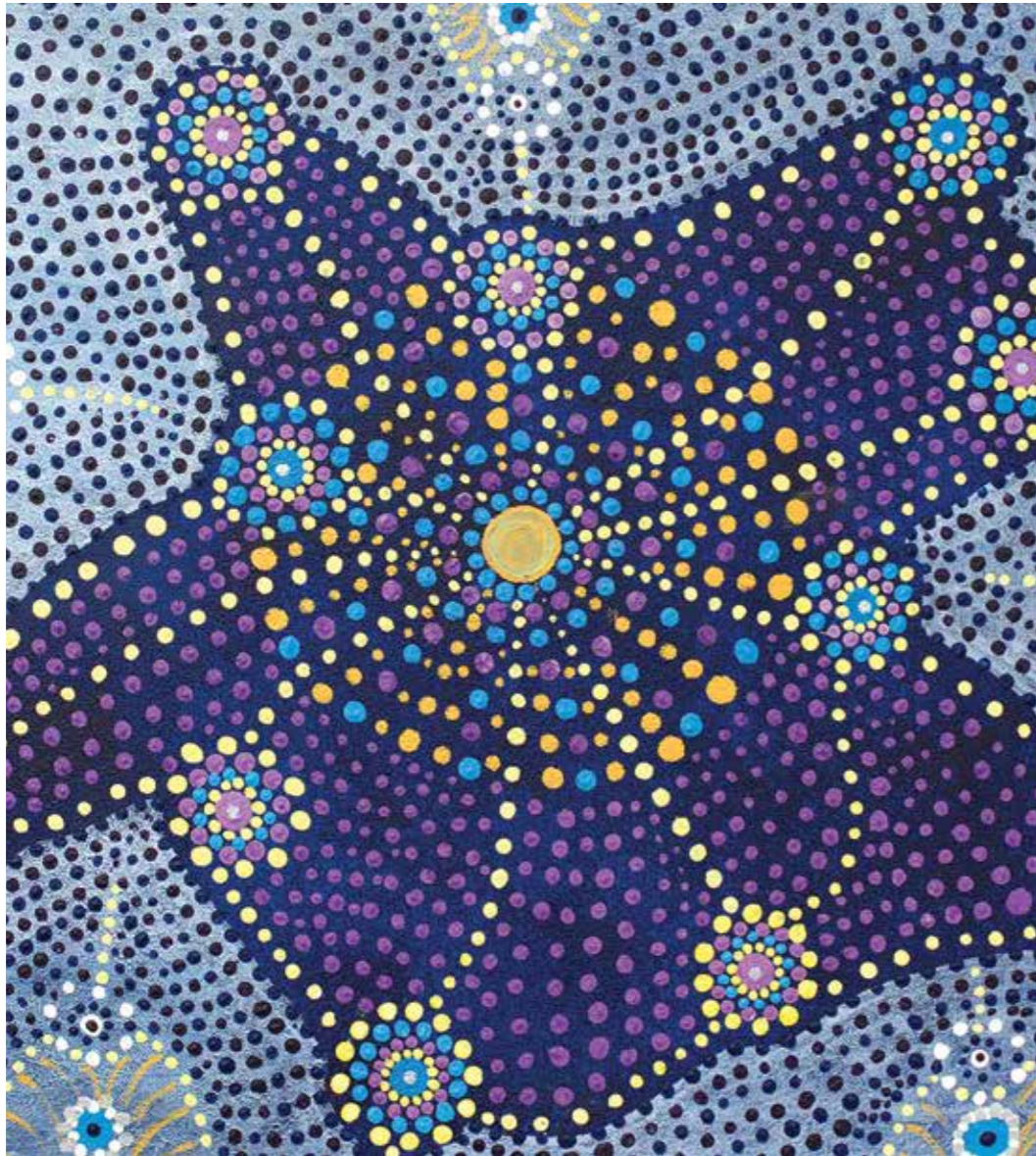


# Deadly Yarn'n

St Vincent's  
leading the way in  
Aboriginal Health

2021  
Edition





We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which our Hospital stands, **the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation.**

We pay our respects to Elders past and present as we walk and work together in the journey of improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health outcomes. We would also like to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal people who contributed their stories to this newsletter. Thank you for sharing your personal journey and how it brought you to St Vincent's.



MESSAGE FROM THE

# Chief Executive Officer

A/Prof Anthony Schembri, AM



**As I write this foreword, I feel a strong sense of pride in terms of the inroads we are making across the spectrum of our health service to ensure we're more responsive to the needs of our Aboriginal patients and more engaging with our Aboriginal staff.**

We've got a long way to go on our journey, but when I look at the accomplishments listed below, I feel we're moving with great momentum in the right direction:

We've worked closely with Redfern AMS and other partners to develop public health promotion materials to keep Aboriginal communities safe during COVID, particularly in relation to testing, and ensuring our Elders and Aboriginal Medical Services are well-stocked with PPE.

We were the first in NSW to introduce Respecting the Difference virtual training, with our Learning & Development team developing online training for our staff to continue their Respecting the Difference courses.

We witnessed an increase in employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to over 65, meeting the targets for NSW Health. Significantly, Graham Kilby was appointed into the Aboriginal Employment Specialist position and has already made good inroads in promoting SVHN as an employer of choice, as well as promoting the Aunty Fay Carol program – which was recently expanded to include courses in both pathology and health administration.

Odessa Saukuru, one of our extraordinary nurses on 7 North – was named first ever winner of the SVHA "Deadly Award" for her outstanding contribution; I can still feel the

enormous warmth in my heart when I picture the scene as her name was read-out at our Annual SVHA Awards Ceremony.

We were engaged in the Sydney Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Health Partnership priorities document 2020–2022 to guide joint action with our partners to close the gap in Aboriginal Health, which includes the social determinants of health to improve Aboriginal Health outcomes.

Importantly, last year we introduced Stay'n Deadly – Stay'n In, Emergency Department Flexi Clinic that has radically improved the rates of Aboriginal people completing their treatment. I can think of few public health interventions I have witnessed in recent times, where we have seen such a positive turn-around in tackling such a perennial health challenge.

Finally, I want to conclude by acknowledging all our Aboriginal frontline workers who turn up each and every day to provide exceptional care and support to the community we are fortunate to serve, particularly as we continue to play such a central role in tackling the Pandemic.

**Thank you for all that you do, and all who you are!**

# Director of Aboriginal Health

Pauline Deweerd



**It has been another big year for St Vincent's Health Network across a range of areas including the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff and the support provided to our Aboriginal patients.**

St Vincent's is fast becoming an employer of choice for Aboriginal people in the health sector. We have seen a growth in the employment of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff to 67 employed across a range of areas.

A number of staff have also been supported in their endeavours to further themselves through studies. Several Aboriginal staff members have commenced higher education studies during 2019, with some staff having also graduated. A big congratulations to those that have completed their studies and good luck to those that are continuing or looking to commence studies.

I would particularly like to acknowledge a couple of our staff members who recently commenced their Certificate 4 Aboriginal Health Workers course. We also had a Nurse who is undertaking her Registered Nurse

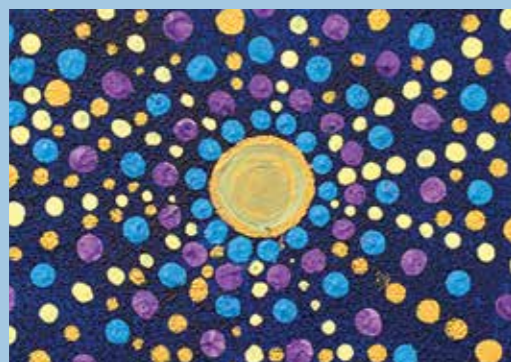
training and was awarded the St Vincent's Health Australia's Deadly Award. This is the first time that SVHA have had this award in recognition of the outstanding work of Aboriginal staff. Congratulations to Enrolled Nurse, Odessa Saukuru.

In addition, we have seen career progression for our Aboriginal staff, including one of our Nurses who was promoted to a Nursing Unit Manager's position, we are all so proud of her. An additional two of our Aboriginal staff stepped up and took on Management positions within St Vincent's.

We have continued to offer Respecting the Difference Cultural Awareness training both online and face-to-face training. The training continues to receive positive feedback and is one of the most well attended training days at St Vincent's.

Finally, our relationship with Aboriginal communities continues to be a priority for St Vincent's Public Hospital to promote Aboriginal Health and encouraging Aboriginal people to take up employment within St Vincent's.

Furthermore, this year we have really had a focus on research and working beside our Research teams in looking at improving our services to better meet the needs of improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities.



## Staff profile



## Odessa Saukuru

### ENROLLED NURSE

Odessa Saukuru began work at St Vincent's six years ago when she was employed in an Administration role to support Mental Health/Integrated Care Services. Odessa was the first face when patients, clients, visitors and staff attended the O'Brien Building. She always greeted them with a smile and said hello to whoever entered the building. There were times when Odessa was observed dealing with very complex and sometimes elevated clients. She was able to deal with any circumstances that came her way in a professional and respectful manner.

Over the years Odessa expressed and shared her dreams of becoming a Nurse. The Director of Aboriginal Health always encouraged her to follow her dreams and reminded her that she could achieve anything she wanted if she really put her mind to it.

Not only did Odessa take up the opportunity to speak to key personnel within the higher education system, she sat the tests and

attended an interview process and passed with flying colours! Odessa decreased her Administration work hours to take up study and despite many sacrifices, Odessa completed her placement with St Vincent's, always giving 100%.

Odessa completed her studies and was successful in an EN placement on ward 7 North. She can now proudly say she has qualifications as an Enrolled Nurse. Not wanting to stop there, Odessa enrolled to further studies to become a Registered Nurse, which she is currently undertaking and crushing it!

Odessa always put others before herself and is loved by both her Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal colleagues. Odessa was awarded "The Deadly Award" at the St Vincent's Innovation and Excellence awards 2019 for her outstanding achievements.

# Lee Smith

## ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER, ST VINCENT'S CORRECTION HEALTH

Hi, my name is Lee Smith. I am a proud Wiradjuri Dunghutti Man.

I am an Aboriginal Health Worker with St Vincent's Correctional Health at Sydney's Parklea Correction Centre. I have been in this role in Correctional Health for more than 18 months now and find myself still evolving each day with every case.

One of the main challenges that I am faced with on a daily basis is attempting to maintain and educate my Indigenous patients of the importance of follow up in relation to their healthcare needs.

This is quite important to address with all patients as well as highlighting that being back in the community doesn't change the healthcare requirement or need.

St Vincent's has identified the concerns with Indigenous Health, and I'm so proud that we are doing our part in Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health.



# Creating leadership opportunities

Peter Honeyman is a proud Barkindji man from far west NSW. In January 2019, he was named St Vincent's Health Network Sydney's first Indigenous participant in the Graduate Management Trainee program undertaking a Master's in Health Service Management through the University of Tasmania.

The two year program has provided Peter with training and experiences in all aspects of the Hospital's operations, working alongside the senior leadership team and has involved undertaking extensive education in relevant health service management theory, research and practice to enhance his ability to plan and manage successfully in an increasingly complex national and international sector.

Peter began at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney in 2015 when the Aboriginal Health Unit was established and was appointed to be the

organisations first Aboriginal Health Worker. Later returning to the organisation in October 2017 as a Senior Aboriginal Health Worker, he played a key role in forging relationships between Aboriginal patients and other health professionals. He also provided an Aboriginal Health perspective to projects across the Hospital campus. Peter is the Network's first internal appointment to the trainee program in over 10 years.



# Sydney Metropolitan

## LOCAL ABORIGINAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

The Sydney Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Health Partnership (SMLAHP) Agreement is the primary mechanism for providing advice and expertise on Aboriginal Health at the regional level. The partnership region includes the geographical area covered by Sydney, Northern Sydney and South Eastern Sydney Local Health Districts.

The aim of the partnership is:

- To bring the collective expertise of the partnership group together to improve the health of the Aboriginal Partnership population across the life course.
- To enhance and support the guiding principles that underpin the Aboriginal community

controlled health service charter. Similarly, the Partnership supports and enhances the LHD's in their role in providing health service provision

- To advocate for improved Aboriginal service delivery and improved service outcomes
- To work together to maximise opportunities for improving information on Aboriginal health within the region and subject to ethical requirements, reciprocal sharing of information and data on Aboriginal health to enable immediate and appropriate responses to local health priorities
- To annually review the changes that occur through the implementation of the priorities document

# Jackson Sagers

## ABORIGINAL PHYSIOTHERAPY CADET

Hi, my name is Jackson Sagers and I am a 25 year old Palawa man from Lutruwita, Tasmania. I enjoyed exploring my homeland and the natural environment near the beach. One of my favourite places to visit is a cultural site with rock carvings less than 500m from my where I grew up.

It's been a long journey to finishing a Physiotherapy degree and starting here at St Vincent's. To start with I never saw myself going to university growing up, in fact none of my family had before and I didn't really consider it an option. Additionally, academics was never a strong point for me and I would have to move away from home. It took until I was 17 years



old to finally pique my interest in school when I studied health / sport science in year 12. I quickly realised this was my passion and re-sat my TCE in year 13 to gain entry to University to study a Bachelor of Exercise Science in Launceston.

I loved studying Exercise Science, and I found an interest in injury management and rehabilitation so I decided to study a Masters of Physiotherapy after my Bachelor's degree. I was accepted into Macquarie's Physiotherapy program and once again re-located, this time interstate to the big city of Sydney. I initially found it very tough transitioning from a rural area and being away from friends and family but once I settled in and met some friends, I've learned to enjoy the lifestyle. During university I supported myself working as a carer and working with people with disabilities on a golf course. I found this extremely rewarding and noticed that this was the area of physiotherapy I enjoyed the most.

Reflecting upon the most important things that have helped me overcome challenges would be being proud of who you are, where you come from, follow your passions and love what you do. Now I've managed to get a job I'm looking forward to becoming part of the team, learning a lot and developing myself as a well-rounded physiotherapist and giving back to those in need.

# Establishing a junior doctor placement

## IN A REMOTE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY

Dr Sarah Michael



An opportunity has opened up to create a junior doctor placement in a First Nations community. In January 2020, a trip was made to Bamaga in the North Peninsula area of Far North Queensland to ascertain whether 12-week rotations to support this community might be possible.

The Northern Peninsula region is a local government area in Far North Queensland which extends from the north western coast of Cape York Peninsula, comprising five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, each with their own cultural identity and history (Injinoo, Umagico, Bamaga, New Mapoon and Seisia.). The total population is around 2800 people, 87.1% of which identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons (NPAFCS, 2018).

The plan is to build on an existing relationship between St Vincent's and the North Peninsula Area Family and Children's Service (NPAFCS). This relationship began with seed funding provided for Community-based Palliative Care, which is still running today. The junior doctor will primarily be based at the NPAFCS GP clinic in Injinoo, which is accessible to all five communities. This clinic, operational since 2015, has 1454 registered patients, representing 52.1% of the total NPA population. NPAFCS employs and builds the capacity of local Indigenous residents to staff their sites and ensure all programs meet the needs of the local community.

For our visit back in early 2020, the beautiful rainforest greenery was a literal breath of fresh air after coming from Sydney's smoky summer. The visit began immediately upon leaving the airport, with a whirlwind tour through all five communities led by Kate Galloway, NPAFCS CEO, including the history of the communities, and the

uniqueness of having both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures side-by-side. The area is steeped in history of relocated and dislocated communities, and white-history as an outpost during World War Two. The tour also included a glimpse of the Torres Strait Islands visible from the shore, the local beaches and running tracks, and the famous town bakery.

A visit to the Injinoo clinic demonstrated the incredible work done in engaging the local community by offering a walk-in service, with a big focus on chronic disease and preventative health through incentives, home visits, and screening clinics. The clinic sees everything from hearing assessments, to acute walk-ins which need direction to the hospital, and everything in-between. NPAFCS runs a multitude of programs focusing on maternal and child health, 'deadly lifestyle', specialist services, skin health, vaccinations, and more. The addition of a junior doctor from St Vincent's will help support existing clinic staff alongside the local GPs, as well as offer the opportunity for more community outreach.

The following day a meeting with the NPAFCS CEO, chairwomen of the board and clinic manager helped really clarify the role for the junior doctor and how welcome and supported they will be at the clinic. All agreed this would be an incredible opportunity to not only provide more support to the Bamaga community, but give our junior doctors a-once-in-a-lifetime look at life in a remote First Nations community, and knowledge and advocacy they could bring back to their roles in the city and future careers. We are all hopeful that this project will commence in late 2021/early 2022, and truly believe this will be a real highlight and drawcard for junior doctors at our Sydney campus.

# Phillip Combridge

## ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKER

I am a proud Wiradjuri man from Central West New South Wales. I was inspired by my community to work in Health due to the various physical and mental health concerns that negatively impact the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Therefore, I was motivated to take on an opportunity at the University of Technology Sydney, where In 2020 I graduated with a Bachelor of Sports and Exercise Science. During this stage, I had spent time in many positions where I was able to engage and support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Recently I have taken up a role as an Aboriginal Health worker here at St Vincent's Hospital, where I am a part of a multidisciplinary

Health care team, working in the Emergency Department and Intensive Care Unit. This role has been challenging but also rewarding as it has provided the opportunity for me to gain additional skills, knowledge and experience. Which eventually I would like to take back to my home communities.

I think what inspires me to keep striving to be the best I can is the amount of support and encouragement I receive from the many health departments and streams within the hospital.

My advice would be to explore the many opportunities that you come across and try new ideas even if this means being out side of your comfort zone.



# Cognitive Assessment Project

## TO IMPROVE COGNITIVE ISSUES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Cindy Tan

Research indicates that the Aboriginal population experience dementia at a rate 3 to 5 times higher than the general Australian population. Aboriginal people also face higher rates of dementia at younger ages than their non-Indigenous counterparts. A study completed in five city and regional New South Wales Aboriginal communities revealed that 21% or three times that of the general Australian population of 6.8%.

There were concerns in the Occupational Therapy Department that there is a gap in culturally appropriate cognition screening tool for Aboriginal people. With the support of Pauline Deweerd, Director of Aboriginal Health, Cindy Tan, Senior Occupational Therapist, and Danielle Gately, Occupational Therapist (who is no longer working at St Vincent's Hospital) and other researchers on the team Dr Josephine Gwynn

from Poche Centre for Indigenous Health and Dr Kylie Radford from Neuroscience Research Australia applied for and were awarded a multi-disciplinary grant from St Vincent's Clinic Foundation. The grant is for a study entitled "A study evaluating the feasibility and acceptability of the modified Kimberly Indigenous Cognitive Assessment (mKICA) to Aboriginal people in an acute tertiary hospital."

The aim of this study is to contribute to closing the gap for Indigenous health and ensure that Aboriginal patients receive appropriate care. Feedback received from participants thus far have indicated that they have found the mKICA a more culturally relevant assessment tool and are more receptive to the mKICA as compared to the mainstream ones.



Cindy Tan



Danielle Gately



Dr. Josephine Gwynn



Pauline Deweerd



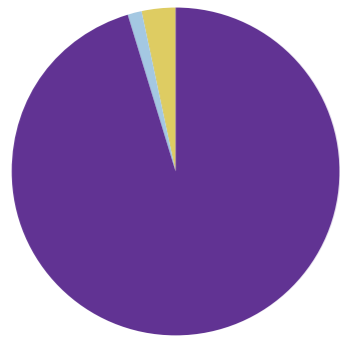
Dr. Kylie Radford

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Employment

St Vincent's Hospital has a strong commitment to promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and remains the fastest growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. Currently, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney has an Aboriginal workforce of 1.5% which equates to 67 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff.

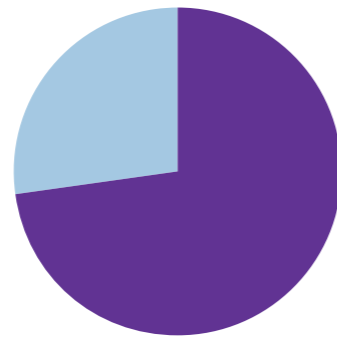
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people fill a wide range of occupations including Senior Management, Doctors, Nurses, NUMS, Allied Health, Administration Officers, Pathologists, Wardsman and transport drivers.

**ATSI**



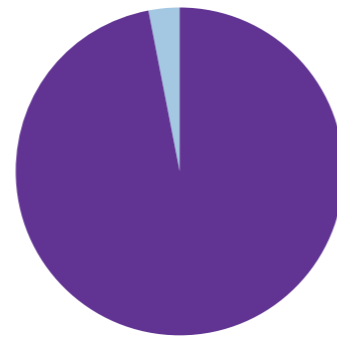
- Aboriginal **64**
- Both **1**
- Torres Strait Islander **2**

**Gender**



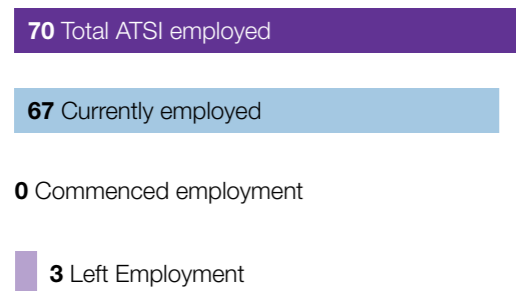
- Female **49**
- Male **18**

**All staff**

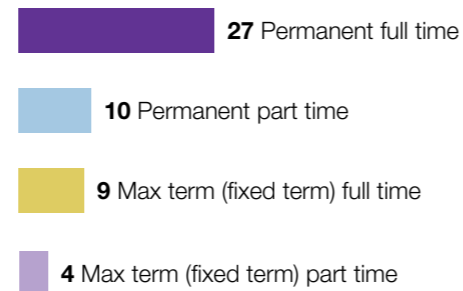


- Non-Indigenous **4288**
- Aboriginal **64**
- Torres Strait Islander **2**
- Both **1**

## December Summary



## Employment type



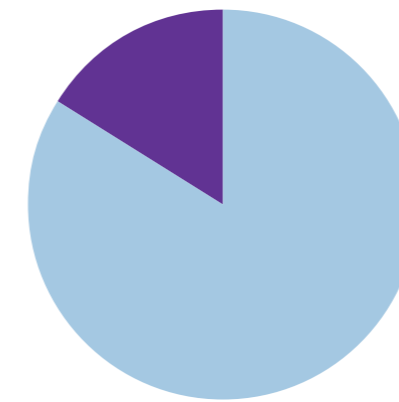
# Respecting the Difference

St Vincent's Hospital continues its Aboriginal Cultural Respecting the Difference training. The purpose of this training is to motivate staff to build positive and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal people who may be patients, visitors or Aboriginal staff, and to improve their confidence in establishing appropriate and sustainable connections.

St Vincent's Hospital continue to engage Mirri Mirri to deliver face-to-face and virtual cultural awareness training. As of December 2020, 67% of staff have completed the face-to-face training and 84% of staff have completed the e-learning.

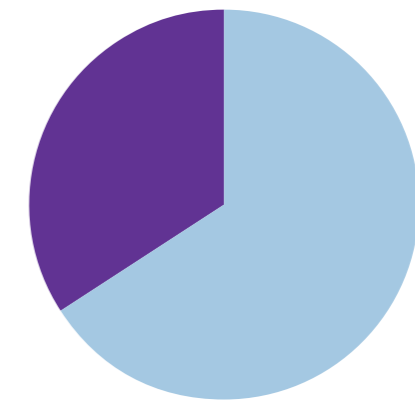
For information on training, staff members should contact the Learning and Development team.

## Respecting the Difference e-Learning



- Sum of completed **3013**
- Sum of incomplete **581**

## Respecting the Difference Face to Face



- Sum of completed **2384**
- Sum of incomplete **1201**

## Some comments from staff who have attended Respecting the Difference training:



*This has been one of the best learning environments I have attended at SVH. Thanks to a talented facilitator, Paul, and colleagues who contributed to activities and discussion.*

*Practical activities. Learning stories about Aboriginal art, craftsmanship, hunting skills and dream time stories. Paul was one of the best presenters I've seen.*

*Paul was so engaging and really helped us all to reach our own conclusions rather than just "telling the facts" Loved all the activities.*



# Where am I now?



## Ashley Cuddy

Hello! My name is Ashley Cuddy and I am a speech pathologist. I have been working at St Vincent's Hospital for just over two years and I was fortunate enough to come on as a new graduate to be SVH's first Indigenous speech pathologist. Clearly I was following in my father's footsteps who also happened to be the first Indigenous nursing cadet the Wesley Hospital in Brisbane many years ago!

My grandmother was of Wakka Wakka just north west of Brisbane. Unfortunately she passed early in my dad's life which made it difficult for me in my younger years to relate to and embrace my heritage. As I have grown older I have been able to build my sense of identity as an Aboriginal woman. Being a part of St Vincent's and being able to connect with other Indigenous staff members has furthered my sense of belonging and culture.

Throughout my time at St Vincent's as a speech pathologist I have worked with patients with communication and swallowing disorders including geriatrics, stroke and neurology, oncology and critical care. I am thoroughly passionate about being a voice for the voiceless and always find myself taking on a strong avocation role with my patients which I only hope to further as my career progresses.



## Sonia Robinson

My name is Sonia Robinson, and I've been nursing for 26 years.

My father is part of the stolen generation and a Bundjalung man who was sadly taken off his mother at 18 months of age and raised in Cowper Orphanage. The trauma of being brought up in an institution drove my father to create a very large family of his own, eight children in all. I am the oldest girl and was given a lot of responsibility from a very young age. The belief my parents had in me, and the skills I had learned to manage and care for my siblings is why I believe I have gravitated towards nursing leadership roles in my career.

I currently hold a position as an Operational Nursing Unit Manager in the Emergency Department at St Vincent's. I love my job, despite it being chaotic, noisy, and very unpredictable.

Although I am fair-skinned, I have always identified as Aboriginal. My ability to connect instantly with my people comes from a heartfelt empathy and understanding of the trauma that many in this cultural group have experienced.

Every day I try to role model kindness, compassion, and understanding so that our Indigenous patients feel safe and well-cared for in our department.

As a part of my management portfolio, I have created a process in which a 48hr follow-up call is made to all our Aboriginal patients that have been discharged. The purpose of these phone calls is to check that they feel better, understand their medical treatment plan, and offer any further reviews in our Flexi Clinic if needed. It makes me so happy that I can lead a program like this, and the positive feedback I get from our patients is that they are always grateful that we have taken the time to contact them. To work in an organisation that continually strives to be culturally sensitive and supportive of Aboriginal people truly makes me so proud.



## Callie Noakes

Dr Suess said "It is better to know how to learn than to know"

My name is Callie Noakes, I am the Nursing Unit Manager on Xavier 9 South (Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplant). I manage the day to day running of this awesome unit, where we specialise in treating malignant and non-cancer related blood disorders, and every day I learn something new from the inspirational & powerful people I work with, my tireless and compassionate peers, my wise and generous mentors, and our amazing and resilient patients.

I completed my post graduate year at St Vincent's in 2010, with the second rotation on 9 South. I had a short period off to see some of the world, and soon after found myself back working full time on X9S. Over the years I have been fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to develop my career to a Clinical Nurse Specialist, then a Clinical Nurse Educator, and now Nursing Unit Manager on the same (but now very different) unit. None of which would have been possible without the support, encouragement and guidance from the many remarkable teachers, mentors and colleagues who have always been there for me.

My fathers' mother was a Bundjalung woman and my mother's mother can trace her ancestry back to the first fleet, so I am in a unique position as I have ancestors who watched from the shore as the tall ships came, and ancestors who saw the shore of their new home from those same ships. Both my grandmothers taught me to be proud and strong, to work hard and care for others less fortunate, and that failure was not the opposite of success but simply part of the journey to success.

Nursing was not my first choice as a career, you could say I stumbled into it by chance and stayed in it very much by choice. The challenges are many, long hours, short breaks, and sad outcomes, but the rewards also are many, great comrades, shared joy and knowing you make a difference. During my ten years nursing I have learnt a great deal and grown as a person. I have learnt medicine is a wondrous and constantly evolving science, a smile and a soft touch can ease pain, kindness and friendship are priceless, miracles are real, all lives matter, and good coffee and cheap parking is the perfect start to every work day.

I strive to be the best leader I can be every day, and follow the advice by Dr Suess always – "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."



# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Staff Forum

## “Seeing it through our heart – seeing it through our eyes”

The 2019 SVHA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff forum is an annual event allowing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from across SVHA facilities nationally to connect and work together to influence the national agenda for Aboriginal Health and employment across our organisations.

Now in its fourth year, the gathering provided an opportunity to consider our Reconciliation

Action Plan for 2019-2021, which will inform the strategies we undertake to Close the Gap in health and employment outcomes for our Nation’s First Peoples.

We were very proud to have so many staff members representing St Vincent’s Health Network Sydney at the two-day event, with many wearing their Dalarinji shirts with pride.



# Dalarinji Aboriginal Advisory Committee

St Vincent’s Health Network Sydney (SVHNS) is continuously looking to improve access and the inclusion of Aboriginal people in our services. We recognise that SVHNS has a role to play in ensuring health services meet the needs of our local community.

The SVHNS Dalarinji Aboriginal Advisory Committee includes representatives from our partners, Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern

and NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, which meets every two months to oversee strategies to promote staff cultural awareness and engagement, employment of Aboriginal staff, foster and develop community partnerships to improve health referrals and linkages, and improve the experiences of Aboriginal patients, families, and visitors at our facilities in Darlinghurst and Auburn.

# Bishop Macbeth-Green visits St Vincent’s

Members of the Bishops Commission for relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) recently visited St Vincent’s Hospital in Darlinghurst.

Commission Chairman, Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE said the group was impressed by the ways the hospital is supporting Aboriginal people. “It is heartening to see a program that works with Indigenous individuals in their pursuit of a better life, not only for themselves but also for their brothers and sisters in their local communities”.

“Some of the personal stories that were told were truly inspirational... stories not only of failure, but of hard work and success in so many individual and unique ways.”

Townsville Bishop Tim Harris and Darwin Bishop Charles Gauci also represented the Bishops Commission during the joint visit with NATSICC. Pauline Deweerd, Director of the Aboriginal Health Unit, said the Hospital

has made an effort in the past 10 years to meet Closing the Gap targets through its Reconciliation plan.

“We have gone from having just four Aboriginal staff members in 2010 to now having 74 Indigenous people employed in a variety of roles right across the hospital,” Ms Deweerd said.

In addition to acknowledgement plaques and Aboriginal art being displayed throughout the Hospital, a key platform of reconciliation efforts was the highly successful “Respecting the Difference” training program.

“Our hospital staff have received ‘Respecting the Difference’ training to ensure that all of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and guests are welcomed to a culturally respectful environment,” Ms Deweerd explained. Nearly 90 per cent of staff at the hospital had undertaken the training program, while 50 per cent had completed a full day of training in cultural awareness, specifically targeting practical skills for dealing with Aboriginal patients.

# Stay'n Deadly and Stay'n In

St Vincent's Hospital Network Sydney (SVHNS) Emergency Department (ED) has one of the highest rates of incomplete treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients in NSW. The target set by the NSW Ministry of Health is 5%. In the financial year 2018-2019, 19% of Aboriginal patients presenting to SVHNS – ED did not complete their treatment.

The project aims to improve the quality of care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients as outlined in the mission and values of SVHA. To achieve this, the goal is to decrease the rate of Aboriginal patients who "Did not wait" (DNW) for treatment or "Left at their own risk" (LAOR). The Quality Improvement project developed these key solutions:

1

## Flexi-Clinic development with Dr Paul Preisz

The Flexi-Clinic is a flexible clinic which allows Aboriginal patients who present to be seen by a Staff Specialist on presentation. One of the aims for the clinic was to reduce the amount of time in the ED. Hence, being seen by a Staff Specialist reduces the treatment time and diagnosis time. The average wait time currently is 16 minutes. The Flexi-Clinic also allows patients who have been triaged and had immediate treatment to represent at a convenient time to finalise results or plan further treatment. The Flexi Doctor and Aboriginal Health Unit are both notified by text message which is generated from the COREPAS/EDIS system when the patient is being entered and asked the mandatory question. This also plays a significant role in the reduction of waiting times.

2

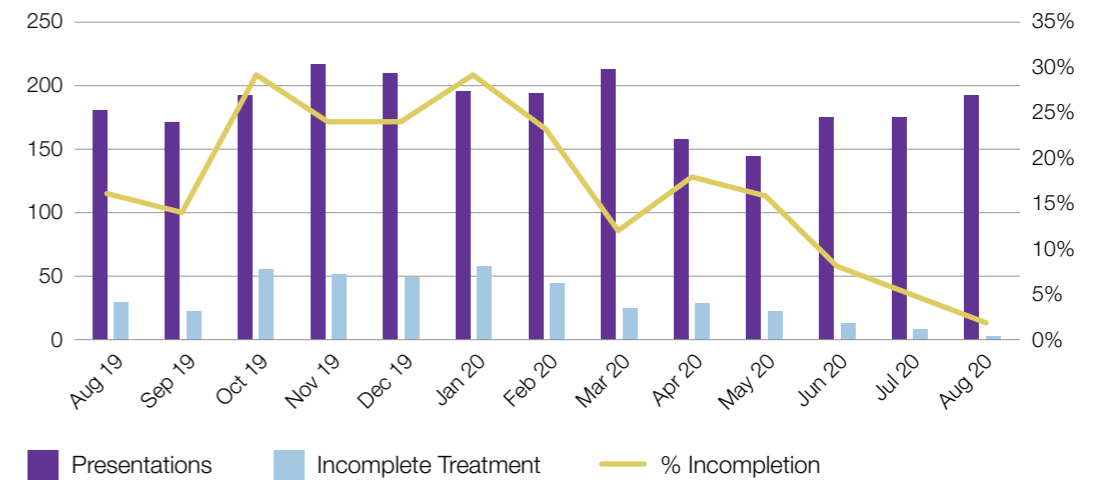
## Aboriginal Health Unit after hours

The Aboriginal Health Unit (AHU) has now changed its service delivery times to 8am-9pm Monday to Friday. Statistics showed during this process that our main presentation time was between 4pm-8pm with Friday, Saturday and Monday being our worst days. A weekend shift began operations on the 3rd October 2020.

As a result from these solutions implemented on the 1st June 2020, the incompleteness rate for Aboriginal patients has dropped from 19.5% (2019) to 8.4% in June and 4.5% in July. The current August statistics show 191 presentations to ED and 3 incomplete treatment accounting for 1.6%. Overall, the last three months has accounted for an incomplete treatment rate of 4.8% which is below the state average of 8.6%.

In summary, it has been quite evident that a structured triage system does not suit Aboriginal people. The level of accountability for the Staff Specialist has changed as the triage system is not considered when treating Aboriginal patients. The project team along with key stakeholders have identified through the provided solutions that a safe and supported patient (AHU after hours) with timely access to a Senior Doctor at a time that is flexible and convenient (Flexi-Clinic) can reduce the rate of incomplete treatment.

## Presentation vs Incomplete Treatment Rates 2019-2020



Left to right: Scott Daley, Nioka Tyson, Jamine Torrefranca & Sosalim Heng



# Catherine Hammond

## MISSION INTEGRATION MANAGER

### What is your role in the Hospital?

I joined the Mission Team in June 2021, a few days before lockdown, so my role has been off to a rather unconventional start. A key part of the role is to find ways our staff can discover and recognise that their valuable work in healthcare is a reflection of the shared mission and values established by our founding Sisters of Charity. Every day by listening and observing, I gain more insight and joy in discovering the incredible contribution that goes into the provision of our services to the vulnerable, the pursuit of innovative solutions, and the value of excellence displayed here at St Vincent's.

### How does your role connect with Aboriginal Health?

Working in partnership to promote Aboriginal health and offer excellent and compassionate care has long been a part of our mission at St Vincent's, and I am one of the staff that work with and report on our Reconciliation Action Plan, which aims to meet our commitment towards reconciliation in a practical way.

I enjoy the opportunity to share the knowledge from listening and learning with our staff in the Aboriginal Health Unit. It has been incredibly inspiring to see the collaborative work of staff striving to increase access to healthcare through projects such as the Flexi- Clinic Project which is improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people and making a much needed contribution to 'closing the gap.'

### How do you involve an Aboriginal perspective in what you do, day to day?

My role here allows me to open up pathways for dialogue to increase understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives at Darlinghurst. Having previous experience in Cross Cultural Immersions, I value the importance of participating in cultural practices such as 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country,' which provide opportunity to walk together with respect and understanding.

My current role involves promoting reconciliation and supporting our staff in their work for Aboriginal Health. It is a practical way to contribute towards the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. I particularly love the Dalarinji artwork that is the visual identity for Aboriginal Health at St Vincent's, and is displayed proudly on staff pins, uniforms, online, on Welcome flags, and even adorns our new Vaccination Vans. Enjoying, using and promoting this artwork, allows me to connect whilst supporting Aboriginal people to feel culturally safe, included and welcome.

## RESPECTING THE DIFFERENCE

# Virtual Training

### Paul Sinclair



Mirri Mirri has enjoyed a wonderful relationship with St Vincent's Hospital, delivering the Respecting the Difference: Aboriginal Cultural Awareness as a face-to-face program since 2016. The program has been accessed by over 1,500 staff with many indicating it was amongst their more memorable learning experiences.

With COVID-19 limiting the opportunity for face-to-face programs, and recognising the importance of staff continuing to access programs that support cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, it was decided to transition the Respecting the Difference program to an online learning environment.

Although different from a face-to-face setting, the new approach took advantage of functionalities offered via the virtual platform. These included accessing the breakout rooms where participants could enjoy open conversations with each

other, utilising the white board to provide visual stimulation, screen sharing modes which ensured a level of autonomy for attendees and the incorporation of short films as a learning resource.

Fortunately to date, much of the feedback has been extremely positive with one attendee stating "...this was a really enjoyable and fun meeting where all participants were actively engaged. I think that there is something for everyone in the course and like me, they will find it both an enjoyable and valuable experience."

For the foreseeable future, Respecting the Difference will continue to be delivered via an online platform. Everyone involved will continue to work hard to ensure those attending access a program that is engaging and benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

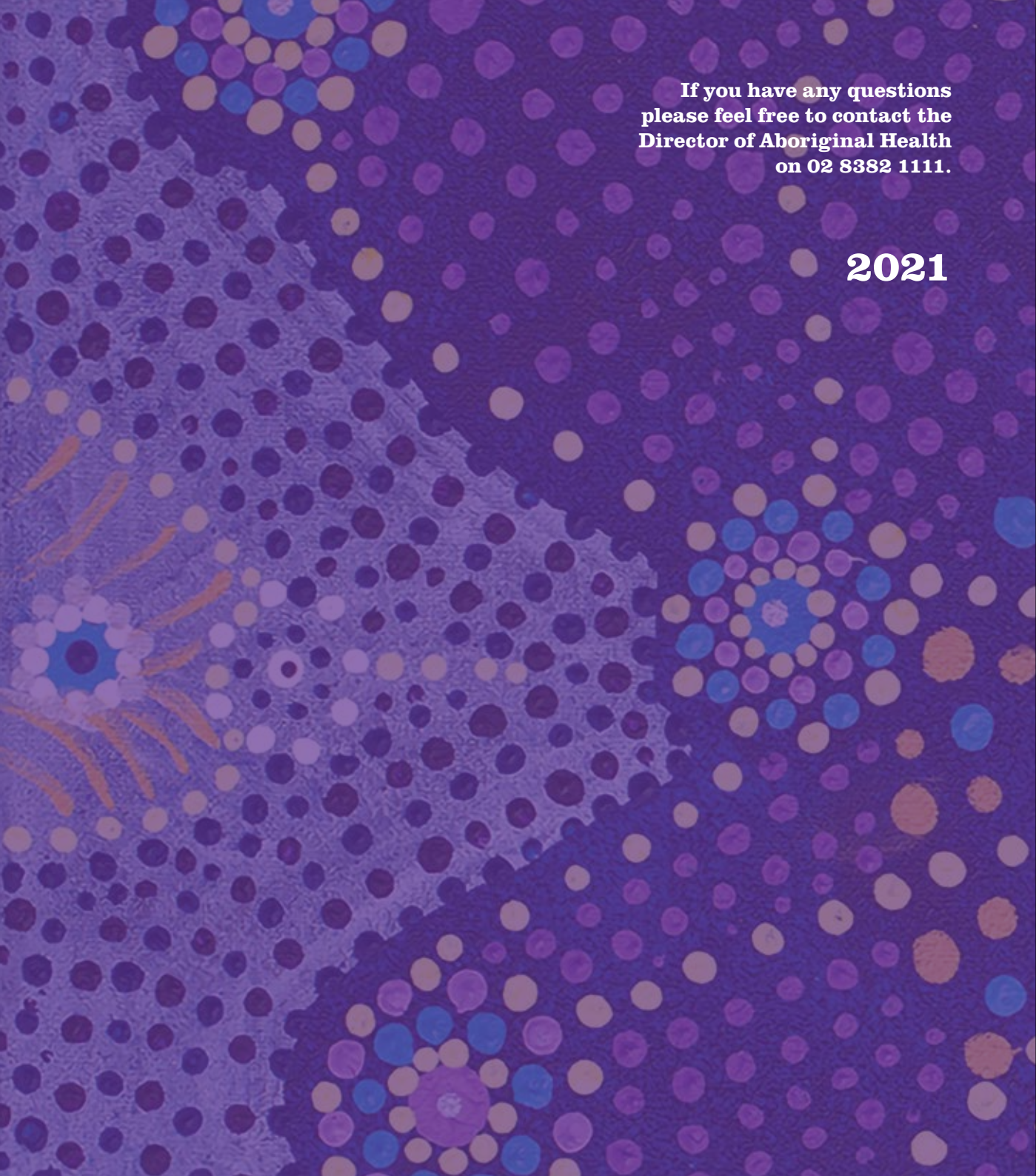


# Thank you

## AND THAT'S A WRAP FOR 2021!

We hope you have enjoyed the 4th edition of the Deadly Yarn'n. Thank you to all those who contributed stories to the newsletter. May your journey through life continue to inspire others.





If you have any questions  
please feel free to contact the  
Director of Aboriginal Health  
on 02 8382 1111.

**2021**