of them.
- Value, and do not judge, and believe people along their service journey.

To feel welcome, the community need a service environment:

- With messaging and communication that shows the commitment to Aboriginal health and community including an acknowledgement of country.
- Spaces that reflect Aboriginal culture and community.
- Clear signage.
- That is an engaging space for families.
- Colours and lighting that is simple and clear and does not 'overload people'.
- A television that provides local stories about people and country.

Aboriginal Yarning Circles should continue and community would like to partner in the following ways:

- Having the organisation and staff as formal allies to the community
- The establishment of First Nations Governance Committee with Peramangk community and other community members involved.

Having heard from this community, we will:

- Work through the identified priorities and ensure all spaces and interactions are welcoming. As practitioners we will learn about the diverse community, understand, and explore what Allyship is and means for us and learn about what voice and Treaty means for Aboriginal people.

Fleurieu (Victor Harbor)

“I want to walk into any health service and feel confident with the care I'm receiving; I don't want to leave confused and frustrated.” (Community Member)

When asked about priorities, cultural maintenance was again a key theme. With the desire for group programs of all types that include a connection between Elders, children, and young people. Workforce was also seen as a priority with community seeking a focus on Aboriginal employment and workforce development, service navigation and support roles and wanting the pregnancy journey being supported in this sub-region by Aboriginal specific programs. Further, due to the distance between Victor Harbor and metropolitan Hospital and other health services and the desire for community to be brought together, community members also asked for greater support for transport and reflected on a bus that had been available in the past. Again, as in previous sub-regions much of the feedback was also focused on the interaction with staff and wanting to be treated fairly and respectfully.

The community identified the following service priorities:

- Building the local Aboriginal workforce through traineeships, cadetships with roles such as advocacy, service navigation and liaison workers across community and the acute services.
- Access to transport for example a van.
- Group programs that are fun, informative and include exercise, healthy eating life skills and where children can also be involved.
- Elders and young people with shared storytelling encouraging the next generation in health and cultural issues.
- Pregnancy support before and after birth like the Aboriginal Family Birthing Program.
- Holistic support services including mental health, alcohol, and other drug services.
- Support with managing chronic conditions.
- Support with mental health and social emotional wellbeing.

To feel welcome, the community need practitioners who:

- Understand Aboriginal culture, particularly Ngarrindjeri and Ramindjeri culture and can speak some of the language.
- Treat people fairly, respectfully and listen to consumers.
- Accept Aboriginal people and consumers as equal.
- Are polite and patient and have a warm and welcoming attitude.

To feel welcome, the community need a service environment:

- With an Aboriginal workforce.
- Where respect is paid to local Elders through artwork like footprints on the walkway, and community's work with the Hospital is recorded and shared through photography on the walls.
- That has Nunga art and posters and cultural music.
- An information board that shares local services and upcoming activities.

Aboriginal Yarning Circles should continue and community would like to partner in the following ways:

- Where staff are invited to yarning circles as well as any other Aboriginal people.
- There is an open invitation to group programs i.e., health days.
- There are activities implemented like a local community run to encourage reconciliation and start to open conversations.

Having heard from this community, we will:

- Focus on the identified priorities and ensure we bring community together and staff together for there to be shared opportunities for learning and sharing. As practitioners we are committed to learning about the local Aboriginal peoples and respectfully embedding Aboriginal cultural learning across our services.

Fleurieu (Kangaroo Island)

Kangaroo Island is a beautiful, small island and a remote community. Many community members have travelled to the Island from across Australia to live with this beauty and find space. This has led to diverse and disperse Aboriginal community on the Island. Whilst Kangaroo Island has many benefits, it is also extremely isolated and provides a unique challenge in accessing services.

When asked about their priorities, there was a focus on limited-service access, limited transport and the need for Aboriginal people and culture to be acknowledged on the Island.

The community identified the following service priorities:

- Increased access to General Practice and bulk billing.
- Access to other specialist services including allied health services on a regular basis.
- Access to information about the services that are already being provided.
- Improved transport on the Island.
- A health promotion and community development strategy particularly focused on young people, giving consideration to creating youth specific spaces.
- A 'pop-up' health strategy that moves around local communities.
- A sustainable program to support the pregnancy journey.
- A focus on child health and access to allied health services for children.
- A focus on school-based programs.

To feel welcome, the community need practitioners who:

- Are kind, respectful, non-shaming and listen to consumers.
- Understand the history of the Island and its cultural significance.

To feel welcome, the community need a service environment:

- That responds to local community needs where they are at, this includes outreaching into community events such as sports events.
- With Aboriginal faces behind the counter.
- Nunga friendly art and posters.

Aboriginal Yarning Circles should continue and community would like to partner in the following ways:

- The involvement in a local Reconciliation Action Group and the Health Advisory Committee.
- Implementing Health Fair Days for the community.

Having heard from this community we will:

- Work on the identified priorities and seek to provide accessible and culturally safe services. As practitioners we seek to reach out to community to bridge the isolation and are committed to respectfully engage with the history and culture of Kangaroo Island.

8. Strategic priorities

Strategic priority 1: Culturally responsive, equitable and locally tailored services

Why is this important?

An Aboriginal workforce is essential to providing culturally safe services that are accessible to Aboriginal people and communities. It is the key to Aboriginal people trusting services and managing their own health and wellbeing.

And to do this we know we need to ensure an environment that is culturally aware, safe responsive and respectful, where Aboriginal people feel safe to identify and see BHFLHN as an employer of choice. We know we have more work to do.

BHFLHN are implementing effective and consumer respected Aboriginal health services, but this is only occurring in parts of BHFLHN. We need to do more to provide these services across the network, and we need to do this in ways that meet the specific needs of local communities.

What we are proud of and would like to grow?

- Increase the percentage of the Aboriginal workforce to 4%.
- A strong Aboriginal Health Team based in Gawler.
- Aboriginal Family Birthing Program positions in Gawler and Mount Barker.
- Planned positions within all service sites with each Emergency Department Development.
- The appointment of an Aboriginal Workforce Project Officer to support workforce planning and recruitment.

What will we do to meet this priority?

- Prioritise the recruitment of positions to work towards equitable service delivery of services for Aboriginal communities.
- Explore creative and assertive approaches to recruit Aboriginal positions from local community as a priority.
- Ensure all human resource recruitment and retention strategies are meeting their requirements for Aboriginal community and staff involvement in the processes.
- Implement multiple strategies to provide employment and training opportunities to Aboriginal people. There will be a specific focus on young Aboriginal people and students.

Strategic priority 2: Culturally safe and welcoming services

Why is this important?

To support the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities we know that in addition to high quality clinical services the spaces we create and the interactions we have are fundamental to great health outcomes. We know that every interaction matters, and this can be the difference between Aboriginal people engaging with our services at the right time to manage their health or not.

We also are learning to better understand each of the communities we serve. They are all vibrant, diverse communities each with their own traditional cultural stories and wisdom and community, family, and personal stories. Each requires deep listening at a local level to genuinely respond to the needs of each community. We are committed to a life-long journey of learning.

What we are proud of and would like to grow?

- The implementation of Aboriginal cultural awareness training.
- The development of culturally appropriate and healing spaces as part of Emergency Department developments.
- The development of a healing space and garden at Kangaroo Island Health Service with local community.
- The development of an Allyship program, that provides the knowledge and guidance for nominated staff to support the Aboriginal workforce and carry the cultural load in partnership with Aboriginal staff. Strategies being explored include Ally accreditation training, cultural supervision, and mentoring, and onboarding new Aboriginal staff into mainstream services and how we become genuine allies for local communities.
- The implementation of the Aboriginal Health Committee Yarning Circle.

What will we do to meet this priority?

- The recruitment of a specific staff member that has a focus on Aboriginal cultural safety to support the creation, delivery, and mentoring support for a series of localised cultural awareness programs.
- The development of localised cultural awareness programs that are designed with local Aboriginal communities in the Barossa, Hills and Fleurieu and are flexible and accessible to meet the needs of staff.
- The development and implementation of Aboriginal Yarning Circles that are specifically focused on cultural learning and challenging racism and involve staff and local Aboriginal community where they choose to be involved.
- Any future site developments will be informed by consultations with Aboriginal communities to date and Aboriginal people will be invited to inform future design.

Strategic priority 3: Supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal communities

Why is this important?

When Aboriginal people are asked about their health issues, the answers are rarely focused on health conditions or body parts. Instead, Aboriginal people discuss the full social and emotional wellbeing of their communities that includes wanting holistic service responses within the context of building community and regenerating and maintaining cultural knowledge and practices. As part of our response, we are committed to the principles outlined in the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017, p3) that provide this, "holistic and whole-of-life definition of health held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."

We are also aware of the impact of the pandemic on Aboriginal communities as it limited-service responses and isolated family and communities. We want to ensure that we play a role in bringing community together as we focus on meeting the local health needs.

What we are proud of and would like to grow

- The implementation of Aboriginal Yarning Circles across communities.
- Nunga Lunches in Gawler and Kangaroo Island.
- The Kangaroo Island Healing Garden and Art Project.
- School holiday programs based in Gawler.
- The Wirrkuta Yarta Health Living Program.
- Holistic clinical services in Gawler.

What will we do to meet this priority?

- The expansion of Aboriginal Yarning Circles.
- The continued implementation and expansion of Nunga lunches.
- The implementation of health and wellbeing programs that respond to community need and are designed with local communities. These will include programs that specifically support men, women, young people and bringing Elders and young people together.
- Social and emotional wellbeing as a specific service approach will be designed and built into relevant Aboriginal positions for existing and new staff. This could include components like group and individual work, working within sites and providing outreach and applying narrative therapy approaches.
- The implementation and resourcing of culturally appropriate training and accredited training to key staff.
- The development and implementation of a traditional healing program including engaging Ngangkari.

Strategic priority 4: Partnering with local Aboriginal communities

Why is this important?

For sustainable health and healing to occur in Aboriginal communities we know that Aboriginal people and communities must lead this and as a health service, we need to be an ally in this. We have the responsibility to deliver high quality services to Aboriginal people that need them, and we need to walk alongside community to ensure we deliver these in the right way. This means that Aboriginal people need a voice across all levels of our organisation, and we need to come to any partnership in a spirit of reciprocity. This also includes working alongside local Aboriginal services including Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS).

What we are proud of and would like to grow?

- The implementation of Aboriginal Yarning Circles across communities.
- Aboriginal Health Experts on committees and working groups.
- Developing complementary services with Moorundi ACCHS.

What will we do to meet this priority?

- Encourage and support Aboriginal community members to be involved in established Health Advisory Committees
- Co-design a First Nations Governance Committee with our First Nations community from Ngadjuri, Kaurna, Peramangk, and Ngarrindjeri Ramindjeri nations.
- Increasing Aboriginal Health Experts on committees and working groups. This will include updating the register for BHFLHN.
- Growing the partnership with Moorundi ACCHS.
- Establishing a partnership with the Aboriginal Health Council of SA to build closer connections with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.
- Bringing together all Aboriginal Yarning Circles community members together annually.

Strategic priority 5: Partnering to provide holistic responses

Why is this important?

Whilst Aboriginal communities often focus on the broad social and emotional wellbeing of individuals and communities, unfortunately many social service and health services are funded to focus on specific service responses and issues, this can lead to service 'siloes' that make accessing services more difficult.

We know that to better respond to the fullness of Aboriginal communities and peoples; we need to partner with other organisations to provide holistic responses.

Having said this in general Aboriginal health services in and of themselves provide more holistic approaches as they are led by Aboriginal people and are founded on Aboriginal lived experience.

What we are proud of and would like to grow?

- Holistic services based at Gawler in partnership with Sonder, Department of Education, SAPOL, and Town of Gawler.
- Our internal partnerships with Community and Allied Health and Acute services.
- Strengthening our partnership with Moorundi through Wellbeing services.

What will we do to meet this priority?

- Where community members have identified priorities that may not be completely within the BHFLHN service scope, the Network is committed to working with others to respond to these priorities. Depending on the area this could include transportation and various social needs.

Strategic priority 6: Working with Aboriginal families and children

Why is this important?

Compared to the broader community, Aboriginal peoples have a younger population. Across BHFLHN, 52% of the overall population who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander are under 25 years of age (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

We need to provide service responses that-for this greater population and support Aboriginal families and children to thrive across the life course.

We also know that there are many Aboriginal children currently in out of home care and often not living with their families. This tells us that we have a shared responsibility to support Aboriginal families and children wherever we can as early as we can, so that families can self-determine, heal, and thrive.

What we are proud of and would like to grow?

- Child Health and Development Team Aboriginal Health Practitioner.
- Aboriginal Family Resources Workers based in Gawler.
- A three year pilot of an Aboriginal Child Health and Development Practitioner in the Barossa.
- Aboriginal Family Birthing Programs in Gawler and Mount Barker.
- School based programs at Nuriootpa and Gawler.

What will we do to meet this priority?

- We will prioritise Aboriginal family birthing and child health and development positions.
- We will strengthen the partnership with social services to support and advocate for families and children.

Strategic priority 7: Leading and growing Aboriginal health knowledges and evidence

Why is this important?

Due to colonisation and subsequent policies, Aboriginal cultures have been disrupted, with language and knowledge taken away causing harm that will be with Aboriginal communities for generations. Due to this impact, the stories about Aboriginal people are often problem focused, where the data, research and narrative about Aboriginal communities are still controlled and told by others about Aboriginal peoples.

With the profound work of Aboriginal leaders and researchers and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Organisations this is changing, and we are committed to ensuring these changes also occur within our organisation. We want to ensure that the stories of Aboriginal peoples are told by Aboriginal peoples and that Aboriginal data and evidence is understood and shared through a cultural lens.

Further it will be important to ensure that service data is captured efficiently and effectively to understand service need and impact.

What we are proud of and would like to grow?

- The implementation of Aboriginal Yarning Circles.
- A strong executive leadership that are willing to learn and be challenged on Aboriginal issues and work to allyship.
- Gawler Aboriginal Health Team managing local Aboriginal health data.

What will we do to meet this priority?

- Consider the development and engagement of an Aboriginal specific role that is primarily focused on data capture and analysis with a cultural lens.
- Establish a partnership with the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) to grow our research capabilities.

9. Closing the Gap Statement of Commitment

In closing, at BHFLHN we are committed to ensuring equitable healthcare outcomes and improving the health and wellbeing of all individuals within our community. Recognising the significant health disparities faced by First Nations people in South Australia, we pledge to actively work towards closing the gap and achieving health equity for all.

We acknowledge that First Nations communities have unique health challenges resulting from historical and ongoing systemic injustices, including social and cultural determinants of health, barriers, and limited access to healthcare services. As a mainstream health service, we believe it is our responsibility to address these disparities and provide culturally safe and responsive care.

Our commitment is grounded in the following principles:

1. **Cultural Respect and Safety:** We will foster an environment that respects and values First Nations cultures, practices, and knowledge systems. We will actively work to ensure culturally safe practices are embedded within our services and engage in ongoing cultural safety training for our staff.
2. **Partnership and Collaboration:** We will actively seek partnerships and collaborations with First Nations communities, Elders, and leaders to develop shared strategies, initiatives, and solutions. We will prioritise community-led and community-controlled approaches in healthcare planning, implementation, and evaluation.
3. **Accessible and Equitable Services:** We will strive to improve access to healthcare services for First Nations people by addressing geographical, financial, and cultural barriers. This includes increasing the availability of culturally appropriate healthcare providers, expanding outreach services, and developing innovative solutions to enhance accessibility.
4. **Health Promotion and Prevention:** We will prioritise prevention and health promotion strategies that address the specific needs and priorities of First Nations communities. This includes addressing the social and cultural determinants of health, supporting community-led initiatives, and ensuring early intervention programs are available to address health challenges.
5. **Data Sovereignty:** We aim to collect and analyse data to monitor health outcomes, identify disparities, and measure progress in closing the gap. We will be transparent and accountable for our efforts, regularly reporting on our progress and seeking feedback from First Nations communities to inform our actions.

The BHFLHN Aboriginal Health Strategy is commitment to Closing The Gap for First Nations people. It aims to embed cultural safety, privilege voices of First Nations, and develop services that Aboriginal people feel empowered to self-determine. We recognise that this journey requires sustained effort, and we are dedicated to continuous learning, improvement, and engagement with First Nations communities to ensure our actions are guided by their needs and aspirations.

For more information

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