

MERRI HEALTH

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

June 2017 - July 2019



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN
INNOVATE



Merri Health

Our Vision for Reconciliation

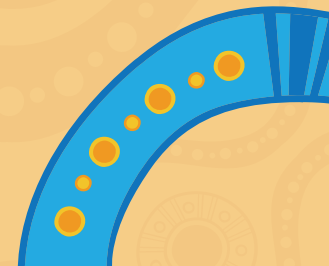
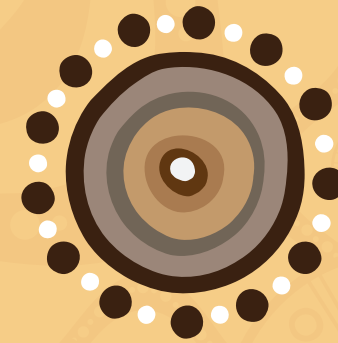
Merri Health has a vision for reconciliation where the wellbeing of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Moreland and surrounding areas will be enhanced through respect, equity and recognition in all aspects of our community.

This Reconciliation Action Plan has been developed to formalise and consolidate Merri Health's ongoing commitment and achievements to date.

From working in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, this journey will enable us as an organisation to continue to improve and build on these achievements in the years to come, and identify new opportunities for growth and development.

Merri Health will work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to:

- make a positive difference in the lives and health of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- ensure that our organisation is culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- improve service access and cultural appropriateness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- work towards improving health and wellbeing of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- celebrate the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members both past and present, in and around the Northern Metropolitan catchment and across the country.



Our Story

Merri Health formerly known as Merri Community Health Services (MCHS) was formed in 1994 as Moreland Community Health Service Inc. through the merging of the former Coburg Community Health Centre, Brunswick Community Health Centre and Co-Care (Youth and Disability Health Service).

The name “Merri Health” acknowledges the Merri Creek which flows through areas in Moreland and is a site of great significance for Aboriginal people. “Merri” comes from the Wurundjeri-wilam phrase “merri merri” which means “very rocky”.

Our Business

Merri Health is a not-for-profit community health organisation, providing health and community services across the northern metropolitan region and the regional Hume area of Victoria, which extends from north of Whittlesea up to the NSW border. We are among the largest community health providers in Victoria and provide services for people in need, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, young people, people with disabilities, people from culturally diverse backgrounds and individuals with various gender identities and sexual orientations. Our aim is to create a healthy and connected community through the provision of health and community-based services to marginalised and vulnerable groups.

We aspire to make a positive difference in people’s lives by being an innovative and integrated health, community and advocacy service provider. We provide services from a number of sites in the City of Moreland and in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, as well as the regional cities of Shepparton, Benalla, Wangaratta and Wodonga. Merri Health is the third largest community health service in metropolitan Melbourne and is governed by a Board of Directors. Internal management is grouped by service units with General Managers, Managers and Team Leaders, and employs 350 staff, in full time and part time roles. Currently 2 employees identify as Aboriginal people, however, our past databases have not had the capacity to capture this information accurately and consistently, and the upcoming rollout of a new staff database will better enable this and support more detailed and comprehensive staff profiling. Our current staffing includes 164 (48%) social workers / community development workers, 106 (31%) administration roles including management and support roles such as finance and corporate services, 72 (21%) clinicians such as dentists, physiotherapists, podiatrists and nurses, and 2 (0.6%) teachers.



Our RAP

In 2005, Merri Health began a consultation process with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to recruit a Koorie Community Engagement Officer. This was a newly created position to be based within the Population Health Unit. The work carried out by the Koorie Community Engagement Officer is linked to both the Merri Health Integrated Health Promotion and Diversity Plans. Our organisation regularly reports on the outcomes of these plans, as required by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. The work particularly focuses on improving service access for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and other population groups who experience higher health inequity. This role has facilitated and led a number of key initiatives since 2005, such as building staff awareness around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety, facilitating a local Audiology Project with Elders, developing and strengthening partnerships with key community partners such as Wandarra Aboriginal Incorporation, ACES (Aboriginal Community Elders Services) and VACCHO (Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation), as well as celebrating key events such as NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week.

In early 2014, Merri Health moved to formalise our existing work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, by creating a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for the organisation. The RAP committee is chaired by the Manager, Population Health Unit, and is attended by the General Manager of Family & Community Support Services who acts as the Executive Sponsor. Merri employees who attend the RAP committee include the Marketing & Communications Co-ordinator, the Human Resources Manager, and employee representatives from our Carer Links North Program and Victims Assistance Program. The Koorie Community Engagement Officer is also a key representative on the RAP committee. The Koorie Community Engagement Officer approached several

community members to seek their participation on our RAP committee, with a very positive response received. To date we have 5 representatives from the local Aboriginal community, 3 of which have been regular attendees since the beginning. A local Aboriginal artist was commissioned to create a work of art that represents the organisation's journey towards reconciliation. A local Aboriginal graphic designer was also engaged to guide the publication of the RAP booklet, and create a design that tells the story of our reconciliation journey.

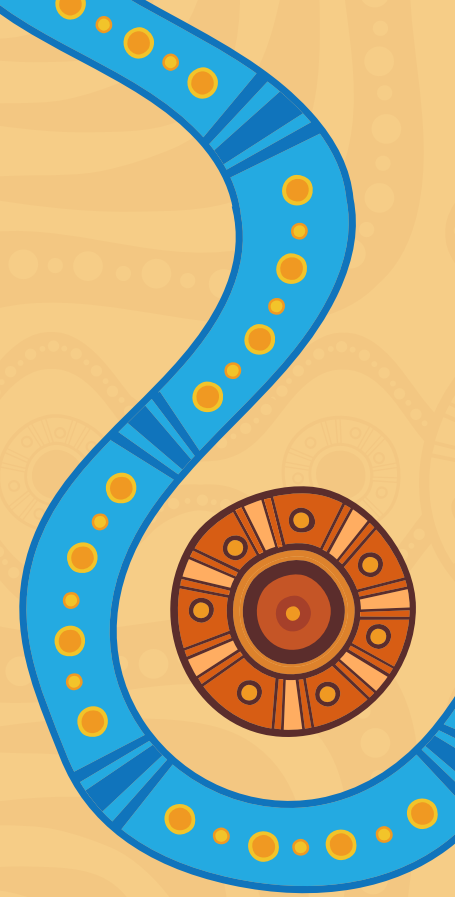
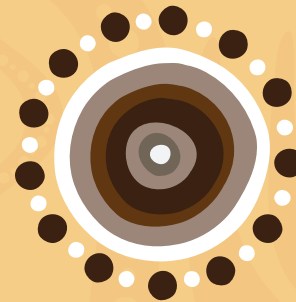
A key component of our RAP has included the introduction of the "Working with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander clients" training facilitated by Girraway Ganyi Consultancy. Feedback from training evaluation indicated Merri Health staff have increased knowledge and understanding around cultural awareness issues after attending the training. So far 265 staff, volunteers and students have received the training which is conducted 4 times throughout the year.

Another key element of our RAP has been the annual Koorie Carer's Lunch, which has been held since 2010 during National Carers Week. The 2016 lunch attracted 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, carers and Elders.

The Merri Health Little Long Walk initiative was first held in 2016 to raise awareness among local school children about National Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week and Michael Long's 650 km walk to Canberra to get Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues back on the national agenda.

The inaugural event was a successful collaborative effort between Merri Health, Long Walk Foundation, Aboriginal Community Elders Services and St Marks- a local primary school in Fawkner.

Our RAP also aims to increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to do their placements at Merri Health. So far we've had one student who experienced working across many programs at our Bell St and Vic Place sites. The Koori Services Unit at Melbourne Polytechnic have been our partner since March 2016 and there are plans to offer future placements to more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students over the next two years.



Relationships

Merri Health recognises that establishing and building strong relationships, particularly with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, is an important and ongoing responsibility of the organisation if we are to be serious in achieving positive health and wellbeing outcomes with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community we serve. Our values of Passion, Respect, Integrity, Diversity and Engagement underpin and drive our efforts to provide high quality services and build the strength of our community.

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	MEASURABLE TARGET
<p>RAP committee to provide governance of the RAP, identify actions and new opportunities to pursue, and actively monitor RAP development and implementation of actions, tracking progress and reporting</p>	<p>Population Health Unit Manager Koorie Community Engagement Officer Merri Health RAP committee</p>	<p>Jul, 2017, Jun, 2019 Feb, Apr, Jul, Sep, 2017, 2018, 2019 Jul, 2017</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merri Health RAP committee to oversee the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP • RAP committee to consist of representation from various levels areas of Merri Health and a minimum of 2 representatives from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community • Hold at least 4 meetings per year • Establish and endorse a Terms of Reference
<p>Celebrate National Reconciliation Week 27th May – 3rd June annually</p>	<p>Koorie Community Engagement Officer Community Engagement and Communications Officer</p>	<p>May, 2017, 2018, 2019 May, 2017, 2018, 2019 May, 2017, 2018, 2019 May, 2017, 2018, 2019 May, 2017, 2018, 2019</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote NRW internally through NRW displays at Merri Health sites (Preston and Moreland Rd, Brunswick West) • Facilitate or actively participate in at least one local NRW event (eg. ACES Breakfast) • Organise at least one internal event for NRW each year • Register our event on Reconciliation Australia’s NRW website • Support an external NRW event • Ensure our RAP steering committee participates in an external event to recognise and celebrate NRW



ACTION

Develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations

RESPONSIBILITY

Koorie Community Engagement Officer
Relevant Merri Health staff

TIMELINE

Jun, 2017, 2018

Mar, Sep, 2017, 2018, 2019

Fortnightly, 2017, 2018, 2019

Mar, Jun, Sep, Dec, 2017, 2018, 2019

Oct, 2017, 2018

Jul, 2017

MEASURABLE TARGET

- Develop and implement an engagement plan to work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders
- Meet with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop guiding principles for future engagement
- Continue to participate in and support Wandarra Aboriginal Corporation – and identify opportunities for partnerships
- Merri Health staff to participate in Wandarra meetings, events and host Wandarra at Merri Health community events (minimum once per quarter)
- Actively participate in at least one joint initiative / event / project with Wandarra Aboriginal Corporation through the year
- Seek to increase partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (eg. ACES)

Increase the number of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people on relevant committees within Merri Health

Koorie Community Engagement Officer
Relevant Program areas in Merri Health

Jul, 2017

Aug, 2017

- Collect information on the current make up of Merri Health committees and advisory bodies
- Increase the number of Koorie community members on Merri Health committees, consultative/advisory/working groups by pursuing targeted recruiting, and ensuring the TOR for advisory groups support this

Raise internal and external awareness of our RAP to promote reconciliation across our business and sector

CEO
Population Health Unit Manager
Koorie Community Engagement Officer

Jun, 2017, 2018, 2019

Jun, 2019

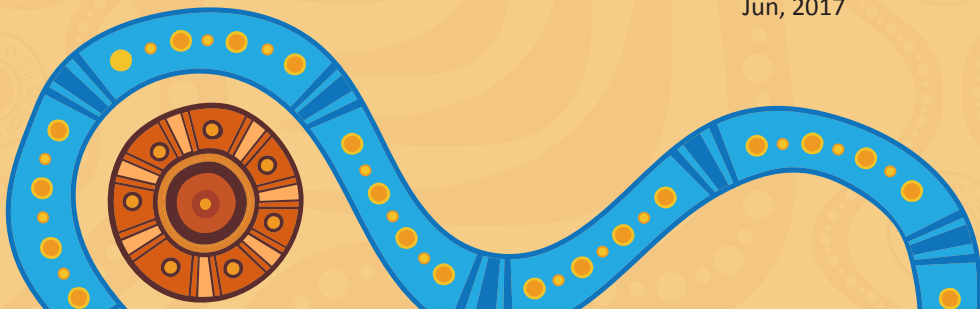
Jun, 2019

Jul, 2017

Bi-monthly, 2017, 2018, 2019

Jun, 2017

- Implement and review a strategy to communicate our RAP to all internal and external stakeholders
- Promote reconciliation through ongoing active engagement with all stakeholders
- Liaise with other RAP organisations to share learnings around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare
- Publish RAP on Merri Health website and provide hard copy displays in client areas
- Provide regular updates on RAP in Population Health Unit Program Area Meetings
- Present RAP update at All Staff meeting.



Respect



A core part of our business relates to respectful treatment of the diverse communities within our catchment and Merri Health acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as the oldest and most resilient in Australia. Acknowledgement of Traditional Owner plaques are in situ at all entrances to Merri Health sites and the flags of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are displayed in each office. By promoting the diverse history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples Merri Health hopes to broaden the knowledge of the wider community to the disparities and inequities in health outcomes still faced today.

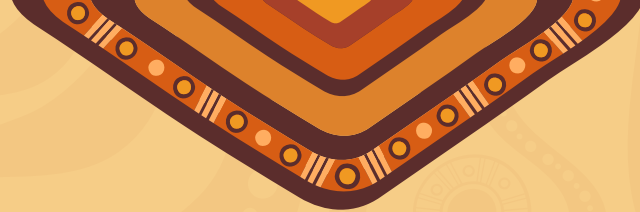
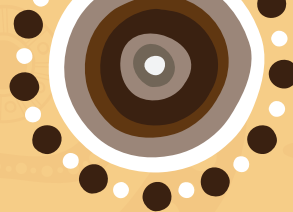
ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	MEASURABLE TARGET
Co-ordinate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Appreciation training for all Merri Health staff to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and achievements	Koorie Community Engagement Officer Team Leader Community Health Promotion	Jul, Oct, 2017 Feb, May, Jul, Oct, 2018 Feb, May, 2019 Jul, Oct, 2017 Feb, May, Jul, Oct, 2018 Feb, May, 2019 Jul, Oct, 2017 Feb, May, Jul, Oct, 2018 Feb, May, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Appreciation training strategy for all Merri Health staff which considers various ways cultural learning can be provided (online, face to face, cultural immersion) AJ Williams Tchen of Girraway Ganyi Consultancy to run “Working with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Clients” training to Merri Health staff, students and volunteers with at least 3 face to face training sessions per year Provide opportunities for RAP Committee members, Merri Health board members, RAP champions and other key leadership staff to participate in cultural training

Encourage Koorie friendly environments at all Merri Health offices	Koorie Community Engagement Officer	Dec, 2017, 2018 Feb, 2018, 2019 Feb, 2018, 2019 Aug, 2017 Feb, 2018, 2019 Feb, 2018, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct annual cultural audits at all 10 Merri Health sites to ensure our sites are culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and communities Maintain or improve audit scores / results each year Identify any gaps/ issues and develop an action list to ensure they are responded to in a timely manner Make our Koori Mail subscription available in reception areas of all main sites within Merri Health Ensure Koorie specific brochures, resources and information are available and on display at all Merri Health reception areas Display local Aboriginal artwork at all key Merri Health sites
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ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	MEASURABLE TARGET
Facilitate Koorie Conversations to provide staff the opportunity to hear diverse life stories and experiences of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people	Koorie Community Engagement Officer	Jun, 2017 Jun, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite local members from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to speak at lunch time events attended by Merri Health staff • Hold four Koorie Conversations sessions with at least 30 staff from across Merri Health in attendance
Celebrate and communicate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates of significance in a Merri Health cultural calendar	Koorie Community Engagement Officer Community Engagement and Communications Officer	Jan, 2017, 2018, 2019 Aug, 2017, 2018, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a cultural calendar which includes significant Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander events and commemorations • Ensure all significant events are included and actively communicated through the Merri Health Events Calendar, internal Corporate News Page, Merri Health newsletters and promoted via Merri Health media channels (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, website)
Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with their culture and communities by celebrating NAIDOC Week	Koorie Community Engagement Officer Team Leader Community Health Promotion	Jul, 2017, 2018 Oct, 2017 Oct, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase at least 5 tickets to the annual NAIDOC ball with representation from Merri Health Koorie Community Engagement Officer and community members • Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in NAIDOC Week • Provide opportunities for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate with their cultures and communities during NAIDOC Week
Engage employees in understanding the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country to ensure there is shared meaning	Koorie Community Engagement Officer Community Engagement and Communications Officer HR Manager	Nov, 2017 Mar, Jun, Sep, Nov, 2017, 2018, 2019 Jun, 2019 Jun, 2019 Jun, 2017 Jun, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Merri Health's comprehensive Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country policy and procedure which includes a cultural protocol document for staff • At induction for all Merri Health staff, train and support staff to appropriately implement the policy and procedure • Provide ongoing training and support to staff to appropriately implement the policy and procedure • Provide Acknowledgement and Welcome to Country at all major / significant Merri Health meetings and events • Develop a list of key contacts for organising a Welcome to Country and maintaining respectful partnerships • Invite a Traditional Owner to provide a Welcome to Country at at least one significant event such as the launch of a new program, an organisational celebration, milestone, or event
Celebrate Koorie Carer's Week in order to acknowledge and highlight the role of carers in the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community during National Carers Week	Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre CarerLinks North Koorie Community Engagement Officer Population Health Unit	Oct, 2017, 2018 Apr, 2018, 2019 May, 2018, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a Koorie Carer's week event with attendance of at least 10 community members • Seek positive feedback from community members on the event in order to improve successive years' events • Conduct The Little Long Walk event with Long Walk Foundation, Aboriginal Community Elders Inc and local Moreland primary schools.

Opportunities



Merri Health is committed to improving access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and ensuring the services provided are both culturally safe and appropriate to the needs of the community. Merri Health is keen to provide opportunity for employment and careers in the organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to encourage the community's participation in the community health sector, to work toward addressing the disparities in health experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

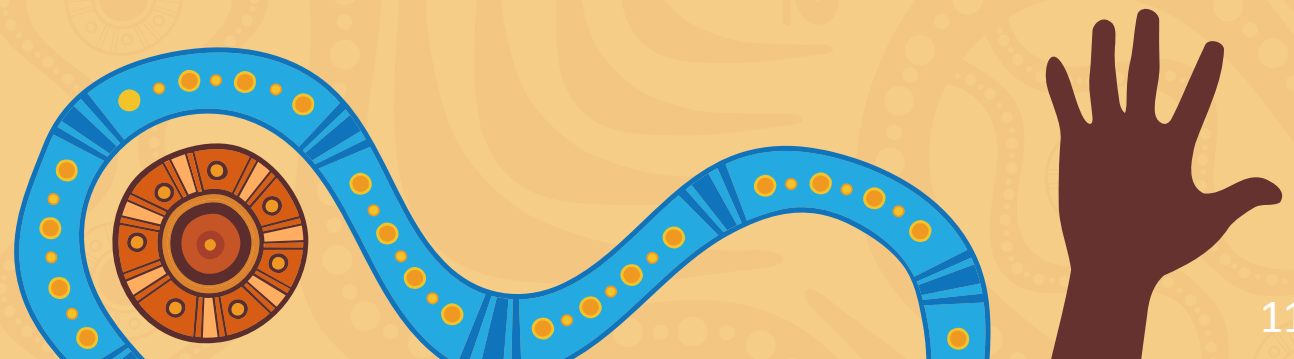
ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	MEASURABLE TARGET
Develop organisational capacity to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment opportunities	Koorie Community Engagement Officer HR Managers Team Leaders INWPCP Koolin Balit Project Officer	Oct, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to consult on employment strategies, including professional development
		Jun, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review HR procedures and policies to address barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees
		Jun, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and retention strategy
		Jun, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise all vacancies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media
		Jun, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a system / mechanism for identifying Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in order to inform future employment and professional development opportunities
Explore opportunities for supporting student placements at Merri Health and promote careers in mainstream Community Health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members	HR Manager Koorie Community Engagement Officer	Jul, 2017, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain existing and develop new partnerships with relevant tertiary institutions to increase capacity to support student placements
		Jun, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to increase the number of student placements
Investigate opportunities to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity within Merri Health	Koorie Community Engagement Officer	Dec, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review procurement policies and procedures to identify barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to supply our organisation with goods and services
		Dec, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop one commercial relationship with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander business
		Dec, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Supply Nation membership
		Jul, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and communicate to staff a list of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses that can be used to procure goods and services.

Tracking Progress and Reporting

Report achievements, challenges and learnings.



ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	MEASURABLE TARGET
Report RAP achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia and externally	Population Health Unit Manager Community Engagement & Communications Officer Koorie Community Engagement Officer	Oct, 2016, 2017, 2018 Sep, 2017, 2018 Aug, 2016, 2017 May, 2018 May, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Annual Quality Report and Diversity Plan to Merri Health Board • Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually • Report to the Victorian Department of Health & Human Services annually via Integrated Health Promotion Plan/IHP Reporting • Investigate participating in the RAP Barometer
Report on RAP progress to government stakeholders	Population Health Unit Manager Community Health Promotion Team Leader Koorie Community Engagement Officer	Aug, 2017, 2018 Aug, Dec, 2017, Apr, June, Aug, Dec, 2018 Apr, June, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Integrated Health Promotion Plan report to Department of Health and Human Services • Submit Quarterly Merri Health Diversity Plan status reports
Review, refresh and update RAP	Population Health Unit Manager Koorie Community Engagement Officer Merri Health RAP Steering Committee	November 2018 January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with Reconciliation Australia to develop a new RAP based on learnings, challenges and achievements • Send draft RAP to Reconciliation Australia for formal feedback and endorsement.





The water flow represents a site of significance for Aboriginal people, the Merri Creek. 'Merri' means 'rocky' in the Wurundjeri language.

Merri Health provides a range of health and welfare services within the City of Moreland and northern metropolitan Melbourne.

The large circles with the cross symbol in the middle represents health, depicting community coming together to yarn and transfer knowledge and stories.

The smaller circles represent the smaller communities making up a larger community we know as Melbourne.

The medium circles are the various sites/services of Merri Health.

The various teal pathways depict everybody's journey throughout life.

The diamond exhibits the continuity of Aboriginal culture, the diamond was a regularly used design for Melbourne and surrounds and could be found on traditional Possum-Skin Cloaks, Shields etc.

The leaves embodies reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, we are different leaves from the same tree.

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