

## Ideas for Action

Change doesn't happen overnight. Reflect on the answers you gave in the audit. Using the framework suggested below, keep a record of the actions you might take to bring about short, medium and long term change.

### 1. Identify any important issues to address in relation to:

Creating a welcoming environment

Engaging with Aboriginal clients and communities

Communication and relationships

Developing Cultural Competence

Staff training

Working collaboratively and respectfully with Aboriginal organisations and services

### 2. Identify those actions which you see as possible to implement:

In the next 6 weeks...

In the next 6 months...

In the next year...

Note: This audit tool has been adapted with permission from the Sexual Diversity Health Services Audit produced by Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria

\* Department of Health NSW (2007) NSW Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Guidelines \*\*Some Indigenous people prefer to be called 'Indigenous' and others prefer 'Aboriginal'. Community Cultural Development NSW (2003) Respect, Acknowledge, Listen: Practical protocols for working with the Indigenous Community of Western Sydney.

Produced by the Making Two Worlds Work Project: building the capacity of the health and community sector to work effectively and respectfully with our Aboriginal community. A partnership project between Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation & Women's Health Goulburn North East. Supported by Upper Hume Primary Care Partnership & Albury Wodonga Health.

For more information about Making Two Worlds Work telephone Mungabareena 02 6024 7599, or visit [www.whealth.com.au](http://www.whealth.com.au) or [www.mungabareena.com](http://www.mungabareena.com)



## Working with Aboriginal people and communities

### Health and community services audit

#### Making it easier for health and community workers to work respectfully with Aboriginal clients and communities

Aboriginal concepts of health and illness differ from those of the general population in many ways. The development of policies and programs, and the delivery of services for Aboriginal people, should take these differences into account.

Recognising the diverse needs of individuals and populations is a core component of providing good quality care. This audit is an informal tool to help you assess access and quality of care at your service for Aboriginal

people. Small changes can make a big contribution to providing better care. It can also serve as a prompt to encourage us to challenge existing cultural norms and values which can limit our ability to make services and programs accessible, responsive and accountable to those with greatest need in our communities.

It has been designed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers, from a range of local services, to ensure it is both relevant and useful.

*'Using the Audit tool from the MTWW kit helped us to identify where we are at, prior to using the resource we had no idea where to start or what to do to ensure it is both relevant and useful.'*

The original inhabitants and traditional owners of the Murray River area near Albury and Wodonga are the Wiradjuri, Waveroo and Dhudhuroa people. Albury was a resettlement area in the 1970's and many Aboriginal people moved to the area at this time, particularly from western NSW.

We are quite a transient population with many new faces around at the moment. There are currently around 4,500-5,000 Aboriginal people in our community living on both sides of the Murray River.

Aboriginality is in the heart. In our community there are as many fair skinned Aboriginal people as there are dark skinned people. In some respects, we are quite invisible as a community. The Murray River is considered the giver of life, not a divider of communities, but it can be challenging to collect accurate data about health needs and service usage as the organisations used by community members are located in both NSW and Victoria.



Victorian Public Healthcare Awards - Gold Winner - Reducing Inequalities Award 2009

How to use this audit: Tick in the YES, Work in Progress, NO or Unknown columns. Score 1 point for YES & Work in Progress; 0 for NO and Unknown.

## Creating a welcoming environment

There are some simple ways of communicating to Aboriginal people that they are coming to a welcoming and safe environment.

	Yes	WIP	No	Unknown
Does your service display Aboriginal symbols of welcome, posters and Aboriginal art work developed locally?				
Do the reception staff acknowledge people's presence on arrival?				
Is the waiting room child friendly (e.g. are there toys or activities provided) and safe?				
Do you provide reading material that is relevant to your Aboriginal clients, e.g. the weekly 'Koori Mail' newspaper, local newsletters & children's books with Aboriginal characters or content?				
SCORE				

## Engaging with Aboriginal clients and communities

A respectful and inclusive engagement process is essential to establishing and maintaining relationships.

	Yes	WIP	No	Unknown
When an Aboriginal client contacts you it is usually to address a crisis. Can you do your best to make a time that day, even for a brief initial contact?				
You can't always identify an Aboriginal person by looks. Does your service always ask clients "are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent"? Does your service ask people how they would like to be addressed?				
Does your intake process take into consideration a range of literacy levels?				
Do you encourage and support your client to attend with a family member or support worker?				
Are you prepared for kids to be present in the office or agency during an appointment?				
Has your service a procedure in place to assist with transport if needed?				
Does your service adopt each client's definition of 'family' which may include, but not limited to, significant others, relatives by blood, same-sex partners, or spouses?				
SCORE				

## Communication and relationships

Communication skills remain central to creating a trusting and open environment.

	Yes	WIP	No	Unknown
Concerns about confidentiality can inhibit communication and openness. Do you make it clear to the client that confidentiality is protected and privacy respected?				
Do staff have positive and affirming communication skills and attitudes that build on a client's strengths, resilience, and existing resources?				
Do you provide information and seek feedback from your clients/participants in ways which consider varying literacy levels and communication methods?				
Do staff know the local Aboriginal workers that can provide assistance with communication and relationship building?				
SCORE				

## Developing Cultural Competence

A person who is culturally competent can communicate sensitively and effectively with people from a range of cultures, religions, ethnicities, ages, abilities and sexualities.

	Yes	WIP	No	Unknown
Are processes for self-reflection in place to support your workers and to ensure no assumptions are made based on values, stereotypes, prejudices, or family history?				
Are staff encouraged to attend important Indigenous events (e.g. National Reconciliation week, NAIDOC week) and get involved?				
Do staff take into account that many Aboriginal people feel great shame about their health issue, about having to use the service, and that it can take a great deal of courage to walk through the front door?				
Does your agency have a policy to acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional owners of the land, and Aboriginal Elders both past and present?				
Does your agency have a policy to invite a local Aboriginal Elder to give a 'welcome to country' at the commencement of any major public event?				
SCORE				

## Staff training

All staff have an important role in creating safe and welcoming environments.

	Yes	WIP	No	Unknown
Have staff participated in cultural training with input from the local Aboriginal community?				
Are staff supported to understand how the accumulated impact of colonisation, dispossession, racism and disempowerment affects the current health status of Aboriginal people and patterns of use of health and community services today?				
Do staff know the relevant Federal and State legislation and policy documents and guides related to racial discrimination, social justice and health, working with Aboriginal communities?				
SCORE				

## Working collaboratively and respectfully with Aboriginal organisations and services

	Yes	WIP	No	Unknown
*Do you follow Aboriginal health promotion principles when working with Aboriginal communities?				
Do you support staff to visit Aboriginal organisations and services, build relationships, and maintain regular contact with the Aboriginal community through network meetings, reference groups, and collaborative projects?				
Are staff aware of the importance of building relationships and trust prior to discussing project proposals and funding opportunities with Aboriginal organisations and services?				
If you deliver a service at an Aboriginal organisation or service, do you do this regularly to build trust and visibility in the community?				
Does your agency regularly meet with staff at Aboriginal organisations and services to review and evaluate your working relationship to ensure it remains effective and appropriate?				
Does your agency regularly discuss with staff at Aboriginal organisations and services issues related to power, autonomy and decision-making?				
Does your agency act upon issues raised in a prompt, culturally sensitive and respectful way? Does your agency report back on any issues on which action has been taken?				
Have you considered formalizing your partnership structures and processes with Aboriginal organisations and services? e.g. a partnership agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding?				
SCORE				

**Scoring** Record the scores from each category in the table below.

CATEGORY	TOTAL
Creating a welcoming environment	
Engaging with Aboriginal clients and communities	
Communication and relationships	
Developing Cultural Competence	
Staff training	
Working collaboratively and respectfully with Aboriginal organisations and services	

**TOTAL SCORE**

## Scoring Tally

0 – 10	Your service is still a challenging one for Aboriginal people. Don't despair; small steps can make a big difference.
10 – 19	Your intentions are good. Your agency/practice has made a start and shows potential to providing more inclusive care.
20 – 30	The work on these issues is happening on several fronts now and starting to make a real difference – coordination and consolidation are the next steps to go further forward.
31	Your service is exemplary in its sensitivity and quality of care for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people feel well-treated, respected and supported. Congratulations.

\*Please refer to Using a health promotion framework with an "Aboriginal" lens, available as part of The Making Two Worlds Work resource kit.