



RECONCILIATION
ACTION PLAN

INNOVATE

**RURAL
HEALTH
WEST**

PHOTO COURTESY WAYNE QUILLIAM PHOTOGRAPHY

INNOVATE

Reconciliation Action Plan

July 2018 to December 2020



ARTIST: Michelle 'Wilura' Kickett

This painting depicts Rural Health West's commitment to Aboriginal reconciliation through the development and implementation of their Reconciliation Action Plan.

The central circle represents Rural Health West working on the Reconciliation Action Plan which is connected to their four core organisational values: community, integrity, innovation and accountability. The hands symbolise Rural Health West reaching out to the community and the feet represent pathways being created for Aboriginal people as a result of reconciliation.

OUR VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

Our vision is for healthier Aboriginal communities, achieved by working alongside Aboriginal people to ensure quality health care is accessible and culturally appropriate.



PLEASE NOTE: Throughout this document, the word Aboriginal is used to denote both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Vision

What we aspire to achieve

Healthy rural communities with access to high quality health care.

Mission

What we aspire to do

Ensure all rural communities in Western Australia have ready access to qualified and experienced health professionals.

Values

How we aspire to act

Community – we work hard to ensure rural communities have access to quality health services.

Integrity – we do the right thing, always.

Innovation – we embrace change and strive for improvement.

Accountability – we value the trust placed in us by our customers, our partners and our funders.



PHOTO COURTESY WAYNE QUILLIAM PHOTOGRAPHY



OUR BUSINESS

Who we are

Rural Health West has been part of the rural health landscape in Western Australia since 1989. We are an independent non-government organisation dedicated to ensuring rural communities have access to high quality healthcare. We achieve this through delivering programs and services that attract, support and supply current and future medical and health professionals to deliver health services in rural and remote locations throughout Western Australia.

Our Board of Directors brings expertise from a range of fields including rural health, commerce, marketing and communications, and regional development. We employ around 45 staff who are motivated, committed and passionate about improving the health of rural communities. Our staff are primarily located in Nedlands in Perth, with two advisors based in regional locations.

Currently no Rural Health West staff identify as Aboriginal; however, we work closely with many Aboriginal health professionals, Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal organisations. Many of the programs we deliver focus on improving health equity for Aboriginal people living in rural Western Australia. We hope that the actions we undertake during the course of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) will encourage more Aboriginal people to apply for roles within our organisation.

The RAP working group comprises five members of staff representing various teams and levels in the organisation. As we do not have any Aboriginal staff, staff from the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) have been involved in the creation of this RAP.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



I am delighted to present and endorse the Rural Health West Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan.

Early in 2018, Rural Health West signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia to formalise our commitment to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people and their communities in Western Australia. This partnership encompassed staff cultural awareness and competency training and advice regarding the development of Rural Health West's inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan.

This Reconciliation Action Plan outlines and signals our strategic commitment to advance reconciliation for Aboriginal people in Western Australia through the delivery of our programs and services.

The significant disparity between the health and life expectancy of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is well documented. The reasons for this are complex and varied; however, a significant contributor is access to culturally-appropriate healthcare.

Rural Health West holds a privileged position of being able to directly influence the accessibility and delivery of healthcare for Aboriginal people living in rural communities. To date, this has been reflected in our activities, relationships and priorities. The development of the Reconciliation Action Plan has provided a tool to identify other opportunities where we can help to progress parity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

I look forward to working with our dedicated Board and staff who are committed to bringing this Reconciliation Action Plan to life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Grant Woodhams'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Grant Woodhams

FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



There is an adage which is often used when describing personal or business growth about the process being vastly more important than the goal. Or another way of putting it – the journey is more important than the destination. This could not be truer when applied to our journey over the past twelve months in developing a Reconciliation Action Plan for Rural Health West.

We work with people from many different cultures across Western Australia. We recruit, place and support general practitioners and health professionals to Aboriginal Medical Services and to communities with Aboriginal people. We consult with Aboriginal communities and meet many community leaders from many different language groups. However, the question lingered about just how sensitive we are to the culture of our First Nations people and the history that has shaped the nature of our relationships today. As we found over the past twelve months, the more we learn the more we realise how little we really know.

Our journey over the life of this plan will be about filling some of those knowledge gaps, developing cultural competence in the organisation and, as we become more knowledgeable, setting in place further plans and activities to truly achieve a process of reconciliation.

Every Rural Health West staff member has received initial cultural awareness training over the past nine months. New staff members are expected to complete this training as part of their commitment to the organisation. However, that's just a 'toe in the water' in a process aimed at achieving equality and equity, recognition of past wrongs, and ultimately achieving mutual trust and respect.

Our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan sets out the first stage of our journey, outlining our short to medium term activities. I look forward to working with all colleagues on making these things happen and I thank the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia and Reconciliation Australia for their guidance and support in getting us to this place.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Shackleton', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Tim Shackleton

OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Our customers

- Rural health professionals
- Employers of rural health professionals
- Families of rural health professionals
- Future rural health professionals
- Rural communities

Our funders

- Australian Government Department of Health
- WA Country Health Service

Our partners

- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services
- Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia
- Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
- Australian Government
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
- Australian Medical Association (WA)
- Doctors Health Advisory Service (WA)
- Metropolitan health service providers
- National Rural Health Commissioner
- Regional Development Commissions
- RFDS Western Operations
- Rural Doctors Association of Australia (WA)
- Rural Health Workforce Australia
- Rural workforce agencies
- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- The Rural Clinical School of Western Australia
- WA Country Health Service
- WA Primary Health Alliance
- Western Australian Centre for Rural Health
- Western Australian General Practice Education and Training
- Western Australian Government
- Western Australian Local Government Association and country local governments
- Western Australian universities



In 2017, the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Management Committee considered Rural Health West's commitment to culturally safe practice and agreed to the development of an internal project to explore opportunities to advance reconciliation and cultural safety within the organisation and its activities. A project officer was appointed and commenced discussions with the AHCWA to jointly develop a strategy for action and shared vision, which was subsequently embraced in a MoU between the two organisations. A summary of the main activities include:

- Establish a Rural Health West Cultural Safety Working Group to oversee implementation of a cultural safety framework.
- Develop a Rural Health West Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which will provide framework and measures for achieving organisational objectives.
- Develop/adopt a staff survey 'barometer' of cultural safety in Rural Health West to inform future actions and as a baseline measure for performance assessment over time.
- Develop an internal communications plan aimed at achieving staff commitment and participation in the development of a culturally safe workplace.
- Update information resources such as *Cultural Wealth – Community Health* and website entries.

- Develop a program with the objective to have all staff undergo Cultural Safety Training (CST).
- Review external service provider agreements to ensure there are arrangements in place for effective linkages with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) and other relevant service providers and inclusion of cultural safety protocol.

Since development of the MoU, Rural Health West has provided CST for all existing staff, implemented a cultural mentor arrangement, and established a RAP Working Group. In discussions with AHCWA, it was agreed to develop an Innovate RAP, as considerable reflection on our vision for reconciliation, and development of our relationships with Aboriginal stakeholders was already in progress as part of the MoU process and the organisation was ready to commit to implementing specific actions and initiatives.

Our RAP will provide a culturally sound framework and key measures to advance our shared vision with AHCWA to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, and their communities in rural Western Australia.

The RAP Working Group comprises staff members from across functional work areas and includes members of the Executive and Operations Committees. Staff from AHCWA also participate in the RAP Working Group. Members of the Group were sourced through an expression of interest.



RELATIONSHIPS

Our vision is to ensure that rural communities have access to quality healthcare services. Many rural communities are home to high numbers of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people often have complex health needs and require access to culturally safe health services. We need to build and maintain strong relationships between Aboriginal people and organisations to ensure we are equipping health professionals with culturally safe skills that maximise positive health outcomes for Aboriginal people.

RELATIONSHIPS

ACTION 1 Form a RAP Working Group to oversee the development, endorsement, launch and implementation of the RAP.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Chief Operating Officer	December 2020	RAP Working Group meet quarterly to monitor and report on RAP progress.
Chief Operating Officer	December 2020	Communication/engagement plan with all staff of Rural Health West's commitment to the RAP and our responsibilities.
Manager, Communications and Marketing	July 2019	Launch RAP at the Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Conference.
Chief Operating Officer	December 2020	Cultivate ideas forming recommendations for inclusion in our next RAP.
Chief Operating Officer	March 2019 March 2020	Review composition of RAP Working Group Terms of Reference.

ACTION 2 Build strong, mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal organisations.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Chief Executive Officer	December 2020	Continue to foster partnership with ACHWA and develop relationships with ACCHS.
General Manager, Regional Services	December 2020	Rural Health West representation at each Regional Aboriginal Health Planning Forum.
Chief Operating Officer	December 2020	Encourage Rural Health West staff to make contact with cultural mentors when visiting ACCHS or Aboriginal communities.
Chief Operating Officer	December 2020	Invite local Aboriginal organisations to provide cultural guidance on specific issues.

RELATIONSHIPS

ACTION 3 Develop a network of cultural mentors – as acknowledged by the people they represent – to provide input into Rural Health West’s planning and program activities.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Manager, Workforce Solutions	December 2020	Connect cultural mentors with scholars on the Bonded Medical Placement Scheme and John Flynn Placement Program (JFPP) to ensure scholars have appropriate levels of cultural awareness and local understanding of cultural safety – 100 per cent of JFPP candidates are aware of cultural mentor contacts and provided information as part of their induction.
General Manager, Workforce	December 2019	Explore opportunities for health professionals that Rural Health West recruit to engage and connect with cultural mentors for each region.
General Manager, Regional Services	December 2019	Explore opportunities for Outreach service providers to engage and connect with cultural mentors for each region.
Regional Advisor North	December 2018	Ensure Rural Health West staff are aware of the network of cultural mentors and their purpose and how to engage with the mentors.

ACTION 4 Communicate RAP to all staff and externally.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Chief Operating Officer	December 2020	All staff are aware of the RAP and that activities are being undertaken as part of the plan.
Chief Executive Officer	December 2020	External stakeholders are advised that Rural Health West has developed a RAP.

ACTION 5 Provide opportunities for Rural Health West staff to engage with cultural and community events such as National Reconciliation Week.

HR Coordinator	December 2020	Recognise cultural events such as National Reconciliation Week, National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week and Sorry Day through the encouragement of staff participation and recognition of the events in newsletters and staff publications. Organise one internal event each year for National Close the Gap Day.
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RESPECT

Rural Health West is committed to fostering an organisational culture built around respect. We believe that acknowledgement, understanding, and respect for the rich culture and history of Aboriginal people will assist Rural Health West to deliver culturally safe programs and services, ensuring healthy rural communities across Western Australia.

RESPECT

ACTION 1 Provide employees with continuous professional development and cultural learning opportunities in order to increase the respect and understanding of Aboriginal cultures and histories at Rural Health West.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Regional Advisor North	December 2018	Develop and implement a cultural training program in partnership with the AHCWA. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 100 per cent staff participation in Modules 1 and 2 of CST at the AHCWA.• All new staff will be booked to undertake Modules 1 and 2 of CST at the commencement of employment.
HR Coordinator	August 2018	Conduct a survey for all staff to identify their level of knowledge and skills, as well as attitudes around Aboriginal culture and history.
HR Coordinator	December 2020	Follow-up surveys conducted on an ongoing basis to measure changes in knowledge, skills, and attitude over time.
Chief Operating Officer	December 2020	Identify and inform Rural Health West staff members of opportunities to attend cultural training, professional development events, and conferences.

ACTION 2 Engage employees in understanding the protocols around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country ceremonies to ensure there is shared meaning behind the ceremonies.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Chief Operating Officer	March 2019	Review and update current policy and communicate process to staff around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country for use at Rural Health West hosted meetings.
Manager, Education and Skills Development	December 2020	Continue to invite Aboriginal Elders to perform a Welcome to Country at the opening of each Rural Health West Aboriginal Health Conference and Annual Conference.

RESPECT

ACTION 3 Engage recruited health professionals and Outreach service providers in cultural learning to increase understanding and appreciation of different cultural backgrounds.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Manager, Communications and Marketing	July 2019	Review, make available and promote the Rural Health West publication <i>Cultural Wealth – Community Health</i> resource to health professionals.
Manager, Workforce Solutions	December 2020	Provide cultural awareness induction during International Medical Graduate orientation.

ACTION 4 Provide cultural immersion opportunities for Rural Health West staff.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Chief Operating Officer	December 2020	Investigate sources/agencies that provide cultural immersion opportunities (eg Urban Indigenous, Western Creation).
Chief Operating Officer	December 2020	Arrange cultural immersion activities for Rural Health West staff during significant Aboriginal events (eg NAIDOC, Reconciliation Week). These activities could be on-country walks, events, painting/storytelling/language/food workshops at Rural Health West with Aboriginal people.



Photo courtesy and with permission from Pamela D'Sylva. Nurse Mary Lane examining a young Kimberley patient.

OPPORTUNITIES

Creating opportunities for Aboriginal people to access culturally safe and appropriate health services is vital to Rural Health West's vision for reconciliation. The influence of Aboriginal people in the organisation allows staff and service providers access to guidance and advice on cultural matters, which will develop skills to build respect and relationships. This will contribute to better health outcomes within the communities.

OPPORTUNITIES

ACTION 1 Investigate opportunities to support the growth and future of health and medical professionals who identify as Aboriginal.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Chief Executive Officer	December 2020	Pilot different approaches to increasing Aboriginal employment within the rural health sector (this may include training and education pathways, apprenticeships, internships, work experience, employment opportunities).
	December 2020	Pilot different approaches to increase Aboriginal health knowledge and skills upskilling (this may include professional development, grants to conferences/workshops).
	December 2020	Explore partnership opportunities with agencies that support Aboriginal workforce (eg Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association, Indigenous Allied Health Australia, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association, Allied Health Education and Training).

ACTION 2 Investigate opportunities to increase Aboriginal employment opportunities within Rural Health West.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Human Resources Coordinator	July 2019	Review Human Resources procedures and policies to ensure barriers to Aboriginal employment is addressed.
	September 2019	Engage with relevant agencies to consult on employment strategies to increase Aboriginal employment within Rural Health West including professional development, training pathways, apprenticeships, internships, cadetships, and work experience.
	March 2019	Identify Aboriginal networks to advertise Rural Health West vacancies.
Chief Executive Officer	October 2019	Update Rural Health West Constitution to include a dedicated Board position for an Aboriginal representative.
Chief Executive Officer	October 2020	Appoint an Aboriginal representative to the Rural Health West Board.

OPPORTUNITIES

ACTION 3

Investigate opportunities for Aboriginal providers to supply goods and services to Rural Health West.

RESPONSIBILITY	TIMELINE	TARGET/DELIVERABLE
Chief Executive Officer	June 2019	Review and document current commercial relationships with Aboriginal businesses and what new opportunities may exist.
Chief Executive Officer	June 2019	Review procurement policies to ensure there are no barriers for Aboriginal providers and to educate staff about policy.
Chief Executive Officer	June 2019	Investigate membership of the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council or Supply Nation and collaborate with the Australian Indigenous Chamber of Commerce.





TRACK AND REPORT

ACTION 1

Report achievements, challenges and learnings to Reconciliation Australia for inclusion in the Annual Impact Measurement Report.

RESPONSIBILITY

TIMELINE

TARGET/DELIVERABLE

Chief Operating Officer

October 2019
October 2020

Complete and submit the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia annually.

ACTION 2

Engage and inform staff of their RAP responsibilities.

RESPONSIBILITY

TIMELINE

TARGET/DELIVERABLE

Chief Operating Officer

December 2018

Incorporate RAP actions into Rural Health West team roles and responsibilities and allocate annual budget to progress these.

March 2019

Develop an evaluation plan to measure and report on RAP activities.

December 2020

Identify the internal and external resources required to implement RAP activities.



CONTACT DETAILS

For enquiries about our RAP

T 08 6389 4500

E rap@ruralhealthwest.com.au