



**Aboriginal
Health Council
of Western Australia**

Aboriginal Workforce Engagement and Development Strategy

2023 - 2027



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Country we live, work and study on, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, for the strength, resilience and capacity they hold for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Within this strategy, 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 peers and community.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following participants who contributed to the development of the new Aboriginal Workforce Engagement and Development Strategy:

- the Board of Directors
- the Executive Management Team
- the organisation's Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employees who participated in consultations
- the People and Culture Team; and
- the previous Aboriginal Workforce Engagement and Development Strategy Working Group Members

This design represents Aboriginal people in the workforce and how AHCWA supports and helps them grow in their careers here. The person symbol is made up of different shades of blue and green colours and shapes which represent AHCWA, its employees and how they back and support each individual. The vibrant yellow and purple colours radiating outwards and inside the design symbolise the energy, optimism and creativity of our Aboriginal employees here at AHCWA.

Tim Prouse - Boonwurrung

Disclaimers

- A. The term 'Member Services' is inclusive of all Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) in WA.
- B. The word 'Aboriginal' has been used throughout this document. When referring to 'Aboriginal' we are referring to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



About AHCWA

The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) is the peak body for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) in Western Australia. We exist to support and act on behalf of our 23 Member services across the state, actively responding to their individual and collective needs.

Governed by an Aboriginal Board of Directors representing seven regions in Western Australia, AHCWA aims to promote and strengthen the ACCHS' Model of Care, a model that is built around the delivery of comprehensive, holistic, and culturally secure primary health care services.

We come together as one to: respect, welcome and understand social and cultural needs; network and provide mutual support; advocate and influence policy; monitor the performance of the ACCHS sector; build the capacity of the Aboriginal health workforce; and, improve and strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people and their communities.

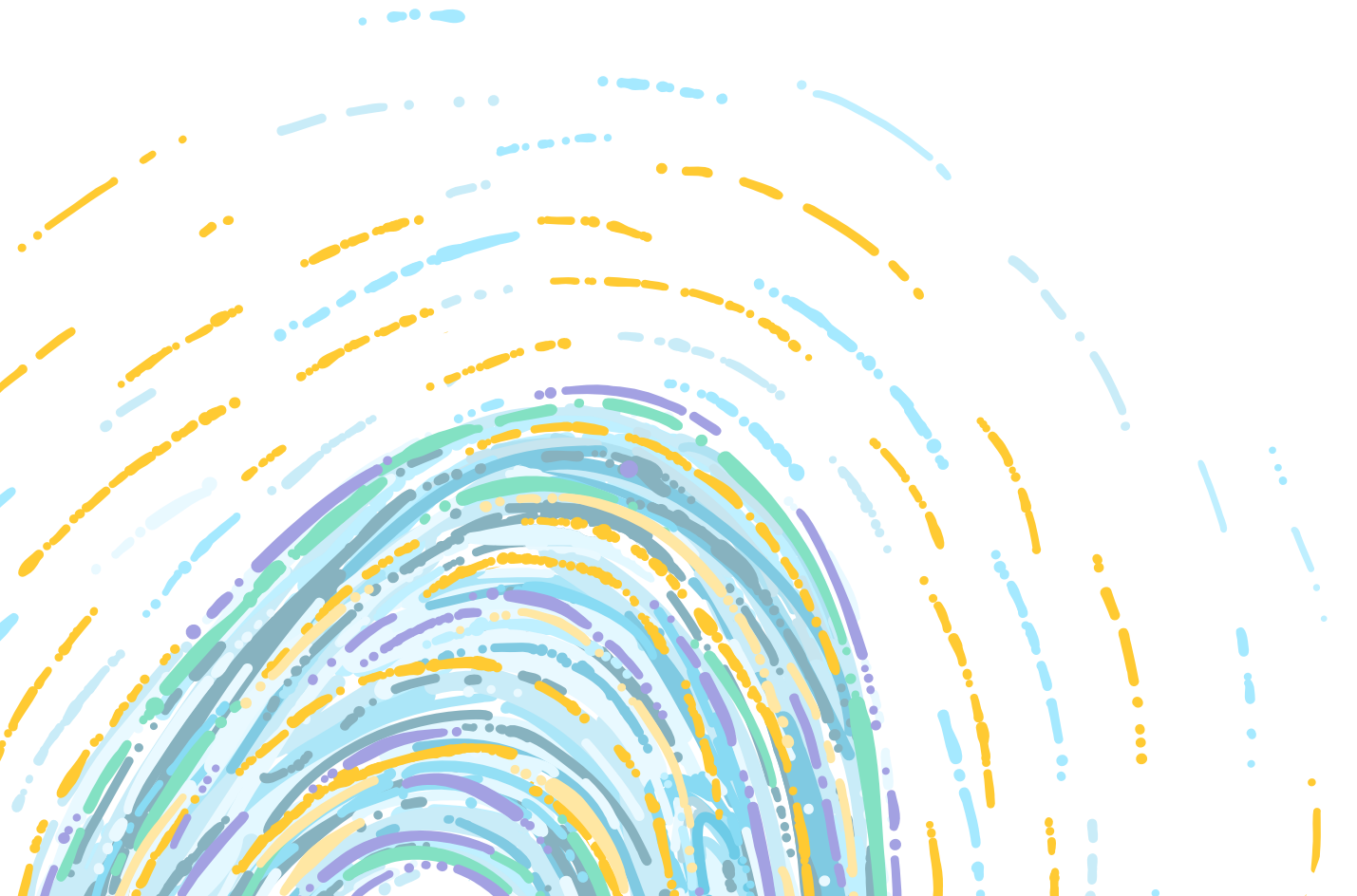
Representing the interests and needs of our Member Services, we lead and influence the development of Aboriginal health policies at a national and a state level. We advocate for the rights and entitlements of all Aboriginal people and their communities to optimal health and wellbeing.

Incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* in May 2005, AHCWA continues to evolve and build capacity as the leading authority for comprehensive Aboriginal primary health care in Western Australia.

Vision → Aboriginal people in Western Australia enjoy the same level of health and wellbeing as all Western Australians.

Mission → As the leading authority for Aboriginal health in Western Australia, we strive to strengthen and promote the ACCHS' Model of Care, empowering Aboriginal people to achieve health equality in their communities.

AHCWA is underpinned by a commitment to Aboriginal leadership, self-determination and cultural diversity, pillars which shape the way the organisation conducts its business.



Values

AHCWA's values are designed to guide and promote a strong and high-performing organisational culture that is responsive to the state-wide needs of our Member Services.



Culture

Acknowledging and understanding the importance and diversity of Aboriginal culture in all that we do.

Integrity

Working with personal and collective integrity whilst striving to achieve service excellence for our Members and community.

Passion

Exhibiting passion, positivity and commitment in all that we do to inspire and empower all people, Member Services and communities to reach their potential.

Collaboration

Fostering and contributing to shared objectives through inclusiveness and engagement with our Member Services.

Accountability

Being accountable to all our Members, stakeholders and the community.

Resilience

Embracing challenges and harnessing opportunities to empower our communities for self-determination.

From the CEO

It is a pleasure to launch the new Aboriginal Workforce Engagement and Development Strategy 2023-2027 for the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia.

This strategy is a key commitment from the Board of Directors, AHCWA Management and staff to improve and sustain employment outcomes for Aboriginal people. It will progress our commitment to be a diverse, inclusive and culturally safe employer of choice and recognised leader in the community.

AHCWA's Aboriginal Workforce Engagement and Development Strategy (AWEDS) 2023 – 2027 builds on past successes of the AWEDS 2018 – 2020, which was underpinned by the organisation's Strategic Plan 2018-2020, predominantly its strategic goal to enhance workforce capacity to improve the health, social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

AHCWA's AWEDS 2023 – 2027 will consolidate, expand on, and enhance the work established

under the previous strategy and reinforces AHCWA's commitment to increasing and retaining its Aboriginal workforce in order to better meet the needs of our clients and stakeholders.

While this strategy has a focus on our internal workforce, the initiatives aim to increase the participation of Aboriginal people across the WA ACCHS sector and within Aboriginal health broadly.

While progress has been made to date, there is still room for improvement if AHCWA is to provide a working environment that is culturally safe, promotes equity and diversity and is considered an employer of choice for Aboriginal people.

Des Martin
Chief Executive Officer

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS)

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) are services devoted to the comprehensive primary health care of Aboriginal people. Comprehensive primary health generally means health care provided by a health care professional when a patient first has contact with the health system.

For Aboriginal people, comprehensive primary health care is about a whole community working together to achieve and maintain wellbeing. Why? Because it's in a community that an individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being and as a consequence, the whole community's wellbeing improves.

The WA ACCHS network operates 73 clinics, offering over 24 different types of health and wellbeing services specifically designed to meet the health needs of local Aboriginal people. This results in over 500,000 episodes of care per annum.

Some are multi-functional practices with various medical practitioners and others are smaller and rely on Aboriginal Health Workers, Aboriginal Health Practitioners and/or Nurses to carry out most primary health care services.

Comprehensive primary health care services often have a preventative and health education focus in the following areas:

- Child and maternal health;
- Oral and dental health;
- Men's and women's health;
- Health checks;
- Eye and ear health; and
- Preventative programs that focus on quitting smoking and healthy eating.

Overview

The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia aims to build a sustainable, skilled and knowledgeable workforce and is committed to increasing and retaining its Aboriginal workforce.

AHCWA recognises that the promotion of equality and diversity in employment and recruitment practices are vital to attracting candidates to the sector, and strives to provide a supportive and culturally safe work environment that encourages the opportunity for professional development and career pathways for Aboriginal participants in the workplace.

This strategy works alongside the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which pledges a commitment to reconciliation, specifically relationships, opportunities and respect.

The updated AWEDS 2023 – 2027 was developed following an extensive consultation process with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

staff and will strengthen and build on past successes and seek new opportunities through increased collaboration, partnerships and shared responsibility for increasing Aboriginal employment and improving retention rates.

The AWEDS sets out the four focus areas to achieve this goal:

- Aboriginal Workforce and Employment Opportunities.
- Local Community Engagement and Opportunities.
- Building and Sustaining a Culturally Safe Workplace.
- Professional Development, Education and Career Pathways.

Guiding Principles

The AWEDS 2023 – 2027 is guided by the following fundamental principles:

- Applying the Organisational Values to the recruitment, selection and retention of Aboriginal employees and to become an employer of choice within the Aboriginal community and health sector.
- Building on the organisation's workplace culture to promote and foster a culturally secure organisation to become an employer of choice within Aboriginal health.
- Building on the mentorship programs within the organisation that are available to Aboriginal workplace participants, enabling them to undertake their roles. Acknowledging that mentoring relationships have a greater positive impact on career success for Aboriginal workplace participants, provide a greater sense of identification for the participant, enhance the balance in work and social life developments, help in early career phases and help the mentee to better navigate the organisation.

1. Aboriginal Workforce and Employment Opportunities

Create employment opportunities to increase the Aboriginal representation within the organisation's workforce.

As the leading authority for Aboriginal health in Western Australia, we strive to strengthen and promote the ACCHS Model of Care, empowering Aboriginal people to achieve health equality in their communities. The organisation acknowledges that increasing its Aboriginal workforce is a key factor in achieving this

The organisation aims to achieve this objective by:

- Identifying, where possible, positions where Aboriginality is considered an essential criteria and classifying as per section 50(D) of the *Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)* and advertising accordingly.
- Classifying all positions (other than 50(D) identified positions) as per section 51 of the *Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)* to enable the targeted appointment of Aboriginal people to all positions.
- Demonstrating a commitment to following the organisation's Affirmative Action Policy to promote equal employment opportunity for Aboriginal people, meaning that Aboriginal applicants will not need to meet all the essential skills and experience requirements, except when mandated by other authorities.
- Demonstrating a commitment to executing AHCWA's recruitment strategy that comprises of a number of different advertising methods such as:
 - Advertising all positions internally and distributing to all employees;
 - Encouraging employees to share vacancies within their networks;
 - Utilising expressions of interest pools where appropriate;
 - Marketing job advertisements to attract Aboriginal people;
 - Utilising Aboriginal specific advertisement and engagement platforms, such as via: Seek, Ethical Jobs, Aboriginal Services Jobs Board, Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet; and OurMob, amongst others.
- Demonstrating a commitment to promoting recruitment processes that are sensitive to cultural needs, including the use of relevant cultural interview questions and ensuring that, where practicable, an Aboriginal person forms part of the selection and interview panel.
- Demonstrating a commitment to creating employment opportunities, including but not limited to: traineeship and cadetship programs, dedicated youth positions, and supporting entry-level opportunities made available to Aboriginal people.
- Targeting and attracting Aboriginal workers through appropriate advertising and recruitment, including the use of video messaging campaigns, culturally appropriate language and selection processes.

2023/2027 Strategy

2. Local Community Engagement and Opportunities

Create opportunities for the local Aboriginal community to develop skills valued by the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector.

Promote the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector as an employer of choice by creating placement opportunities, attending various community events and through education and training pathways.

The organisation aims to achieve this objective by:

- Proactively engaging with Aboriginal students and their training providers to promote and encourage career pathways and direct employment upon graduation.
- Early engagement with young people to raise awareness of and promoting careers in the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia and the wider Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector by supporting school and work placement opportunities.
- Attending relevant events and career exhibitions to promote and encourage employment within the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector, including the sponsorship of awards for Aboriginal people in Health and Community Service Sectors.

3. Building and Sustaining a Culturally Safe Workforce

A commitment to providing a culturally secure working environment that supports and validates the cultural beliefs, aspirations and practices of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal culture underpins every aspect of the work AHCWA does, and should always be reflected in work practices and behaviours. All employees are expected to acknowledge, understand and continuously promote the importance and diversity of Aboriginal culture in all work activities.

The organisation aims to achieve this objective by:

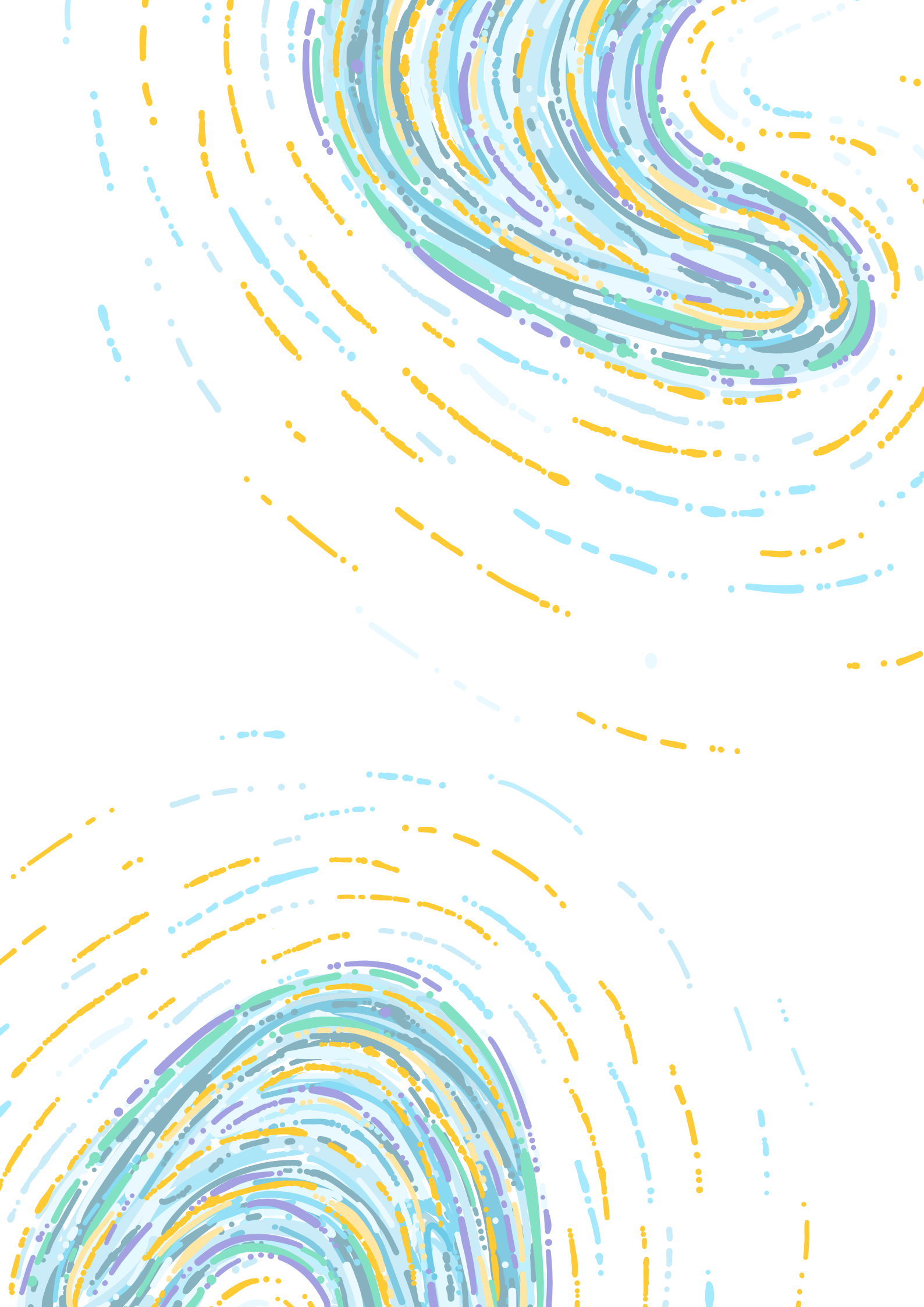
- Ensuring that the organisation's induction program raises awareness of Aboriginal culture as a method of promoting a culturally secure workplace by requiring all workplace participants to attend face-to-face cultural safety training in line with organisational policies. This includes facilitating cultural awareness, safety and/or security training throughout the year.
- Ensuring that employees required to be absent from work for Aboriginal cultural or ceremonial purposes are aware of, and approved to access to, cultural leave.
- Encouraging all employees to acknowledge, commemorate and where appropriate, participate or volunteer in, significant Aboriginal events.
- Utilising and building upon the skills within the AHCWA workforce to promote sharing of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and skills.
- Fostering a harmonious organisational culture that celebrates and promotes diversity through organisational team building activities, recognising significant multi-cultural events such as Harmony Day and workplace wellness initiatives.
- Creating a safe space for Aboriginal young people to share their connection to culture through various internal and external events.

4. Professional Development, Education and Career Pathways

The Aboriginal workforce are provided with, and have access to, professional development activities, education and career pathways.

The organisation aims to achieve this objective by:

- Empowering Aboriginal staff by promoting acting, secondment and transfer opportunities across the organisation, to enable Aboriginal employees to build upon existing, and gain new and diverse skills and knowledge.
- Encouraging employees to participate in appropriate professional development activities that promote personal growth and career progression, including participating in mentoring programs, and on cross-functional committees and recruitment and selection panels.
- Identifying, creating, implementing and evaluating succession planning opportunities for Aboriginal employees.
- Identifying and promoting external scholarships for Aboriginal employees to participate in professional development activities.
- Identifying and promoting external scholarships that are aimed at Aboriginal young people to enable personal and professional growth within the Aboriginal health sector.
- Building the leadership capabilities of existing and emerging leaders through recognised external professional development activities, and internal management development in-services and various cross-functional committee meetings.







**Aboriginal
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