



# Aboriginal Employment Plan

2025–28



**Dhelkaya  
Health**



"Gather" by Tanisha Murray

### Artist statement

Tanisha Murray is a First Nations artist living on Djaara Country. She was inspired to become an artist after watching her mum draw throughout her childhood. Tanisha is passionate about Indigenous art and values the way her culture brings deeper meaning to her creative work.

Tanisha is active in the community working with Nalderun Education Aboriginal Corporation as the program co-coordinator of the Yulawi program (school-based apprenticeships and traineeships program) as well as mentoring young First Nations peoples.

The artwork is called '**Gather**'. Tanisha wanted to represent a sense of togetherness. It's about First Nations peoples feeling safe and supported by their colleagues in the workplace.



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# Acknowledgement of Country

*Dhelkaya Health is located on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung People. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this nation. Dhelkaya Health is committed to achieving equality in health status between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.*

# Message from the Chief Executive Officer



I'm pleased to introduce our *Aboriginal Employment Plan 2025–28*, which builds upon the work that commenced in 2016 with our first Aboriginal Employment Plan and aligns with our ongoing commitment to meaningful reconciliation.

Dhelkaya Health has been actively engaged in advancing reconciliation objectives over a number of years via our *Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) July 2023 – December 2024*. This plan, which was formally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, had a key objective to improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development. It also enhanced existing partnerships with First Nations consultants, organisations and training providers.

This *Aboriginal Employment Plan* advances the key actions outlined in the RAP and complements our new *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026–28*, which will be commencing next year.

At Dhelkaya Health we understand that employment is more than just a job – it is a pathway to empowerment, self-determination, and generational impact. Through this plan, we aim to:

- create more accessible pathways into our workforce for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- foster culturally safe and supportive workplaces
- continue to develop and embed a culturally safe and appropriate recruitment process
- build cultural capability and awareness across our teams
- partner with community organisations to enhance opportunities and outcomes.

The new Learning Hub, which opened at our Castlemaine campus in July 2025, will underpin this work. A collaboration between Dhelkaya Health and Bendigo TAFE, the Learning Hub offers Dhelkaya Health a powerful opportunity to attract and connect with First Nations peoples of all ages who wish to study and work locally.

This *Aboriginal Employment Plan* is not a one-off initiative, but a sustained commitment. We are accountable for our progress and will report transparently on our outcomes.

We invite our staff and the wider community to join us on this journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Race'.

Sue Race

# About Dhelkaya Health

Dhelkaya Health is located in central Victoria in the shire of Mount Alexander. Its two main campuses are located in Cornish Street, Castlemaine and Chapel Street North, Maldon. Dhelkaya Health also operates a Community Health Information Hub co-located with Castlemaine Community House in Templeton Street, Castlemaine.

Dhelkaya Health provides a comprehensive range of services for residents of the Mount Alexander Shire, as well as sub-regional community services for residents of Mount Alexander, Mount Macedon and Goldfields Shires. This makes Dhelkaya Health a significant partner in delivering care to the Loddon Mallee regional population.

Dhelkaya means 'being healthy' in the language of the Dja Dja Wurrung People. The choice of an Indigenous name acknowledges the traditional ownership of the land on which we live and work and expresses our gratitude to the Dja Dja Wurrung People for sharing this with us.

An Indigenous name also makes a clear statement about our commitment to First Nations health and wellbeing. It signals to our community and the wider health sector that when we say our core purpose is to be 'Healthier Together' we are absolutely committed to ensuring healthy futures belong to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



**Aunty Kerri Douglas** is a proud Dja Dja Wurrung/Bangerang woman who calls Castlemaine home. She is the Cultural Education and Tourism Coordinator for DUMAWUL, an active member of the Reconciliation Advisory Committee and contributes her cultural knowledge through Welcome to Country ceremonies and ongoing cultural guidance.



**Uncle Rick Nelson** is a respected Aboriginal Jaara Elder, living and practicing culture on country. Based in Castlemaine, he shares the richness of Jaara culture through collaborations with local initiatives, fostering profound appreciation for Jaara life and heritage. Uncle Rick has worked closely with Dhelkaya Health for many years, offering Welcome to Country ceremonies and providing invaluable guidance on cultural awareness and safety.

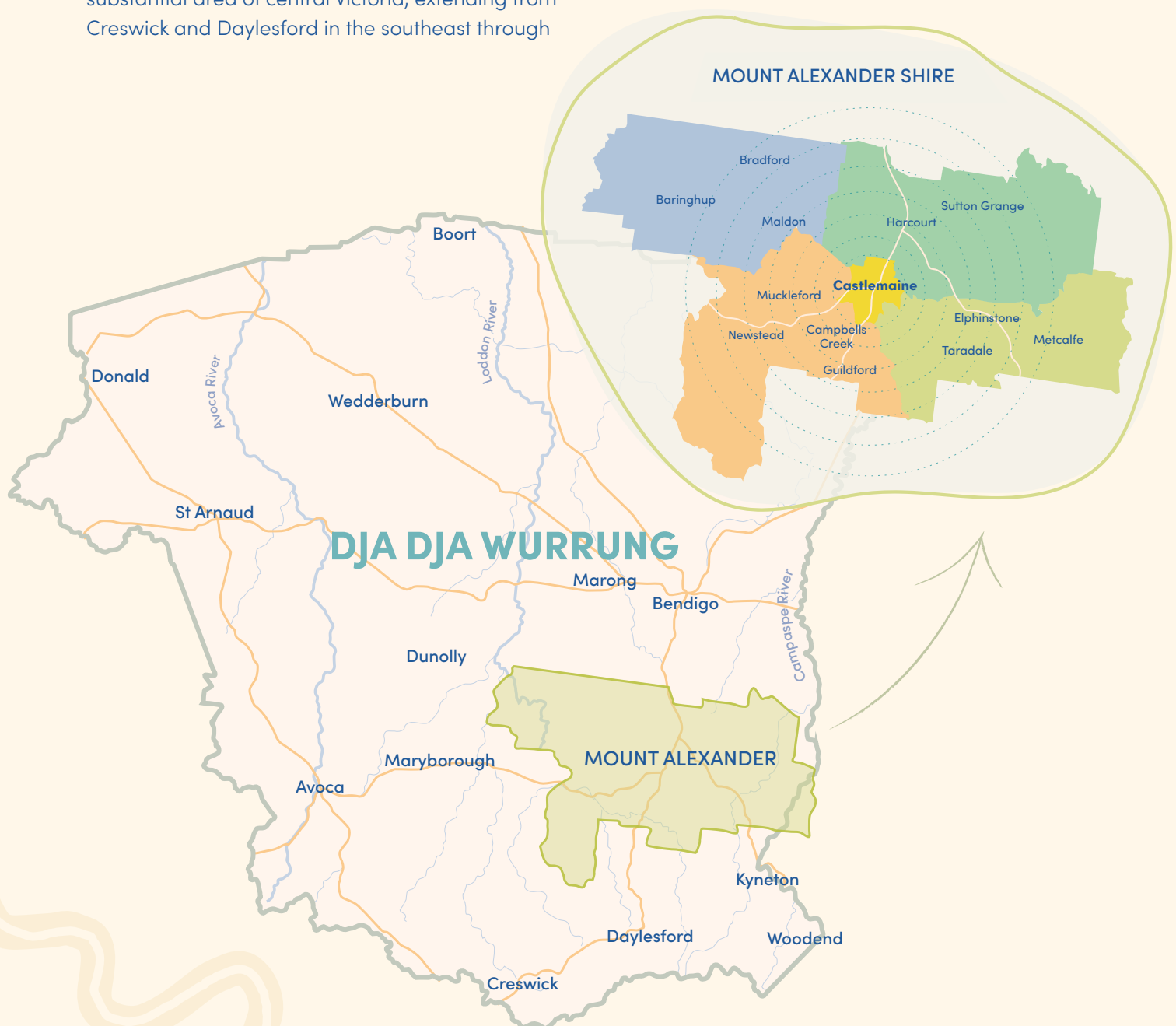


# Djaara Country

Dhelkaya Health is located in the shadow of two mountains, Liarganook (Mount Alexander) and Dharren Gauwa (Mount Tarrengower) on Djaara Country. The Djaara (meaning the people) of the Dja Dja Wurrung are the Custodians of the land and waters on which we live and work. Djaara people see all people as part of nature, not separate from it.

Dja Dja Wurrung Country encompasses a substantial area of central Victoria, extending from Creswick and Daylesford in the southeast through

Castlemaine, Bendigo and Maldon, reaching Boort in the north, Donald in the northwest, and stretching southwest to Navarre Hill and Mount Avoca. The area, known as Djandak, includes the upper catchments of the Loddon, Campaspe and Avoca Rivers and covers significant portions of Victoria's goldfields region.



For the Dja Dja Wurrung People (Djaara), Djandak represents far more than geography. It is a living, spiritual entity that underpins cultural identity, law and heritage. The Djaara have maintained a continuous relationship with this Country for over a thousand generations, guided by the teachings and responsibilities passed down from their Ngurar Balak (Ancestors) and the original Martinga kuli (clan leaders). Despite the profound disruptions of colonisation, mission life and the suppression of language and cultural practices, the Djaara have preserved their identity, kinship systems and custodial obligations to Djandak.

In 2013, the Dja Dja Wurrung were formally recognised as the Traditional Owners of more than 266,000 hectares of Crown land under a native title settlement with the State of Victoria.

The Dja Dja Wurrung are one of the five language groups of the Kulin Nation, sharing with other Kulin peoples the creator beings Bunjil (the wedge-tailed eagle) and Waa (the crow). These ancestral figures represent the moieties of the traditional kinship system and embody the laws and ceremonies that sustain life and cultural continuity.

Extensive archaeological evidence demonstrates the enduring presence of the Dja Dja Wurrung across the region. Sites include middens, scarred trees, stone artefacts and axe heads, with the majority located near waterways such as the Loddon River. Liarganook is of particular cultural significance as a sacred ceremonial ground and an area of intensive occupation, evidenced by numerous scar trees and artefacts.

*"For my People, our djandak is our being. It is a landscape in which the tangible is interwoven with our dreaming stories, our Lore and our Martinga kuli murrup (Ancestral spirits). It is the land that gave birth to our Martinga kuli and nourished and sheltered them. In return they were the guardians of djandak, in the care of the waterways and woodlands, ensuring the health and future of both djandak and Djaara."*

**Trent Nelson, Chairperson (2017-2023)**  
Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.



# Dhelkaya Health's Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team

Our Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team plays a critical role in advancing culturally safe and equitable healthcare access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families, and communities.

Persistent health inequities, including high rates of complex and chronic conditions, underscore the urgent need for accessible and culturally responsive services. Cultural safety is a key determinant of healthcare access and outcomes for Aboriginal communities. In recognition of this, the strategic integration of a diverse Aboriginal Health workforce enables the delivery of holistic, place-based, and culturally informed care.

This approach aligns with broader organisational and system-level commitments to health equity, self-determination, and the co-design of services

that reflect the strengths, priorities, and cultural values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team is made up of an Aboriginal Health Liaison Coordinator (3 days per week) and two Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers (also 3 days per week).

Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers work with treating teams across the hospital to actively improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The team also provides culturally-responsive support to our First Nations work experience students and staff.





# Aboriginal Employment Plan 2025-28

Dhelkaya Health is currently laying the foundation for a successful and sustainable workforce culture. Central to this vision is becoming an employer of choice that is progressive, culturally inclusive, and socially responsible.

A workforce that is culturally strong and responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives is essential to creating a health service better equipped to meet patient needs. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff play an integral role in developing this workforce by helping to break down barriers to healthcare access and enhancing Dhelkaya Health's ability to provide culturally responsive care.

This *Aboriginal Employment Plan* is dynamic and flexible, designed to support the overall goal of building workforce participation and cultural safety. Critical to the success of this plan is shared responsibility for its implementation. To achieve measurable outcomes across all key focus areas, Dhelkaya Health will collaborate with a diverse range of stakeholders, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and health providers.

This plan has been reviewed by Traditional Owners, Dhelkaya Health's Reconciliation Advisory Committee and Board of Directors.



Bushfoods plants mural at Murnong Mumma's bushfood plot

# Key priority areas

For many years our organisation has actively worked to improve the employment and career development opportunities for Aboriginal peoples in line with the Victorian State Government's commitment in Kareeta Yirramboi.

We now aim to build on the lessons learned from our previous work in this area with a clear objective to increase the participation of Aboriginal peoples in employment from one per cent to 3% of the total workforce, measured by headcount rather than effective full-time equivalents. Through career development pathways, we also seek to address the under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in leadership positions.

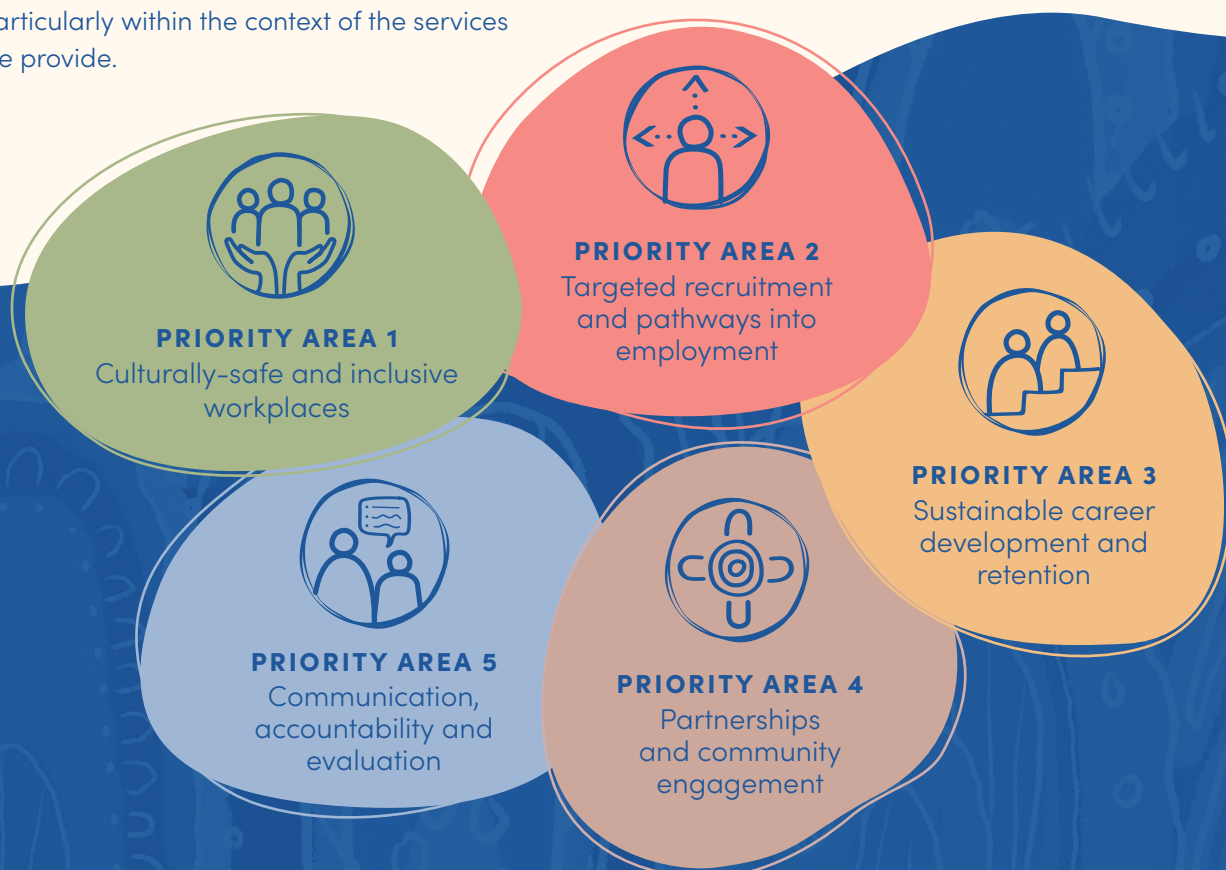
This *Aboriginal Employment Plan* is structured around five priority areas designed to help us achieve these goals. Dhelkaya Health recognises the critical importance of a unified and coordinated approach led by senior leaders to ensure that all staff across the organisation genuinely understand and value the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, particularly within the context of the services we provide.

With accountability as a fundamental principle, we are committed to embedding cultural safety and respect throughout our workforce. We acknowledge that significant effort is still required to create meaningful, transformational, and lasting change within the health system.

Our priority areas are shaped and driven by our leadership teams and managers, whose ongoing commitment and guidance will define the path forward and guarantee sustained support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Our Aboriginal Employment Plan contains five priority areas to help achieve our goal:

1. Culturally safe and inclusive workplaces
2. Targeted recruitment and pathways into employment
3. Sustainable career development and retention
4. Partnerships and community engagement
5. Communication, accountability and evaluation.





## 1

We can achieve cultural safety by creating an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel safe, respected and free from discrimination. Creating a culturally-safe workplace goes beyond the bare minimums of including Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of all meetings, displaying an Acknowledgement plaque at all entrances, flying First Nations flags and displaying artwork. In a workplace setting, cultural safety is felt through policies and procedures, systems, leadership, and collegial interactions which support respect,

Cultural safety is a significant factor in accessibility of healthcare for the community and is the responsibility of all staff at Dhelkaya Health. It is an ongoing learning journey that requires commitment to continuous learning and providing training across all areas and levels.

Importantly, we acknowledge that our role is an active one requiring reflection and evaluation and then responsive action. We aspire to best practice and our cultural safety initiatives will be supported by our actions to become an anti-racist organisation.

*To develop a culturally-aware workplace where all staff members understand, respect, and value cultural diversity, leading to improved collaboration, communication, and employee wellbeing.*

Aboriginal Employment Plan | 2025-28

Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
Demonstrate executive and senior leader commitment to creating a culturally safe workplace and organisational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure executives articulate their commitment to the <i>Aboriginal Employment Plan</i> amongst senior leaders and their teams to foster awareness, understanding and compliance obligations of hiring managers and line managers.</li> <li>Direct all staff to begin meetings with Acknowledgement of Country, as per the <i>Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country Procedure</i>.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive and senior leadership teams</li> </ul>
Ensure all staff (including volunteers) undertake compulsory and targeted Cultural Awareness training (Module 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Cultural Awareness (Module 1) training added to mandatory onboarding (pre-employment) learning portal and 100% target established.</li> <li>Achieve 100% target for all existing staff and volunteers to complete Cultural Awareness training (Module 1).</li> </ul>	<p>Complete</p> <p>June 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning and Development team</li> </ul>
Create targeted specialist cultural humility training for key client-facing roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff offered additional face-to-face training led by First Nations-owned organisations to enhance knowledge and skills from the foundation set in mandatory cultural awareness training.</li> </ul>	<p>Every six months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>Learning and Development team</li> </ul>
Offer cultural awareness opportunities to organisational leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board of Directors, executives and senior leaders to attend cultural awareness tour led by Traditional Owners and First Nations peoples.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO</li> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>Learning and Development team</li> </ul>
Offer additional cultural safety and awareness training for all staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce Cultural Awareness training Module 2 for hiring managers.</li> <li>Introduce Unconscious Bias training for all staff.</li> <li>Ongoing 'Ask the Question' training for front-line and intake staff.</li> <li>Promote Lunch'n'Learn sessions delivered by Kinaway Chamber of Commerce through the Staff Update and screensavers.</li> </ul>	<p>June 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>Learning and Development team</li> </ul>
Create, regularly review, and update policies and procedures that embed and advance cultural safety within the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Cultural Safety policy is revised and updated by policy owner and First Nations community groups to meet best practice.</li> <li>Progress the development of an anti-racism policy.</li> <li>Revise <i>Employee Grievance Procedure</i> to better equip Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to raise concerns regarding discrimination and/or other issues, including mechanism to provide feedback on grievance process and outcome.</li> </ul>	<p>Every two years</p> <p>November 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>People and Culture business partners</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY 2

### Targeted recruitment and employment pathways

Dhelkaya Health is committed to strengthening the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. This priority focuses on implementing targeted attraction strategies and ensuring culturally safe recruitment and onboarding processes.

An essential first step in effectively recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is understanding how to attract them to our organisation. Central to this is promoting Dhelkaya Health as a culturally safe and supportive workplace for First Nations peoples. Strengthening community relationships and building a strong, positive reputation supports this goal by encouraging word-of-mouth referrals,

deepening our understanding of local cultural practices, refining recruitment approaches, identifying barriers to employment, and broadening our networks.

Key initiatives will include providing early and ongoing support throughout the recruitment process, such as application guidance and interview preparation, and creating opportunities for connection from the outset. Involving our Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers alongside hiring managers will ensure a culturally informed approach is applied throughout, helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants feel welcomed, respected, and supported at every stage.

#### Increase Aboriginal participation in the workforce through tailored and culturally respectful recruitment

*To increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the workforce through tailored, culturally respectful recruitment and retention strategies that foster a supportive, inclusive environment and create sustainable employment pathways.*

Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
<b>ATTRACTION</b>			
Promote Dhelkaya Health as a culturally safe and supportive workplace for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events to promote Dhelkaya Health as an employer of choice.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend open days and careers fairs to promote Dhelkaya Health as a culturally diverse and inclusive workplace. Utilise this opportunity to advertise opportunities for work experience for First Nations young people (Year 10).</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications and Marketing team</li> <li>Recruitment Coordinator</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure position descriptions are written in plain English and value placed on life experience, practical knowledge and connections to community.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO and executive team</li> </ul>



Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build and maintain strong relationships with local community, schools and Traditional Owner groups to consistently share information with job seekers and local employment and education providers about the diverse range of roles available at Dhelkaya Health.</li> <li>• Develop ongoing advertising campaigns for employment at Dhelkaya Health – including brochures and flyers co-developed with Aboriginal organisations.</li> <li>• Website and job advertisements to include a statement about cultural leave provisions to communicate to potential applicants that we are an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</li> <li>• Continue membership of the Indigenous Round Table run in partnership with Mount Alexander Shire and Traditional Owner groups.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
<b>RECRUITMENT</b>			
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates are identified and supported during the recruitment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the Candidate Management System (Springboard) to include a question that allows applicants to identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.</li> <li>• Provide updated training for hiring managers to support the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates during the screening process.</li> <li>• Ensure recruitment policies and procedures clearly outline supports available for candidates, including the option to have an Aboriginal staff member on interview panels.</li> <li>• Provide interview supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates and ensure a respectful and inclusive interview process, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– making interview spaces welcoming and culturally safe</li> <li>– including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative on interview panels</li> <li>– ensuring all panel members have completed Cultural Awareness training Modules 1 and 2, and the Unconscious Bias module, prior to the interview</li> <li>– offering pre-interview support to candidates.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Complete</p> <p>July 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People and Culture Director</li> <li>• People and Culture Consultant</li> </ul>



Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
Identify key clinical and non-clinical vacancies for targeted recruitment campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish process to flag vacancies with Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team for consideration of targeted recruitment.</li> <li>Add an additional online advertising platform to our targeted recruitment advertising process to reach Aboriginal and First Nations peoples (e.g. Ethical Jobs).</li> <li>Identify key clinical and non-clinical roles for targeted recruitment campaigns in First Nations-specific channels (e.g. Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation), Nalderun Education Aboriginal Corporation, IndigenousX, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations Inc (VACCHO), Ethical Jobs) and ensure sufficient additional lead-time is scheduled in the recruitment timeline to ensure these advertising targets can be met.</li> </ul>	<p>February 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p> <p>May 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People and Culture Director</li> <li>People and Culture Consultant</li> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> </ul>
<b>ONBOARDING &amp; INDUCTION</b>			
Enhance onboarding experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to promote increased cultural safety and connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the New Staff and Volunteer Induction event includes Acknowledgment of Country, discussion of cultural safety, introduction of Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team and highlights support available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.</li> <li>Include in induction pack advice on cultural leave entitlements, Aboriginal Health Liaison team supports, peer networks and buddy/mentor systems.</li> <li>Ensure all hiring managers have completed Cultural Awareness training Modules 1 and 2.</li> </ul>	<p>June 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p> <p>March 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>Learning and Development Manager</li> </ul>
<b>PATHWAYS including opportunities for traineeships.</b>			
<p>Increase work experience and placement opportunities.</p> <p>The new Learning Hub will be an avenue to identify potential placements and employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work experience and placement opportunities through local and regional opportunities and networks.</li> <li>Aboriginal Health Liaison team to meet and greet Aboriginal students in the Learning Hub and connect them with the staff network.</li> <li>Develop employment resources for Aboriginal and Torres Islander secondary students by partnering with local secondary school career advisor to highlight future career and work opportunities at Dhelkaya Health.</li> <li>Develop a pathway program (traineeship) in collaboration with either MEGT (a not-for-profit recruitment and employment agency) or Bendigo TAFE that offers students the opportunity for a clear direction into future employment with Dhelkaya Health.</li> </ul>	<p>June 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>June 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People and Culture Director</li> <li>Workplace trainer/ Careers advisor</li> <li>Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer</li> <li>Communications and Marketing team</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY 3

### Sustainable career development and retention

Dhelkaya Health is committed to fostering a culturally safe and supportive environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff feel respected, empowered to identify, and supported to thrive. Our *Aboriginal Employment Plan* outlines coordinated strategies to attract and recruit staff, but retention requires more than hiring – it requires active support for wellbeing, growth, and cultural connection.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff often carry a significant colonial load, including community obligations, leadership responsibilities, and lived experiences of trauma. Understanding these pressures is essential to building respectful, resilient, and inclusive workplaces.

To support staff development, we promote both mentoring and sponsoring. Mentoring, ideally by another Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander professional, provides cultural guidance, connection, and professional support. This can be formal (structured and career-focused) or informal (peer-driven and naturally formed). Sponsoring offers opportunities for staff to build experience in new roles through collaboration with senior leaders.

Strong relationships built on mutual respect, cultural safety, and an understanding of cultural boundaries are key to retaining staff and enabling them to grow. Through these efforts, Dhelkaya Health creates an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff feel valued and can flourish.

#### Ensure long-term growth, training and support for Aboriginal staff

*To enable effective retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.*

Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
Ensure all new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are provided with the opportunity to connect with the Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team and the opportunity for mentorship (internal/external).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish processes to connect staff with Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team.</li> <li>Establish and document mentorship opportunities and process for referring staff.</li> <li>Promote access to professional networks and knowledge sharing.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>June 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>People and Culture Director</li> <li>People and Culture Consultant</li> </ul>
Establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network and terms of operation.</li> </ul>	June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> </ul>



Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
Provide access to cultural supervision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff access to culturally-safe Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services.</li> <li>• Publish information about this service on intranet under EAP section and promote widely to senior leaders, line managers and staff.</li> <li>• Seek ongoing feedback from users on suitability of EAP provider and benefit to staff.</li> </ul>	<p>June 2026</p> <p>January 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning and Development Manager</li> </ul>
Offer flexible work hours for cultural practices and ceremonies and cultural leave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff understand their entitlement to Cultural and Ceremonial leave under the Leave Policy and Procedure.</li> <li>• Promote availability of Cultural and Ceremonial leave via Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network and Staff and Volunteer Induction event for days or events of significance such as NAIDOC week and Reconciliation Week.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning and Development Manager</li> <li>• Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> </ul>
Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with access to individual training plans to support their role and future career pathway development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual training plan and career development discussions are documented and progressed through the Performance, Development, Review (PDR) process.</li> <li>• Offer financially supported leadership and skill development programs in line with career development discussions and document via the PDR process</li> </ul>	<p>Annually</p> <p>June 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line managers</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY 4

### Partnerships and community engagement

Dhelkaya Health understands that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples face barriers to accessing jobs. Building partnerships with First Nations businesses and agencies helps remove those barriers and creates fairer access to recruitment, training, and career pathways. Working closely with First Nations communities and health leaders ensures employment initiatives respect cultural values and needs, making workplaces welcoming, inclusive, and supportive for First Nations staff.

Formal agreements exist between our health service and Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC), Kinaway Chamber of Commerce and Nalderun Education Aboriginal Corporation, consolidating genuine collaboration and building long-term trust. This shows a real commitment to First Nations employment and helps create sustainable programs that benefit

both the community and the organisation. These connections will help create employment, skills development, and career opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the organisation and community.

We will also continue to build relationships with health sector leaders, First Nations communities and organisations (for example, Djaara – Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation), local councils and educational institutions to support culturally appropriate initiatives. Regular communication and consultation will enhance health programs, improve service delivery, and ensure culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

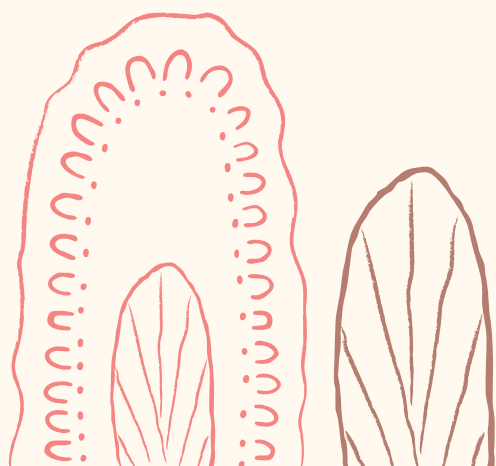
Aligning efforts around shared objectives will support community empowerment, cultural preservation, and social and economic progress.

#### Collaborate with local Aboriginal organisations and build trust through shared goals

*To support equitable employment opportunities, promote culturally-safe workplaces, strengthen community trust and engagement, enhance workforce diversity and capability and support social and economic advancement.*

Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
Position Dhelkaya Health as the employer of choice within the community by maintaining a strong visible presence and actively demonstrating commitment to building cultural capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility at community events and days of cultural significance (for example, Invasion Day, National Apology Anniversary, Close the Gap Day, National Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week).</li> <li>• Partner with Mount Alexander Shire Council to deliver the Welcome to Baby ceremonial event.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Biannually</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>• Communications and Marketing team</li> </ul>

Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
Build on existing partnerships and relationships with First Nations organisations and networks by identifying new opportunities for partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing relationships with Djaara, BDAC, Nalderun Education Aboriginal Corporation, Mount Alexander Shire Council and Kinaway Chamber of Commerce.</li> <li>• Organise collaborative workshops with partners to co-design career, placement and work experience programs.</li> <li>• Collaborate with Uncle Rick Nelson to support delivery of his art project designed to transform the Learning Hub into a place that celebrates the importance and recognition of First Nations knowledge in education, and create a culturally safe space for all students.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>• CEO</li> </ul>
Engage with Traditional Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain formal relationships with Traditional Owners through the Reconciliation Advisory Committee and the Health Equity and Community Wellbeing Committee.</li> <li>• Continue to engage Traditional Owners to bring First Nations knowledge and cultural safety perspective into projects, services and organisational initiatives.</li> <li>• First Nations people appointed to the organisation's Board of Directors.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>July 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>• CEO</li> <li>• Reconciliation Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Board of Directors</li> </ul>
Purchasing and procurement to support First Nations businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain corporate partnership status with Kinaway Chamber of Commerce.</li> <li>• Achieve one per cent of business contracts awarded to First Nations businesses in line with Victorian Government targets.</li> <li>• Increase number of First Nations businesses with preferred supplier status in Oracle by 10% to enable staff to more easily choose to use First Nations businesses.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2027</p> <p>March 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>• Procurement team</li> <li>• Executive team</li> </ul>



## PRIORITY 5

### Communication, accountability and evaluation

Dhelkaya Health is committed to monitoring and reporting progress against the *Aboriginal Employment Plan* objectives and key deliverables through clearly defined processes, to be finalised in the plan's implementation framework.

An annual progress report on the *Aboriginal Employment Plan* will occur to assess progress against key deliverables, identify areas for improvement, and guide future actions to strengthen outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

Accountability for delivering the *Aboriginal Employment Plan* sits with the executive leadership team, who will provide oversight and ensure that cultural safety and inclusion are embedded in workforce practices. Regular

reporting to and by senior leaders will support transparency and shared responsibility across the organisation.

The *Aboriginal Employment Plan* will be communicated organisation-wide to ensure understanding and engagement at all levels. Updates on progress will be shared internally, and feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff will be actively sought to inform continuous improvement.

Through strong governance, clear accountability, and regular evaluation, Dhelkaya Health will drive meaningful and measurable progress in recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

#### Maintain transparency and drive improvements through communication, feedback and reporting

*To embed the Aboriginal Employment Plan across all levels of the organisation and ensure sustained awareness, accountability, and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions to our workforce.*

Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
Promote awareness and understanding of <i>Aboriginal Employment Plan</i> and key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Aboriginal Employment Plan</i> housed on website and intranet.</li> <li>• Publish a dedicated news article outlining the purpose and objectives of the plan on the website to inform the broader community of the organisation's commitment to First Nations employment and inclusion.</li> <li>• Table the <i>Aboriginal Employment Plan</i> at the Annual General Meeting and provide report to the Board of Directors to ensure appropriate oversight and endorsement at the highest levels of governance.</li> </ul>	<p>December 2025</p> <p>December 2025</p> <p>December 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>• People and Culture Director</li> <li>• Communications and Marketing team</li> </ul>



Deliverable	Action undertaken	Timeframe	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief executive and senior leadership on the <i>Aboriginal Employment Plan</i>, emphasising the importance of demonstrating commitment to its principles within their respective areas of influence.</li> <li>Communicate progress against the <i>Aboriginal Employment Plan</i> initiatives regularly through a variety of internal channels, including staff meetings, the Healthier Together staff newsletter, and weekly staff updates.</li> </ul>	<p>December 2025</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
Formal transparent reporting to executive and Board of Directors on <i>Aboriginal Employment Plan</i> progress and regular reporting to Reconciliation Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide the executive leadership team with comprehensive quarterly reports that detail progress against specific Aboriginal employment targets and key performance indicators.</li> <li>Submit an annual report on Aboriginal employment progress to the Board of Directors through the Reconciliation Advisory Committee, providing a review of outcomes, assessing strategy effectiveness, and outlining future priorities. This ensures alignment with reconciliation goals and secures Board endorsement and support.</li> </ul>	<p>Quarterly, commencing March 2026</p> <p>December 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive Director People, Safety and Experience</li> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>CEO</li> </ul>
Formal evaluation of the plan at conclusion, and guidance on future work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct targeted surveys, gather feedback and analyse retention data.</li> <li>Perform a detailed annual review and provide progress report against defined deliverables and milestones.</li> <li>Identify areas of success and those requiring improvement, using data-driven insights to inform strategic adjustments. Maintain continuous consultation and reflective dialogue with key stakeholders throughout the evaluation process to ensure that insights and experiences shape future planning, ensuring relevance and shared ownership.</li> </ul>	<p>December 2026</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>December 2026</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Health and Inclusion team</li> <li>Quality, Development and Improvement team</li> <li>Executive Director People, Safety and Experience</li> </ul>

# References/key documents

## **Dhelkaya Health Strategic Plan 2023 – 2026**

<https://dhelkayahealth.org.au/about-us/#957ff24>

## **Dhelkaya Health Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan July 2023 – December 2024**

<https://dhelkayahealth.org.au/about-us/#957ff24>

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## **Indigenous Recruitment Guide**

Australian Public Service Commission

[https://www.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/indigenous-recruitment-guide\\_0.pdf](https://www.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/indigenous-recruitment-guide_0.pdf)

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## **Barring Djinang: First Peoples Workforce**

Development Framework 2024 – 2028

Victorian Public Sector Commission

<https://www.vpsc.vic.gov.au/workforce-programs/first-peoples-workforce/barring-djinang-first-peoples-workforce-development-framework/>

## **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural capability toolkit**

Victorian Public Sector Commission

<https://www.vpsc.vic.gov.au/workforce-programs/aboriginal-cultural-capability-toolkit/>

## **Aboriginal Employment Action Plan**

Department of Premier and Cabinet

<https://www.vic.gov.au/dpcs-aboriginal-employment-action-plan>

## **Aboriginal workforce strategy 2021 – 2026**

Department of Health and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/strategy-and-planning/aboriginal-workforce-strategy-2021-2026>

## **Dhelkunya Dja – Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014 – 2034**

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation

<https://djadjawurrung.com.au/>

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## **Dja Dja Wurrung seasonal calendar**

Mount Alexander Shire Council

<https://www.mountalexander.vic.gov.au/Explore-the-shire/Castlemaine-Botanical-Gardens/Explore-the-collections/Dja-Dja-Wurrung-seasonal-calendar>

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## **Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement – Map**

First Peoples – State Relations

<https://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/dja-dja-wurrung-recognition-and-settlement-agreement>



**Dhelkaya  
Health**

[dhelkayahealth.org.au](http://dhelkayahealth.org.au)



2025

**Kinaway**

**PARTNER**