ARE YOU (OR IS THE PERSON) OF ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORIGIN? TRAINING RESOURCE





Inner North West Primary Care Partnership acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government

Inner North West Primary Care Partnership acknowledges the Wurundjeri people and other peoples of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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July 2014



### **ASKING THE QUESTION:**

ARE YOU (OR IS THE PERSON) OF ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORIGIN?

A training resource developed for health employees working in mainstream health organisations of Inner North West Melbourne

An Inner North West Primary Care Partnership (INW PCP) Closing the Health Gap initiative supporting improved health care access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

This training was developed to address the specific training needs for "Asking the Question" by health and community workers. These needs were identified in the Closing the Health Gap Inner North West Region Profile Report February 2013. The INW PCP wishes to acknowledge the work of the INW PCP CtHG Wellbeing Partnership Working Group in completing this training module.

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Whilst this training can be freely accessed by all, this training resource was tailored to meet local catchment issues and the resources to support this training were chosen accordingly. It is also acknowledged that the information contained in this training may need to be updated over time and organisations accessing this training for their workers are responsible for updating the module where required for their workers.

Suggested citation: Inner North West Primary Care Partnership (2014), Asking the Question: Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Origin? Training Resource. www. inwpcp.org.au



## ASKING THE QUESTION TRAINING OUTLINE

#### SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

• Provides a brief overview of the purpose and background to this training

#### **SECTION TWO:** CLOSING THE HEALTH GAP

• Provides more information on the gap in health status for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and what is being done to address this gap

#### SECTION THREE: LEARNING ABOUT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

· Provides some information about the history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

#### SECTION FOUR: ASKING THE QUESTION - THE WORKERS' PERSPECTIVE

• Provides more details on the practice requirements of organisations to collect information on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin from all clients

#### SECTION FIVE: ASKING THE QUESTION -THE CLIENTS' PERSPECTIVE

• Devised to increase staff awareness about some potential concerns community members may have about being asked the question on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin and improve staff confidence and skills to respond to these concerns appropriately

#### SECTION SIX: WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ORGANISATIONS

• Provides information on how providers can make their services more welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It also provides information on the health benefits available along with recommended referral pathways for members of these communities

#### **Terminology:**

The reference to clients and/or service users throughout this document also refers to patients and consumers.

# SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

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## SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

This section will provide a brief overview of the purpose and background to this training.

## PURPOSE OF THIS TRAINING

Welcome to this training, which supports employees working in health and/ or community services to understand why it is important to ask all clients "Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?" when first registering with your service and/or during client review processes. The training will also provide some further information and resources to assist you to better engage with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to raise your awareness of how to provide more culturally appropriate service responses.

This training is an initiative of the Inner North West Primary Care Partnership (INW PCP) under the Victorian initiative *Closing the Health Gap* (CtHG). It was developed and endorsed by members of the CtHG Wellbeing Partnership; a body created to oversee a number of INW PCP CtHG initiatives in the Inner North West of Melbourne.

The purpose of this training is to assist mainstream member organisations to achieve their goals related to improving health service access, and closing the health gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by ensuring that all staff have the information, awareness and confidence they need to ask all those accessing their service "Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?"

Your organisation has referred you to this training because asking this question and collecting accurate data on health service access and use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a national health policy requirement for all health (and many community services) in Australia.

Recording Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is a mandatory data requirement of your organisation.To meet this requirement you are required to ask:

"Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?" and record one of the following answers on each client record and in client data sheets:

- No
- Yes, Aboriginal
- Yes, Torres Strait Islander
- Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



## WHY IS ASKING THE QUESTION IMPORTANT?

Australia is trying to address a critical health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australian communities. There are known health conditions associated with being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin and therefore vital health treatment and health checks can be missed if the health practitioner is not aware of their clients/service users Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

Getting accurate data on health care access for these communities helps everyone to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Research indicates that the best way to improve this accurately is to ask clients/service users directly if they are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. More accurate information will also:

- help the design, delivery and evaluation of services to be more responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- assist researchers, policy makers and community organisations who rely on the data to understand and improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

## WHO IS THE TRAINING FOR?

This training is for:

- all staff of mainstream health and community services that come into contact with members of the public or provide health care services directly to them
- in particular, front line staff who register clients and/or ask clients to provide personal details to be included in client records

We now understand that it is vital to know whether a client/service user is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin to achieve equal health outcomes for all. This training aims to build awareness, understanding and confidence of front line workers to support them to ask "Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?" to all people using their service and to respond to any client questions or concerns appropriately. Over 70% of staff in the Inner North West Region reported they had not received training on the importance of *Asking the Question* and 50% indicated it was difficult to *Ask the Question* to every client.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT WILL THE TRAINING DELIVER?

This training aims to provide you with the information, awareness and reflective learning to be confident to:

- ask the standard question and record it correctly
- · clearly explain the reasons for collecting this information
- understand why it's important to collect and record Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin of all clients
- · understand why it's important to collect accurate information

This training has also been designed as a resource for trainers and/or organisations to undertake agency based training and/or to include this information in induction processes and policies.

## HOW TO UNDERTAKE THIS TRAINING

You are asked to read through the material in this document and link to the websites listed for further information. There are also small videos that you are asked to view.You can either do this by:

- · directly linking with the websites and videos online as you read this document on your computer, or
- using the web addresses provided to link to the online material if you have downloaded this document

Using this material you will be asked to reflect on issues and undertake other activities designed to assist your individual learning.

You will need 2-3 hours to read this training resource, view nominated videos and identified website linkages and complete the activitities.



## WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A HEALTH WORKER?

If you are employed by an organisation that is a member of the INW PCP, it is your responsibility to undertake this training to improve your understanding and awareness of the importance of asking "Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?" to everyone who uses your service. This is a Victorian health policy requirement helping to Close the Health Gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

# SECTION TWO: CLOSING THE HEALTH GAP

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## SECTION TWO: CLOSING THE HEALTH GAP

This section of the training will provide more information on the gap in health status for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and what is being done to address this gap.

### CLOSING THE HEALTH GAP: A NATIONAL CHALLENGE

In December 2007 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) committed to a national reform of health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities –*Closing the Gap*. The aim of this initiative is to address a critical health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and mainstream Australian communities. This includes *Closing the Gap* between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and mainstream life expectancy by 2030 and to halve the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infant mortality for children under five by 2018.

Nationally, the life expectancy for Aboriginal Australians is 67.2 for males and 72.9 for females compared with 78.7 and 82.6 for non-Aboriginal Australians respectively. This means that the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is 11.5 years for men and 9.7 years for women.<sup>2</sup>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians experience poorer health outcomes than non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Victorians in almost every measure of health.

Nationally, the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is 11.5 years for men and 9.7 years for women.<sup>3</sup>

Closing the Health Gap targets include closing the life expectancy gap by 2030 and to halve the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infant mortality for children under five by 2018.<sup>4</sup>



## HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are the only communities that are growing in number due to natural increases in birth rate. In Victoria over half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations is below the age of 18<sup>5</sup>. In Victoria, children born of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin are more likely to have risk factors such as lack of antenatal care, smoking, and low birth weight, which impact on their health status over their entire life.

Therefore a key part of Closing the Health Gap is ensuring children have the necessary health checks, immunisations and preventative health care screening they need to prevent known genetic health conditions and to lead healthy lives equivalent to other Australian children. This includes reducing rates of pneumonia, chronic ear disease, infant under five mortality rates, so they are the same for all Australian children.

This cannot be achieved without ensuring that children's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is recorded on client files and that practitioners are informed.

Sometimes the mother may have children who are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin even though she is not. It is therefore important to ensure that the question of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is asked for each individual child receiving a health service so that their health care can help them to experience the same health status as all Australians. Aboriginal children in Victoria have three times higher rates of chronic ear disease than other Australian children and have a higher probability of dying under five years than other Australian children.<sup>6</sup>



## HOW DOES "ASKING THE QUESTION" SUPPORT CLOSING THE HEALTH GAP?

Research<sup>7</sup> has concluded that the most accurate way to measure the health gap is to have each person disclose their cultural origin; ideally this is included as part of the many questions asked of clients/service users, before they register for a service or complete their intake and assessment process. It is not possible for health professionals to determine the cultural origin of their clients/service users without asking individuals themselves because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are as diverse as other multicultural communities in Australia.

So by getting the answer to the question "Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?" you will not only ensure appropriate health care is provided; you will also be contributing to an important national reform by:

- providing information that helps to plan and design services according to need
- monitoring and measuring the achievement of narrowing the health care gap and improved health care outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- helping to better understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' preferences and which services and policies produce the best outcomes



### WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A HEALTH WORKER?

It is your responsibility as a health worker to ensure that everyone receiving a service is asked the question "Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander origin?" and that this information is appropriately recorded on the clients/service user's case file. The question may be included in existing client information forms. It is also important to follow up with clients if they have not filled in this part of the form and/or let practitioners know that this information is incomplete so that they can follow up with the client concerned.

# SECTION THREE: LEARNING ABOUT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

## SECTION THREE: LEARNING ABOUT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

This section of the training will provide some information about the history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Health and community workers must accept someone is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander if they identify that this is their origin. Formal documentation is not required to prove Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin when accessing a mainstream community health service.

## WHO ARE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS?

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is a person:

- of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent
- who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and
- · who is accepted as such by the community in which they live

Torres Strait Islanders are the people of the Torres Strait Islands in Queensland. Their identity and culture are distinct from those of Aboriginal peoples on the mainland. Together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are referred to as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians and they make up 2.5% of Australia's population.<sup>8</sup>

Historical categories of caste ( $\frac{1}{2}$  caste and  $\frac{1}{4}$  caste) are offensive and are not used in current legislation as they are irrelevant to cultural identity.

Health and community workers must accept someone is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander if they identify that this is their origin. Formal documentation is not required to prove Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin when accessing a mainstream community health service. One of the myths of Aboriginality is that if you have fair skin you can't be an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. There are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in cities who have pale skin.

http://shareourpride. reconciliation.org.au/sections/ first-australians/



To begin with, we invite you to visit the <u>http://shareourpride.reconciliation.org</u>. <u>au</u> website which presents information from an Aboriginal and Torres Islander perspective. Learning about this perspective will also help raise awareness of cultural issues and improve your understanding of their past and present. The website design will help you learn at your own pace and will ask you if you wish to learn more in certain areas and then direct you accordingly.

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES IN VICTORIA

Victoria has unique Aboriginal traditional owners. Our INW PCP catchment belongs to the Kulin Nation and is on the lands of the Wurundjeri people.

Since white settlement Victorian Aboriginal peoples had to endure their story of struggle, survival and resilience in which the population reduced from approximately 60,000 to 2,000. Now, however, the Victorian Aboriginal story is one of growing strength and pride. It is estimated that there are now approximately 38,000 Victorian Aboriginal peoples; half are under the age of 18 and live in Victorian cities. Victoria is benefiting significantly from this cultural vibrancy and Aboriginal peoples' achievements in all fields of life.

There are many health issues confronting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Victoria. They have the highest rates of depression and anxiety, cancer, diabetes, stroke and heart disease. So the gap in health is not just one of life expectancy, it is also a gap in health status and quality of life. There are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health programs, treatments and GP incentives for health care assessments and other benefits aimed at removing barriers to health care access including cost, accommodation and pharmaceutical support. Further information about specific health programs available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is provided in section six of this training.

## MIGRATION PATHWAYS TO MELBOURNE

Melbourne is a multicultural city which attracts migrants from all over the world. This attraction also extends to Victorian Aboriginal peoples migrating from rural and regional centres as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who also migrate to Melbourne from other states. Many come for education, work and other opportunities. There has been a significant growth in the numbers of individuals from Torres Strait Islander communities over the last two decades.

So whilst the Inner North West has traditional owners (the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation) it is important to acknowledge that the culture, language, history and traditions of this community do not necessary apply to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Together, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians, like other Victorians, are members of a multicultural community that is both vibrant and diverse.

In the Inner North West the traditional owners of this land are the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. However, Melbourne is also very multicultural and there are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from different tribal groups and nations living in Victoria. Over half of the Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is under the age of 18 years.



You cannot tell who is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander from the way they look.





### **ACTIVITY TWO**

To learn about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Victoria please have a look at the following video presented by the Department of Health Victoria

### Victorian Aboriginal population: a snapshot

http://youtu.be/AayR\_C6\_CKM

## THE STOLEN GENERATION AND NATIONAL APOLOGY

The term "stolen generation" refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who were forcibly removed as children by government, church and welfare authorities and placed in institutional care or placed with non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians between the years 1800 and 1970. This related to achieving a policy outcome of assimilation whereby traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture would be lost to all Australians. Stolen generation policies do not include children transported to attend schools or placed in the care of others due to neglect.

It is very important that health and community workers understand the impact of "Stolen Generation" policies on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the importance of receiving an Apology from the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Kevin Rudd, in 2010.

It is also important to understand that many health services were involved in either complying with or enforcing stolen generation policies during this era. There are many stories of babies being removed from mothers after birth. There are also stories of infants and children who were never seen again by family members after they attended hospitals and other health centres for treatment. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people carry stories of family members' loss and grief, which may translate into fear and anxiety when engaging with health services.

### For further information you may want to read the

"Bringing them Home" Report

http://www.humanrights.gov. au/publications/bringing-themhome-report-1997





## **ACTIVITY THREE**

To learn more about the Stolen Generation you are asked to read the attached PDF document written by members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support national reconciliation processes <u>The Apology to the</u> <u>Stolen Generations (revised)</u>

http://www.inwpcp.org.au/sites/default/files/Apology%20to%20the%20stolen%20generations\_revised.pdf

and reflect on the following two questions:

In what ways do you think the living memory of "Stolen Generation policies" would impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access and use of health services today?

How could the living memory of "Stolen Generation" policies impact on being asked to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin?



## WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A HEALTH CARE WORKER?

It is your responsibility as a health care and community worker to gain an awareness of the impact of historical policies on the lives and families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and understand how they might create intergenerational trauma, grief and loss. It is also important to understand that it makes sense that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a distrust for disclosing their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin based on their own or family's experience. The role of a health care and community worker is to continue to work towards restoring this trust via their own communication style, values, behaviours and practice.

# SECTION FOUR: ASKING THE QUESTION – THE WORKERS' PERSPECTIVE

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## SECTION FOUR: ASKING THE QUESTION — THE WORKERS' PERSPECTIVE

This section of the training will provide more details on the practice requirements of organisations to collect information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin from all clients.

## COLLECTING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORIGIN IS MANDATORY FOR ALL AUSTRALIAN HEALTH SERVICES

It is mandatory for all health services in Australia to collect information on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin of their clients/service users. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) have agreed to a standard question and answer format for determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin of all clients using health services in Australia.

The question every health service is required to ask of all clients receiving their service is:

• Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

The choice of answers include the following:

- No
- Yes, Aboriginal
- Yes, Torres Strait Islander
- Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

This question should be asked of parents and/or carers of children as well as family members and friends accompanying a person who requires treatment but cannot answer for themselves at this time.

# What is the question you must ask?

Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- No
- Yes, Aboriginal
- Yes, Torres Strait Islander
- Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Your health organisation is required to have a written question on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin included in client information forms.

## BEST PRACTICE IN GAINING INFORMATION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORIGIN

The Australian government has developed best practice guidelines for gaining information on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin of health clients<sup>9</sup>. Research suggests that asking clients/service users directly is the best way to gain accurate data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health service access and use. Best practice in collecting this information suggests that the question on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin should be included in client/ service user registration and intake forms. In this case people can tick one of the suggested responses during this registration process.

It is also advised that the question on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin should be included in the same part of the form which asks details of cultural background in general. Finally, if it is noted that the client/service user has not provided a response to the question on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, it is recommended that the person who provided the form to the client follow up with the client verbally to ensure that a response is recorded. As a health practitioner you need to know if your client/service user is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin so you can plan their health care. Do you know where this information is recorded?

### WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO ASK THIS QUESTION?

As indicated, the best way to ask the question is to include this in the written client information form in the section that asks for cultural background. However, sometimes it may be important for health practitioners to ask this question verbally or during an intake discussion with the client if it is noted that the written question has not been responded to. There is nothing discriminatory about asking the question on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. It's the same as asking a person their age, sex or country of birth. However, given the historical information provided in the previous section of this training, there is a need to be sensitive to the understanding that for some individuals who have been affected by family dislocation and separation, disclosing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is difficult, particularly if there is not an established trust in the relationship.

- It is important the question is asked exactly as it is worded
- Respond to issues of concern with factual information (see following section of the training)
- Reassure that this information is required to ensure they have the right health care, will be handled in confidence, and their privacy will be respected.

### WHY ASK EVERYONE?

It is not possible to tell whether someone is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin from appearance alone. The only way to gain an accurate picture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is to ask the client/service user concerned directly, or to ask a family member, carer or significant other, if it is not possible to ask them directly. The answer to this question is vital for ensuring the right health care plan is provided.

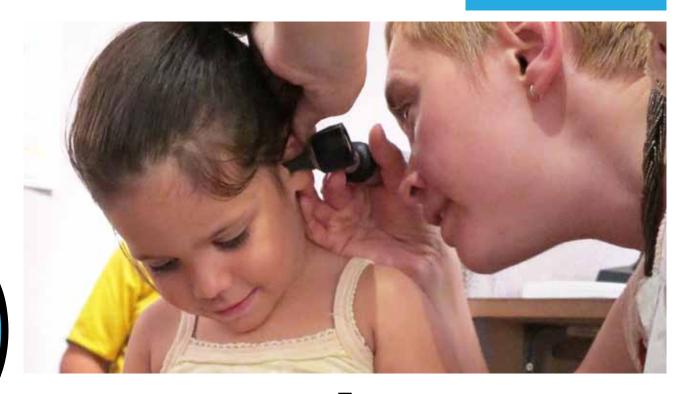
### WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN RECEIVING A SERVICE?

In the case of children receiving a health service, all parents, guardians or carers should also be asked if the child receiving the service is a person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait origin. It is not unusual for extended families of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin to have diverse multicultural origins, just like most Australians, so it is possible that within one family children will have different cultural origins. This is why it is important to ask the parent/carer about each child's origin if they are coming to use your service.



### Creative Spirits website 'Aboriginal Identity:Who is Aboriginal?'

http://www.creativespirits, info/aboriginalculture/people/ aboriginal-identity-who-isaboriginal



## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AUSTRALIANS IN OUR COMMUNITY

One of the prime reasons given for not ensuring every client/service user has been asked their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is that "A decision has been made that there are no or very few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing their service".<sup>10</sup> However, research conducted in the northern suburbs of Melbourne indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples using local health services are often not asked their cultural origin.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, there is a clear gap in understanding that must be addressed to avoid people from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin missing out on the tailored health care they need to close the gap between their health outcomes and those of mainstream Australians.

It is precisely because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are a minority group that health and community workers need to be diligent in making sure they receive the services they need to *Close the Health Gap*.

People should not miss out on the services they are entitled to because they may be few in number as this approach increases disadvantage rather than reducing it.



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ASKING THE QUESTION: Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

## THE RIGHT NOT TO DISCLOSE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORIGIN

Not everyone may feel comfortable disclosing their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin for a range of reasons. Some of these reasons relate to past experiences of stigma, racism and trauma or family members' past experiences. There can also be wariness in providing personal information to organisations. This also comes from past individual or family experiences.

It is important for health and community workers responsible for collecting personal client information to have the knowledge and skills to explain to clients why this information is important for their health care and how it will be used. Sometimes, however, clients may still choose not to disclose their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. In this case it is important to note that everyone has the right not to disclose their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status. Answering this question should not be a requirement of service.



It is important to note that everyone has the right not to disclose their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status. Answering this question should not be a requirement of service.

Having information about a client's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status helps health services to better plan health care and to provide the right services that are culturally safe and inclusive.

## CLIENT SEEKS TO CHANGE ABORIGINAL AND/ OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORIGIN

Disclosing one's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is voluntary. Research<sup>12</sup> suggests that whilst a person's Aboriginality does not change, their willingness to identify they are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origins does. The decision to engage with and/or disclose to others their cultural identity can be both complex and personal. (See Stolen Generation Video in Activity Three of this training.) This is why it is important for organisations to regularly review their client information on record.

When a client seeks to update their information to advise they are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, this decision should be both accepted and respected without requiring the client to explain this change in status. Any change to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status should be highlighted to the health practitioners providing the service to the client. It would also be appropriate for the health worker to thank the person for providing this update so that the service can plan their health care appropriately.



WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A HEALTH WORKER?

Your responsibility as a health worker is to follow up with clients to ensure they have answered the question on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, which should be included in your organisation's client registration or intake process. This disclosure is voluntary and may change over time in response to a personal journey of identity or in greater client trust in the practitioner/service. Your role is to both accept and respect a change of status, which may be initiated by either the client and/or the organisation as part of their review process. You should ensure that the health service practitioner is made aware of any change to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin so they can plan the person's health care appropriately.

# SECTION FIVE: ASKING THE QUESTION – THE CLIENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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## SECTION FIVE: ASKING THE QUESTION - THE CLIENTS' PERSPECTIVE

ASKING THE QUESTION: ARE YOU (IS THE PERSON) OF ABORIGINAL AND/OR

This section of the training has been developed largely from feedback from members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community; including community members who work in health service delivery.<sup>13</sup> It has been developed to increase your awareness about some potential concerns community members may have about being asked the question on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin and improve your confidence and skills to respond to these concerns appropriately.





The following video on 'Asking the Question' presents information from two Inner North West Aboriginal Health Workers to help you to reflect on how to respond to concerns of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients who have been asked the question "Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?" Please look at this video now http:// vimeo.com/99014500.

After you have watched the video, please read a summary of the information provided in the video in this section of the document.

## ADDRESSING CONCERNS RAISED BY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

The following section of this training provides summary information presented in the video above. In particular it attempts to summarise advice given by the two health workers on what the potential concerns may be in responding to the question on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin from the perspective of being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. In presenting this information we wish to note that all individuals are different and it is not possible to truly predict every individual's potential concerns. The aim of providing this information is to support health workers to gain confidence to "Ask the Question" by having some understanding of what the appropriate response may be to questions or concerns raised.

#### Why do you need to know my Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- Your answer helps us to plan your health care
- Because if you are a member of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community you may have specific health care issues that need to be managed proactively by your health care specialist
- We want to ensure you get the health care you need and are entitled to, in order to maintain ongoing good health
- We will be able to ensure that we get your referrals right for you.

#### What if I don't want to answer this question?

- It's your right not to answer this question you will still receive the service
- Sometimes people don't answer at first, but as they get to know us or feel more comfortable, they then tell us. So feel free to update your records down the track if you change your mind
- This will help us plan your health care to get the services you need.

## Why is it important to know whether my children are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- We know that children of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin can have a number of health issues that set them back from other children if they are not sorted out as soon as possible
- We particularly want to make sure that your children receive all the preventative health checks they
  need
- We want to make sure all kids have the best health they can.

#### Do I have to provide paper work to prove my Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

- No, we will accept your disclosure of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin and do not require formal paper work
- We will also respect your disclosure of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin for some members of your family and not others
- You will not be asked to provide proof of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin to receive a health service from our mainstream organisations.

## What will you do with the information you record

- Your GP and other health professionals will use this information to plan your health care, referrals and health information
- Your personal records are kept by the organisation and we do not share information that identifies you without your permission. This includes seeking your permission to make referrals
- All health services in Australia also send service data to government, but these data do not include your personal information and you cannot be identified
- All health services in Australia are working together to close the health gap between Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. The service data are also used nationally to see how we are going and whether the programs we have in place are helping to close the gap.

## What are my rights to privacy and confidentiality?

All personal information collected by businesses and government agencies is subject to a set of privacy laws. These laws require us to ensure that your information is protected and used appropriately. This includes:

- protecting your information from unauthorised or accidental access or disclosure
- telling you why we are collecting this information about you
- removing any information that would enable you to be identified once it is no longer needed.

### Who will see this information?

Your GP and other health professionals will use this information to plan your health care, referrals and health information. No information is sent outside this service without making sure no individual or family can be identified by others. If there is a need to provide personal details to referring agencies you will be specifically asked permission for this to occur. This is part of our privacy and confidentiality laws, policies and procedures.

## Your rights to services that help to close the health gap

There are a number of health services which are aimed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access health services and prevent the onset of health issues which can affect people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. If we know your Aboriginal and/orTorres Strait Islander origin we can provide further information about a range of incentives available to you and help you make the best choice about your health care.

## ADDRESSING CONCERNS RAISED BY PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT OF ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ORIGIN

Sometimes people who are not of Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander origin raise concerns about being asked the question. This section of the document provides further suggestions about how to respond to these concerns.

### Why are you asking me this question when I don't look Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

- You can't tell if a person is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin from appearance alone
- Melbourne is a multicultural community and there are many differences in appearance between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as there are in the broad range of other ethnic communities in Melbourne.

## Why is this question relevant to getting a health service?

- People of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin have particular health needs that must be addressed so they can have the same health as others in the community
- All governments and health services in Australia are committed to improving the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and this goal requires information to be collected by every health service on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin of their clients.

### Why ask everyone when clearly we don't have anyone who is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in our community?

- We have done research that shows that there are people who are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin who use health services and they are never asked this question. This means that their health needs are not being met and we need to do better for this community even if its members may be few in number
- There are many areas in the Inner North West where numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are increasing due to migration from regional centres and other Australian States.

## Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples get more than we do?

- Actually Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a lower health status than other Australian Groups and we are trying to close this gap
- As part of Closing the Health Gap we have targeted specific programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- We have similar programs for other groups who have high risk issues or require more prevention approaches.



### ACTIVITY FIVE

Before you move on, try the True or False Quiz below to identify your learning. Select the correct True or False answer.

After you have completed the quiz, go to appendix 3 for the answers.

ASKING THE QUESTION QUIZ
I. Closing the Health Gap is a Victorian health initiative aimed at reducing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' life expectancy and infant mortality.
True False
2. All health services are required to ask every client "Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?"
True False
<ol> <li>The main reason why we ask all clients this Question is because we need to collect information on the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing services.</li> </ol>
True False
<ol> <li>Clients need documentary proof of their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Status if they wish to have this recorded on their records.</li> </ol>
True False
5. Some individuals and families may take some time to disclose their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status due to a range of personal and family reasons.
True False
<ol> <li>Children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin require assertive health care screening and preventative health approaches to lead healthy lives equivalent to other Australian Children.</li> </ol>
True False
7. Aboriginals living in the North Western Metropolitan region are from the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.
True False
<ol> <li>In Victoria over half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is over 40 years of age.</li> </ol>
True False
9. The environment of the health service has little impact on the decision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to come to the service.
True False
10.There are no specific health care programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.
True False

/



## WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A HEALTH WORKER?

Your responsibility as a health worker is to ensure that you can respond to any concerns raised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and/or other clients after you have asked them the question "Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?" If after completing this training you believe you are not confident enough to undertake this task, you are required to discuss this directly with your supervisor so you can get the necessary support you need. Your role in closing the health gap for Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander peoples is important to the achievement of this goal. We also encourage you to continue to learn more about our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.



# SECTION SIX: AN ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH

TRUCK!

# SECTION SIX: AN ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH

This section of the guidelines provides information on how health services can make their service more welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It also provides information on the health benefits available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples along with recommended referral pathways for members of these communities.

## BEST PRACTICE FOR ORGANISATIONS

The national best practice guidelines for collecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin in health data sets<sup>14</sup> provides guidance to all organisations on how to collect information on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin of their clients. In summary they advise:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is a mandatory data requirement
- Standard guidelines and data recording are required according to the National Health Data Dictionary
- Quality assurance processes should be regularly in place to review client data and follow up missing data
- The question about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status should be embedded in a section with general ethnicity questions
- Use the standard/recommended question format
- Ensure your staff are trained to provide clients/service users with an explanation for why they are being asked about their social history and highlight the relevance of this information to their quality of care.



It is therefore recommended that organisations have clear policy and procedures in place relating to meeting their national responsibilities in relation to 'Asking the Question' to all clients as part of their client registration and review process.

Your organisation is required to have policy and/or procedures in place to ensure that you ask the question to all clients, record the answer on client records and agency data and provide ongoing opportunities for this information to be updated.

## **RECORDING CLIENT INFORMATION**

All health organisations are responsible for ensuring that client health records are accurate, and this includes providing information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin and updating this information on a regular basis.

## ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW OF CLIENT INFORMATION

It is also important that client information held by health services is regularly updated and reviewed by those receiving the service. This should be part of your organisation's normal quality control.

Please talk to your manager to clarify your organisation's policies and procedures.

stated (inadequately describ Country of birth Australia D Other (sp age spoken at home nent Interpreter required referred language (if not spoke language and any required commu interpreter needs (specify) Indigenous Status aboriginal but not Torres Strait Is Torres Strait Islander but not Abor Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Is 7 Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Government Pensione

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Does your organisation have a client registration or intake form which includes the question "Are you (or is the person) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?"

Does your organisation have specific policies and procedures in place related to 'Asking the Question'?

Who can you contact within your organisation to find the answers to the questions above?

What are the procedures and findings for reviewing your organisation's client information records?



## PROVIDING A CULTURALLY WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Research indicates that providing a welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is one key to improving service access to this community. The INW PCP interviewed members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities living in north and west Melbourne and the feedback on *what makes a welcoming environment* mirrored national research.<sup>15</sup> This includes:

- cultural respect having symbols of cultural respect such as acknowledgement plaques, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander paintings, cultural toys and artefacts so that the environment is visually welcoming
- cultural safety ensuring that staff have appropriate cultural training, that an individual person's privacy and autonomy are respected and that information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin is visible to clinicians
- awareness ensuring staff understand the cultural factors that influence health, the link between ethnicity and quality of care, and how past policies, history and traumatic events may influence engagement with health services
- **supporting** community members to take the initiative in identification through written identification (which is easiest) and at another time choosing to change their status
- **providing** information on potential health issues related to being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, appropriate preventative health plans, choice of referrals to specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services and/or direct links with Aboriginal Liaison Officers within a mainstream health service.

For a copy of the INW PCP's Welcoming Environments document please contact Inner North West Primary Care Partnership on T: 03 9389 2231 or download from

http://www.inwpcp.org.au/closingthehealthgap/welcomingenvironments

All health organisations are responsible for ensuring that client health records are accurate and this includes providing information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin and updating this information on a regular basis.

Quality health care for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples includes cultural respect, cultural safety, awareness of cultural factors that influence health, providing opportunities for community members to disclose their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin and respecting their choice.

## HEALTH REFERRALS TO ABORIGINAL CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

Like everyone, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will choose the best health care provider that meets their needs. This may be a mainstream health organisation or an Aboriginal controlled health organisation or both. It is important for all health organisations to have active referral networks across both health sectors to facilitate choice and collaborative health care planning. Provided is a list of Aboriginal Community Controlled health organisations (ACCHOs) in or nearby the Inner North West catchment.

There are also specific health care programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that require both ACCHOs and other community based primary care services to work together to deliver a range of services in a coordinated care plan approach. It is important that health care organisations understand the health care options and choices available to their clients. A list of Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations in or near the Inner North West Melbourne Metropolitan region is attached as Appendix One. We need to partner with Aboriginal controlled health organisations to provide greater choice and better health care planning.

## LINKING WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH LIAISON OFFICERS (ATSILOS)

Many mainstream health services have employed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers (ATSILOs) to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples whilst they engage with the health services they need. The ATSILOs also assist health and community workers to understand specific cultural issues relevant to developing either prevention or recovery health plans. When referring a member of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community to a hospital or other health service it is important to clarify if there is an ATSILO available to help by providing cultural support, practical assistance and advice, relevant referrals and other family and carer support assistance and information.

Some ATSILOs do not work specifically with clients or service users; rather they assist organisations with developing their practice and policies to be more culturally appropriate. In this case ATSILOs can also be an important resource for information and organisational advice. Please see list of organisations who employ individuals in (ATSILOs) roles in Appendix Two. A list of Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander health liaison officers working in the Inner North West region of Melbourne is attached in Appendix Two.

## **CLOSING THE HEALTH CARE GAP INITIATIVES**

There are a number of health initiatives created for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to help to close the health gap. All health and community services should ensure their practitioners have information readily available on initiatives designed to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and close the health gap. Individuals and staff can make a Medicare free phone call to find out more information. This call number should be provided to members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities accessing their service. The list provided is not conclusive and is designed to provide information relevant to Victoria.

For further information about specific health programs for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island peoples, Medicare has a freecall telephone service to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customers. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Access Line is supported by staff who are culturally aware of the special conditions that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Call **1800 556 955** or visit the Medicare website

http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/medicare-services-for-indigenous-australians





ORGANISATION /PROGRAM	TARGETED ABORIGINAL AND/ OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE'S RESPONSE	CONTACT DETAILS
Medicare	Closing the Gap PBS co-payment measure	Ask your GP or medicare free call on 1800556955
Medicare	Australian Childhood Immunisation Register	Ask your GP or medicare free call on 1800556955
Aboriginal Eye Care Services	Low cost eye care	The Aboriginal Liaison Officer T: 9349 7400
MBS Health Assessment	A complete health assessment, appropriate interventions, advice and information to the client/service user, completed by a qualified GP registered to provide a culturally appropriate service. People are provided with a copy of this health assessment so they can plan their health care.	GP registered to provide a health assessment for individuals and families. Ask your GP or medicare free call on 1800556955
National Immunisation Program	Free pneumococcal and influenza vaccines	Contact your Aboriginal controlled health service Contact your GP
The Aboriginal Health Promotion and Chronic Care Partnership (AHPACC)	Provision of coordinated care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with chronic and complex health issues	Contact your Aboriginal controlled health service or local community health centre Department of Health Melbourne Vic 3000 Ph: (03) 9096 5025
Diabetes Victoria	The road to good health course aims to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their families culturally appropriate health information and support to prevent and manage diabetes 2	Health Promotion Officer –Aboriginal and Cultural Diversity Life! Taking Action on Diabetes program Diabetes Australia – Victoria 206 Queensberry Street Carlton Vic 3053 Ph: (03) 8648 1825



## SPECIFIC APPROACHES FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS

Different types of organisations also have different requirements for collecting and recording Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin and ensuring that people with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin have the appropriate health care and support they need. This section of training provides a selection of videos on Aboriginal and/or Torres Straight Islander health relevant to two health care settings.

### **HOSPITALS**:

Closing the Gap-video for our community (Royal Melbourne Hospital)

http://youtu.be/NI-iCmwIE0o

## PRIMARY CARE:

Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Original? (Healthier Queensland)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNOGf7yj2Eg&feature=em-share\_video\_ user

**Recording Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Status** (VACCHO in collaboration with Mungabareena Aboriginal Cooperative and Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PI10TACQJZs

### The INW PCP

has developed a resource "Helping your Organisation to Create a Welcoming Environment for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island people. It can be download from www.inwpcp.org au/closingthehealthgap/ welcomingenvironments or you can contact the INVV PCP for a printed copy.



Whether you are a front line reception worker or a health practitioner, it's your responsibility to:

- understand your organisation's policy and procedures for Asking the Question
- record the answer on client records and agency data
- ensure that practitioners are made aware of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin of all clients
- contribute to making your organisation a culturally safe and welcoming place to attend

Health and community organisations and practitioners are also required to have available information which will assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make the right health choice of service and know what is available to support them and their health.

Your responsibility also includes ensuring that you are aware of your organisation's policies and procedures and follow up any questions and/or concerns with the appropriate contact person provided.

## ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

#### **APPENDIX ONE**

#### **Aboriginal Community Elders Services**

5 Parkview Avenue East Brunswick VIC 3057 Tel: 9383 4244 Fax: 9384 1532

#### **Dandenong & District Aborigines Co-operative**

3 Carrol Avenue PO Box 683 Dandenong VIC 3175 Tel: 9794 5933 Fax: 9791 1247

#### Ngwala Willumbong Co-operative

93 Wellington Street PO Box 361 St. Kilda VIC 3182 Tel: 9510 3233 Fax: 9510 6288

#### Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) Medical, Dental, Family, Early Years, Maternal & Community Programs

186 Nicholson Street PO Box 255 Fitzroy VIC 3065 Tel: 9419 3000 Fax: 9417 3897

#### VAHS – Family Counselling Service Operates as part of the Victorian Aboriginal Adult Mental Health Network 238–250 Plenty Road Preston VIC 3072 Tel: 9403 3300

**Koorie Connect:** Provides referrals to a range of culturally appropriate mainstream services and Aboriginal services such as: housing, education, health, welfare, employment, financial relief, legal 45 Nicholson Street

East Brunswick VIC 3057 Tel: 9380 4033 Freecall: 1800 993 783 Email: koorieconnect@VACCA.ORG

#### Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Co-Operative Limited

139 Nicholson Street East Brunswick VIC 3057 P.O. Box 494 Northcote Plaza Northcote VIC 3070 Tel: 8388 1855 Fax: 8388 1898

#### Link-Up Victoria

34 Wurruk Avenue Preston VIC 3072 Freecall: 1800 OUR MOB (1800 687 662) Tel: 9470 3666

#### Aboriginal Advancement League

HACC Services, Community Programs and Funeral Service 2 Watt Street Thornbury VIC 3071 PO Box 2019 Preston Business Centre Preston VIC 3072 Tel: 94806377 Fax: 9416 9092 Email: alinc@infoxchange.net.au

#### Victorian Aboriginal Community

Services Assoc. Ltd Northcote RSL 496 High Street Northcote VIC 3070 Tel: 9416 4266

#### Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Ist Floor / 273 High Street Preston VIC 3072 Tel: 9419 3888 Fax: 9418 5900 Email: vals@vals.org.au

#### Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal

**Service** Level 3, 70-80 Wellington Street Collingwood VIC 3066 Tel: 9244 3333 Fax: 9416 0147 Freecall: 1800105303

#### **Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria**

Housing, emergency housing, information, support, home maintenance 125 – 127 Scotchmer Street North Fitzroy VIC 3068 Tel: 9482 4585 Fax: 9482 3964 Email: <u>info@ahvic.org.au</u>

#### Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)

17-23 Sackville Street, Collingwood VIC 3066 Tel: 9411 9411 Fax: 9411 9599 Email: enquiries@vaccho.com.au

## LIST OF ORGANISATIONS EMPLOYING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER - LIASON ROLES

#### **APPENDIX TWO**

Australian College of Optometry Aboriginal Liaison Officer Tel: 9349 7533

Merri Community Health Services Koori Community Engagement Officer Tel: 9389 2271

**cohealth** Aboriginal Liaison Officer Tel: 9411 3555

**Royal Children's Hospital** Team Leader Wadja Aboriginal Family Place, Social Work Department Tel: 9345 5957

#### The Royal Women's Hospital

Badjurr-bulok Wilam, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women and Families Place Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Hospital Liaison Officer Tel: 8345 3048

#### Diabetes Australia Victoria

Aboriginal Liaison Officer Tel: 8648 1833

#### Ambulatory Services Division, Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital

Aboriginal Health Project and Pathway Co-ordinator Tel: 9929 8422 **St Vincent's Hospital** Senior Aboriginal & Hospital Liaison Officer Tel: 9288 3105

**Royal Melbourne Hospital** Aboriginal Service Development Worker Tel: 9342 2566

Wulumperi Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Unit, Melb Sexual Health Centre Aboriginal Community Development Worker Tel: 9341 6200

Wulumperi Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Unit, Melb Sexual Health Centre Aboriginal Community Development Worker Tel: 9341 6200

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) Tel: 9419 3000

Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) Tel: 9341 1163

Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) Tel: 9341 1313



## ASKING THE QUESTION QUIZ ANSWERS

#### **APPENDIX THREE**

1. Closing the Health Gap is a Victorian health initiative aimed at reducing the gap between life expectancy and infant mortality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

**True:** All member agencies of the INW PCP are committed to local initiatives to improve health care access nationally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and close the health care gap.

#### 2. All health services are required to ask every client "Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

**True:** You can't tell who is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander origin by looks alone as like all Australian's, their heritage is multi-cultural. Research suggests that the best way to get accurate information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status is to give people the opportunity to identify their status when they are providing their personal details whilst registering for a service or providing intake information.

# 3. The main reason why we ask all clients this Question is because we need to collect information on the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing services

**False**: The main reason why the answer to this question is important is that it helps practitioners to better plan for the specific health care needs of members in this community. This requires practitioners to address known risk factors, make the appropriate referrals to specialist services and to undertake preventative measures to avoid chronic health conditions occurring.

## 4. Clients need documentary proof of their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status if they wish to have this recorded on their records

**False**: Self disclosure of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status is sufficient. This includes the disclosure of carers of clients/service users who are too ill to provide this information at the time of receiving service and/or parents and guardians of children who are receiving the service.

#### 5. Some individuals and families may take some time to disclose their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status due to a range of personal and family reasons

**True:** Most Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people carry stories of family member's loss and grief, which may translate into fear and anxiety when engaging with health services. This may be because many health services were involved in either complying with or enforcing stolen generation policies. It may take some time before an individual can build enough trust to disclose their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Status. This is why regular review of client personal information is important because it provides another opportunity for people to disclose their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status.

# 6. Children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin require assertive health care screening and preventative health approaches to lead healthy lives equivalent to other Australian Children

**True:** Health services need to be particularly vigilant in ensuring that children of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin have access to specific preventative health care checks, immunizations and specialist treatment to prevent known health care conditions from occurring. This is why it is important to ask the parent and/or guardian to identify if their child is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

## 7. Aboriginal people living in the North Western Metropolitan region are from the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation

**False:** Melbourne is a very multi-cultural community and this is also the case for members of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community who have chosen to live in Melbourne permanently or on a temporary basis. So whilst the traditional owners of North West Melbourne are the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation there are many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Inner North West of Melbourne who come from other areas of Australia and have different histories, culture and language.

#### 8. In Victoria over half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is over 40 years of age

**False:** The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Victoria are very young communities. Over 50% of Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population within Victoria is under 18 years of age.

# 9. The physical environment of the health service has little impact on the decision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to come to the service

**False:** Research conducted by the INW PCP, as part of the Closing the Health Gap, initiative indicated that creating a welcoming environment for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples improved service access from this community. There are many things that can be done to be more culturally welcoming. This includes having the appropriate cultural icons and art works in place and providing information which is culturally relevant. To assist organisations to create a more welcoming environment, organisations can request a copy of the INW PCP resource guide 'Helping your organisation to create a welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' or download it from the INW PCP website www.inwpcp.org.au.

## 10. There are no specific health care programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria

**False:** There are a number of specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care programs available in Victoria. Some of these programs are listed in the training package. This includes access to Aboriginal Controlled Health organisations, and Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers who are based at many mainstream health care organisations and provide a cultural brokerage role between health care professionals and their community members. It is important for all practitioners to have an understanding of the options and choices available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members so that they can help individuals to plan the best health care for their circumstances.

#### Thank you for participating in this training

## RESOURCES

#### REFERENCES

I Inner NorthWest Primary Care Partnership (2013), CtHG Inner NorthWest Region Profile Report, Melbourne

http://www.inwpcp.org.au/sites/default/files/files/CtHG%20INW%20Profile%20 ReportFINAL\_27022013.pdf

- 2 Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet (2013) Summary of Australian Indigenous Health, 2012. Retrieved 17.07.14 from http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/health-facts/summary
- 3 Department of Health Koolin Balit Victorian Government Strategic Directions for Aboriginal Health 2012-2022

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/aboriginalhealth/koolinbalit.htm

4 Council of Australian Governments, National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap) Nov 2012

http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/health\_indigenous/indigenous-reform/national-agreement\_sept\_12.pdf

- 5 North & West Closing the Health Gap Advisory Committee Strategic Plan 2010.
- 6 Inner NorthWest Primary Care Partnership (2013), CtHG Inner NorthWest Region Profile Report, Melbourne
- 7 The Lowitja Institute (2010), Improving the Identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Mainstream General Practice, Canberra

https://www.lowitja.org.au/lowitja-publishing/L005

- 8 Australian Bureau of Statistics 08/09/2009
- 9 Australian Government, National Best Practice Guidelines for Collecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Origin in Health Data Sets (2010), Canberra <u>http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442468342</u>
- 10 The Lowitja Institute (2010)
- 11 Inner North West Primary Care Partnership (2013), CtHG Inner North West Region Profile Report, Melbourne
- 12 The Lowitja Institute (2010)
- 13 Inner North West Metropolitan Region: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Health Consumer Perspectives Project Report (Feb 2013)

http://www.inwpcp.org.au/sites/default/files/files/INWPCP%20Health%20Consumer%20 Perspectives%20Project%20-%20Final%20Report%202013.pdf

- 14 Australian Government, National Best Practice Guidelines for Collecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Origin in Health Data Sets (2010), Canberra
- 15 The Lowitja Institute (2010) Improving the Identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Mainstream General Practice, Canberra

## EDUCATIONAL WEBSITES

Share Our Pride: Who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders: http://shareourpride.reconciliation.org.au/sections/first-australians/

Reconciliation Australia: The Apology to the Stolen Generations (revised): http://www.inwpcp.org.au/sites/default/files/Apology%20to%20the%20stolen%20generations\_revised.pdf

Australian Human Rights Commission: Bringing them Home report: https://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/bringing-them-home-stolen-children-report-1997

Creative Spirits: Aboriginal Identity: Who is Aboriginal?: http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/aboriginal-identity-who-is-aboriginal

## HEALTH SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

http://jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/indigenous-health

http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/medicare-services-for-indigenous-australians

http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/mbsprimarycare\_ATSI\_MBSitem715

http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/content/atsi2

http://australia.gov.au/people/Indigenous-peoples

http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/health-facts

http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/closing-the-gap

http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous-observatory

### VIDEOS

Victorian Aboriginal population: a snapshot: http://youtu.be/AayR C6 CKM

Closing the Gap - video for our community (Royal Melbourne Hospital): http://youtu.be/NI-iCmwIE00

Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Original? (Healthier Queensland): http://youtu.be/WNOGf7yj2Eg

Recording Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Status (VACCHO in collaboration with Mungabareena Aboriginal Cooperative and Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative): <u>http://youtu.be/P110TACQJZs</u>