

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy



ACT
Government

**Canberra Health
Services**



Draft May 2024

Contents

03	Foreward
05	Undertakings
06	Understanding Social and Emotional Wellbeing
08	Social and Emotional Wellbeing Pillars
09	Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing
10	1. Knowledge and Voices
11	2. Health and Wellness
12	3. Recruitment and Retention
14	4. Professional and Personal Development
15	5. Administration
16	6. Recognition and Appreciation
17	7. Indigenous Empowerment
18	Strategic Actions
25	Implementing Strategies for Enhanced Social and Emotional Wellbeing
26	Attachment A

Foreward

Canberra Health Services (CHS) enlisted the assistance of Burbirra Group (Burbirra) because when cultural safety must be placed at the centre of the equation, then specialists are required to make sure a clear pathway is defined.

In crafting this social and emotional wellbeing strategy for Canberra Health Services, staff embarked on a transformative journey toward holistic healing, cultural respect, and Indigenous empowerment. Embedded in the rich tapestry of Aboriginal wisdom and resilience, this strategy embodies the unwavering commitment to nurturing the health, wellness, and professional fulfillment of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members.

Every organisation wants their employees to be happy and fulfilled. It's not a stretch of expectations that management and executives wish for their staff to enjoy the roles they have, enjoy coming to the workplace and feel a sense of purpose in delivering the skills and services the staff possess. It is also an expectation that staff can do that in the context of being safe in the workplace.

It's widely acknowledged that creating a sense of safety, empowerment, and happiness in the workplace for those who feel marginalized or unsafe has a positive ripple effect on overall staff satisfaction. Our approach is simple: by prioritizing support for those who need it most, we create a better environment for everyone. By addressing the needs of individuals who may feel marginalized, we contribute to a

more inclusive and supportive workplace culture that benefits all staff members.

At its core, this strategy encompasses seven critical areas, each essential for supporting the growth, empowerment, and well-being of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

First and foremost, this strategy is founded upon the principle of honoring knowledge and amplifying voices. We recognize the profound value of Indigenous wisdom, traditions, and experiences within our staff community. By centering Aboriginal perspectives, we create a workplace culture that fosters authenticity, belonging, and intergenerational resilience.

At the heart of our strategy is a down-to-earth understanding of health and wellbeing. We recognize that our mental, physical, and spiritual health are deeply intertwined, and we're committed to providing practical support that addresses all aspects of our Aboriginal staff's lives. Our approach is straightforward: we will offer culturally relevant programs and resources designed to help our staff build resilience, prioritize self-care, and feel like valued members of the CHS workplace. It's about rolling up our sleeves and taking real, tangible steps to support the holistic wellbeing of our team.

Further to this, recruitment and retention within our workforce are paramount to our strategy. We are committed to actively recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members,

Foreward (cont.)

ensuring that our workforce reflects the diversity and richness of the communities we serve. By providing tailored support, mentorship, and professional development opportunities, we cultivate an environment where Indigenous healthcare professionals can thrive and lead by example.

Professional development is a strong cornerstone of our strategy, recognizing the importance of ongoing learning and cultural competency among our staff. We will invest in training programs that equip Aboriginal healthcare professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their roles and deliver culturally safe and responsive care. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth, we can empower our staff to advance their careers and make meaningful contributions to the health and well-being of our community.

Administration is not merely a bureaucratic function but a vehicle for operationalizing our commitment to equity, inclusion, and cultural safety. We embed principles of cultural competence and responsiveness into our organizational policies, procedures, and decision-making processes, ensuring that Aboriginal voices are heard and valued at every level of our institution.

Recognition serves as a powerful tool for acknowledging and celebrating the contributions of our Aboriginal staff members. Through initiatives such as awards, ceremonies, and professional development opportunities, we honor the resilience, leadership, and cultural heritage of our Indigenous workforce, fostering a

sense of pride, belonging, and professional fulfillment.

Ultimately, our social and emotional wellbeing strategy is a testament to our unwavering commitment to Indigenous empowerment within the workplace. We recognize that true transformation emerges from within our staff community, and we stand in solidarity with Aboriginal staff members in their pursuit of professional growth, self-determination, and holistic wellness.

As we embark on this journey together, let us be guided by the principles of respect, reciprocity, and resilience. Together, we can create a workplace environment where every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff member can thrive, flourish, and contribute to a brighter and more equitable future for all.

When using terms such as Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Indigenous, the intention is to be inclusive of both communities, even though there may be interchangeability between the terms.

Undertakings

Objective

The objective of the consultation for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy is to develop a holistic framework dedicated to fostering the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members. Through collaborative engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, executives and management, as well as key stakeholders, the consultation aims to identify areas for improvement and implement strategies to enhance the physical, emotional, mental, cultural and social health of staff within the workplace. By recognizing and respecting the cultural values and perspectives of Aboriginal staff, the strategy endeavors to create a supportive and inclusive work environment where individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to thrive professionally and personally. Ultimately, the consultation seeks to promote a sense of belonging, connection, and fulfillment for and among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, contributing to their overall satisfaction and success within and across CHS.

This report represents a roadmap towards bolstering the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, with a steadfast focus on elevating Aboriginal voices. While recognizing the important contributions of non-Indigenous staff, our approach is centered on actively incorporating the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander staff. This inclusive stance is vital; it shifts the responsibility for driving change away from solely Aboriginal shoulders and emphasizes a collective dedication from all staff to implement these strategies. Acknowledging the burdens imposed by colonial legacies, it's evident that the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff resonates throughout every aspect of the workplace, underscoring the urgent need for holistic support and action.

Our approach builds a wellbeing framework that goes beyond theoretical discussions, aiming to create actionable, meaningful changes that are clearly centered on Aboriginal perspectives. This is not merely a document to be archived; it is a call to action, designed to be actively implemented within CHS to foster an inclusive environment that supports and elevates every team member's wellbeing, with Aboriginal voices and actions leading the way.



Understanding Social and Emotional Wellbeing

It's vital to recognize that the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people defies conventional understanding; it's intricately woven into community, country, culture, family obligations, and protocols. Furthermore, it cannot be neatly compartmentalized between personal and professional lives. Unlike the typical 9-5 work dynamic, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff bring their community expectations and obligations into the workplace, adding a layer of complexity often overlooked by managers. This lack of recognition leads to a deficiency of awareness regarding the stress and impact on Aboriginal staffs' social and emotional wellbeing.

Post-consultation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing in the workplace denotes an environment where employees feel valued, safe, connected, and equipped to navigate the emotional complexities of their professional settings. It encompasses the mental and emotional health of employees concerning their work lives, extending beyond the mere absence of mental illness to include elements like job satisfaction, a sense of belonging, cultural respect and understanding, awareness and effective coping mechanisms for workplace stressors. Government department staff contend with heightened stress and complexity as they navigate their dual role of serving both the government and the community. This responsibility, coupled with the weight of expectations and the blurred lines between professional duties and personal life, adds an extra layer of pressure to their work environment.



Understanding Social and Emotional Wellbeing (cont.)

Components:

The key components of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing include cultural identity, safety, cultural connection and health, emotional intelligence, resilience, and social skills. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions, as well as to recognize and influence the emotions of others. Cultural connection is the grounding that comes from being a small part of something much greater than the individual. Resilience refers to the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties and adapt to change. Social skills involve the ability to interact effectively with colleagues and clients, which includes communication, empathy, and conflict resolution. Together, these elements form the backbone of an employee's ability to thrive in the workplace.

Impact on Work:

Social and emotional wellbeing significantly impacts all areas of work performance, engagement, and collaboration. Employees who are emotionally strong and well are more likely to be focused, efficient, and creative in their tasks. Their ability to manage stress and maintain positive relationships with peers and colleagues fosters a collaborative and supportive work environment. This, in turn, leads to higher levels of employee engagement, where staff are not only present but also actively involved and invested in their work and the success of the organization.

Barriers to Wellbeing:

Recognizing the barriers to wellbeing is essential in addressing them effectively. Common challenges include excessive workload, lack of support, Cultural load, unrealistic community expectations, lack of cultural safety and respect, poor management practices, unclear job expectations, and inadequate work-life balance. These stressors can lead to burnout, disengagement, and a decline in mental health. Understanding these barriers helps in developing targeted strategies to mitigate their impact and promote a healthier work environment.

Benefits of Strong Wellbeing:

Investing in strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing yields numerous benefits for both employees and for CHS. Improved morale is seen through increased job satisfaction and a positive outlook towards the workplace. This leads to reduced employee turnover, as staff feel more connected and valued, and therefore, are more likely to stay with the organization. Enhanced team dynamics are another key benefit, with employees collaborating more effectively, leading to innovative solutions and a more dynamic work culture. Ultimately, these benefits contribute to a more robust, productive, and sustainable organization.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Pillars



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing encompasses pillars that are essential for embedding, underpinning and fostering a healthy and supportive workplace culture. These pillars are anchored on five key areas:

Empowerment Ecosystem



Foster an environment that empowers employees with resources, support systems, and personal development opportunities, enabling self-driven wellness.

Cultural Integrity



Ensure all initiatives are culturally sensitive and inclusive, promoting respect and understanding across diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Resilient Frameworks



Build resilience with structured support and adaptive strategies, providing training in mental health first aid, leadership development, and stress management tailored to unique workforce needs.

Connection and Communication Hub



Enhance internal communication and foster connections across the organization through regular, open dialogues, workshops, and digital platforms that ensure every voice is heard and valued.

Leadership-Driven Safety Architecture



Create a safe and secure workplace driven by executive leadership, with clear policies and strong commitment to enforcing a culture of trust and safety.

The foundational pillars of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy represent a holistic approach to nurturing an environment where every individual can achieve their best, both personally and professionally. Each pillar is carefully crafted to address different aspects of wellbeing, creating a comprehensive network that supports and enhances the entire organizational structure. By focusing on *Empowerment Ecosystem*, *Cultural Integrity*, *Resilient Frameworks*, *Connection and Communication Hub*, and *Leadership-Driven Safety Architecture*, the strategy ensures that all dimensions of employee wellbeing are thoughtfully considered. This robust structure not only aims to promote a healthier, more inclusive workplace but also sets a standard for excellence in organizational health practices, ensuring long-term sustainability and effectiveness. As these pillars are implemented and interwoven into the daily operations, they pave the way for transformative changes that benefit all individuals and the collective alike, ultimately leading to a more engaged and productive workforce.

Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing

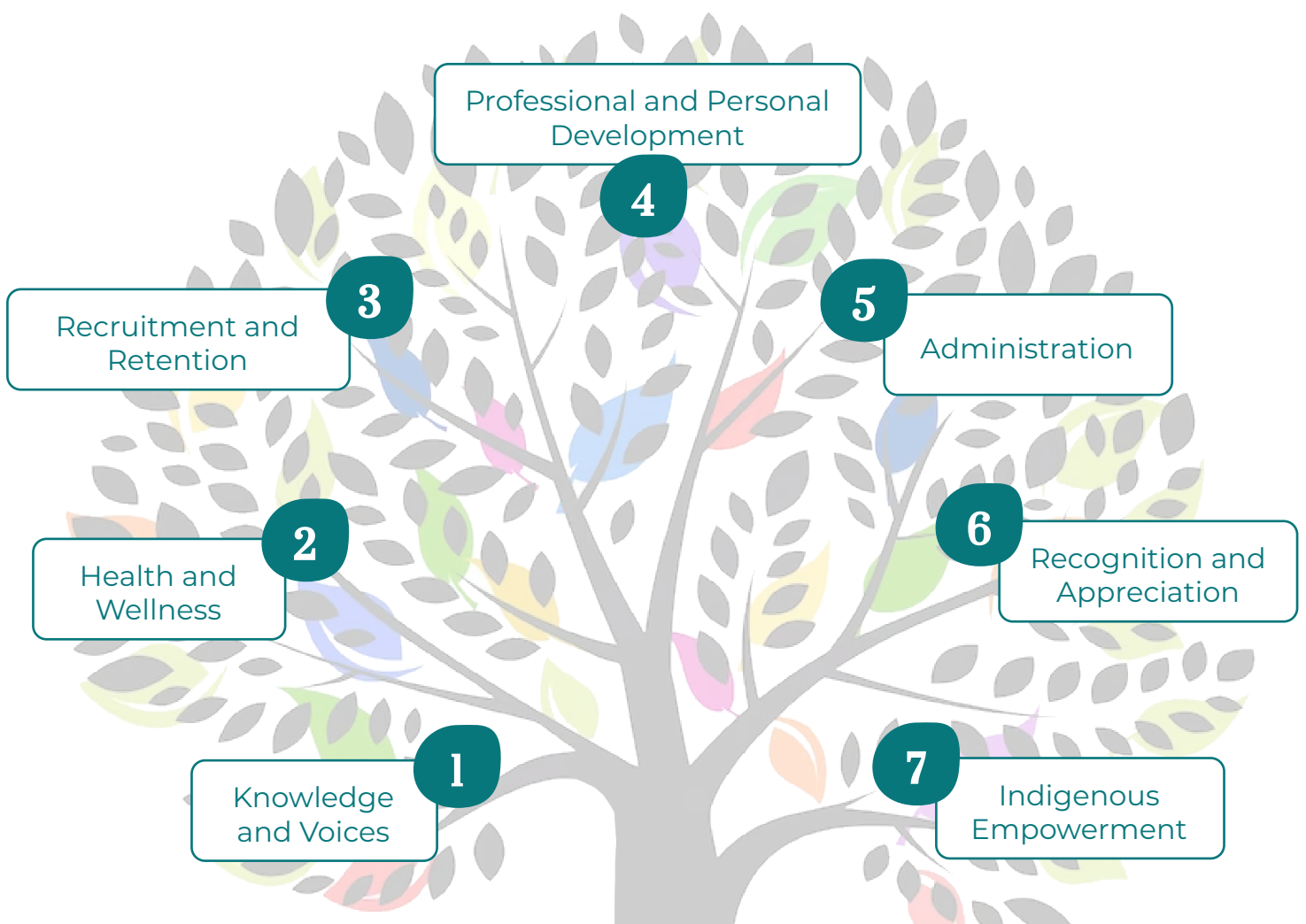


This report represents not just a culmination of this current project but the beginning of an essential and ongoing journey toward meaningful change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within Canberra Health Service.

While this report highlights several strengths within the organization that should continue to be nurtured, it also underscores the substantial work that remains to be done. The acceptance of this report must mark the start of a steadfast, long-term commitment to evolving the overall workplace culture and practices. Implementing the recommendations outlined herein will require sustained effort, resources, and a collective dedication to transformation across all levels of the organization. This is not a one-and-done

initiative; rather, it is a continuous engagement in improving the environment to ensure it truly supports and values all staff, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues. The real work begins post-acceptance, as movement from planning to action, translating these insights into practical outcomes that make a real difference.

Building on the foundational insights gathered through the consultation process, outlined are the key themes of the strategy, each designed to address needs and challenges within Canberra Health Service. These seven foundational criteria can be utilized to establishing and fostering a supportive and thriving workplace culture. These included:



Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing (cont.)

1 Knowledge and Voices

Fostering an environment that respects and embraces the rich cultural knowledge and powerful voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

- **Fostering a culture of respect and empathy among colleagues.**
 - a. Provide reminder statements/resources that encourage all employees to focus on a caring environment where all people are valued and where discussions and decisions are driven by the needs of the people served by the organization.
 - b. Establish protocols for all staff (regardless of job position) to engage in when meeting that includes open, regular, empathetic and honest two-way communication, active listening, opportunities to share ideas and views, and provide respectful feedback on work through a cultural lens.
 - c. Encourage interactions, both formal and informal, that help build greater understanding of culture and cultural respect.
 - d. Establish protocols for written and visual material that supports cultural respect and empathy among colleagues.
- **Encouraging open-mindedness and acceptance of diverse viewpoints.**
 - e. Organise (periodically) work tasks with staff from across different areas of the workforce where different viewpoints are fostered and encouraged. These work groups should be small (no more than six people) and have set tasks, protocols of interaction, and reflection on the process of interaction. This is done through a cultural lens and conversations about ensuring and embedding cultural safety across CHS.
- **Incorporate a review & revision of all policies to ensure they support and promote respect.**
 - f. All policies, strategies and guidelines should be reviewed, using the questions identified at Attachment A as a guide. Supporting Cultural respect, understanding and acknowledgement.
- **Ensuring physical safety and comfort in the workplace.**
 - g. Develop visual and other educational resources that remind staff of their need to ensure physical safety and a comfortable workplace for all.
 - h. Identify processes that should be undertaken in response to workplace issues associated with a culturally safe and comfortable workplace.

Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing (cont.)

2 Health and Wellness

Commitment to respecting and supporting the health and wellness of Aboriginal staff through culturally appropriate practices.

- **CHS Specific Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff network and email list.**
 - i.** Establish a draft paper outlining the purpose, aim, objectives and protocol for a CHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Network and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific email list.
 - j.** Circulate and gain feedback from Aboriginal staff on the draft paper.
 - k.** Finalise purpose, aim, objectives and protocol including network structure and meeting regime.
- **Culturally appropriate support services.**
 - l.** Under the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff network develop and circulate a listing of culturally appropriate support services for staff (and those associated with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff and CHS).
- **Training programs focused on culturally respectful and safe communication.**
 - m.** Identify, in consultation with either the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff network or specific CHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members, appropriate training programs/training providers that can deliver practical outcomes for culturally respectful communication skills.
 - n.** Conduct programs for all CHS staff members.
- **Platforms for sharing ideas and feedback.**
 - o.** Utilise the CHS Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander network as a platform for sharing and distributing ideas and providing feedback and reflection on work-based issues.
 - p.** Contribute to other existing Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander networks to share ideas and feedback.

Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing (cont.)

3 Recruitment and Retention

Implementing flexible policies that respect cultural obligations alongside professional commitments.

- **Flexible scheduling and remote work opportunities.**
 - q. Through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network, develop protocols for flexible scheduling and remote work opportunities as part of a professional development program for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander CHS staff. This is to be taken to the executive as a work initiative for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff. This can also provide an opportunity for staff to work from other community organisations throughout Canberra.
- **Clear boundaries between work hours and personal time.**
 - r. The CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network can develop an ongoing training program to empower Aboriginal staff in respectfully establishing boundaries between their work and personal lives while respecting cultural protocols and community expectations. This program will provide clear guidelines for managing stress, work and cultural burnout and effective work practices. Provisions for one-on-one cultural supervision sessions to address individual challenges related to work protocols and the balancing of personal, cultural, and community commitments.
- **Encouraging regular breaks and time off to connect with culture/country.**
 - r. The CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network can develop an ongoing training program to empower Aboriginal staff in respectfully establishing boundaries between their work and personal lives while respecting cultural protocols and community expectations. This program will provide clear guidelines for managing stress, work and cultural burnout and effective work practices. Provisions for one-on-one cultural supervision sessions to address individual challenges related to work protocols and the balancing of personal, cultural, and community commitments. Training for managers to be aware of the need for support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffs need for culture, community and connection.

Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing (cont.)

3 Recruitment and Retention (cont.)

- Providing support for cultural obligations, family and personal commitments.
 - r. The CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network can develop an ongoing training program to empower Aboriginal staff in respectfully establishing boundaries between their work and personal lives while respecting cultural protocols and community expectations. This program will provide clear guidelines for managing stress, work and cultural burnout and effective work practices. Provisions for one-on-one cultural supervision sessions to address individual challenges related to work protocols and the balancing of personal, cultural, and community commitments. Training for managers to understand the expectations that may conflict with western values and priorities.
- Peer Support group and buddy system.
 - s. Through the CHS Aboriginal network and specific work areas and managers, establish peer support or a buddy system whereby individuals and groups are selected for the best possible, sustainable outcomes.



Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing (cont.)

4 Professional and Personal Development

Offering development opportunities that are aligned with the cultural values and strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

- **Opportunities for continuous learning and skill-building.**
 - t.** Managers, in consultation with their individual staff members, are to identify and discuss specific opportunities for continuous learning and skills building that will help them in their work environment. These opportunities will also include capacity to undertake cultural skill building as relevant to the individual.
 - u.** A register of learning and skills opportunities is to be maintained and evaluated through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network for future reference and sharing of knowledge. This will be professional skill building and also cultural skill, knowledge and wisdom building by learning traditional ways. (Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, being and doing).
- **Clear pathways for career progression and growth.**
 - v.** Managers and/or the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network are to build an understanding of Aboriginal staff member's career pathways through discussion with the individual staff member, and specific learning opportunities are to be identified that will support that pathway.
- **Mentoring programs and professional coaching.**
 - w.** A register of mentoring program possibilities and professional coaching is to be developed and built upon through review and feedback.
 - x.** Through discussions with managers/executive, mentoring programs and coaching opportunities are to be proposed to respond to individual and collective workplace priorities.
- **Regular performance reviews with constructive feedback.**
 - y.** A system of performance review including a feedback component is to be undertaken on a regular basis that includes discussion and feedback about any mentoring, coaching, and other learning opportunities undertaken (as identified under 4.1-4.3).

Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing (cont.)

5 Administration

A firm commitment to avoiding policies, procedures, and practices that knowingly or willingly endanger the well-being of Aboriginal staff.

- **A Zero tolerance policy for racism across CHS.**
 - z.** Develop a Zero tolerance to racism policy and campaign using the Racism. Nobody Wins. Racial Discrimination Policy Template: https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/ahrc_sr_2021_2_racialdiscrimination_policy_word_r2.pdf
 - aa.** Circulate the policy to all staff and follow-up and reiterate the organisation's commitment to the policy through meetings and work gatherings.
- **Supportive and culturally safe processes, procedures and practices.**
 - bb.** Develop supportive and culturally safe processes, procedures and practices policy specific for CHS, using CHS existing resources as well as drawing from other existing documents such as Cultural Safety in Health Care for Indigenous Australians: Monitoring Framework (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2023): <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/cultural-safety-health-care-framework/contents/background-material>
 - cc.** Circulate the policy to all staff and follow-up and reiterate the organisation's commitment to the policy through meetings and work gatherings.
- **Resources for handling personal crises or work-related stress.**
 - dd.** Identify and access resources that support the handling of personal crises and work-related stresses (for example, Taking Care of Yourself (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, <https://healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/health-professionals/health-workers/taking-care-of-yourself/>)).
 - ee.** Identify individuals either within the workforce or from other professional settings who can support handling personal crises or work-related stress and provide culturally appropriate support.
 - ff.** Maintain a register of resources through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff network.

Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing (cont.)

5 Administration (cont.)

- Training in culturally respectful resilience, coping strategies or other helpful modalities.
 - gg.** Identify providers of training in culturally respectful resilience, coping strategies or other helpful modalities that would be appropriate for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff (such as trauma, grief, empowerment, leadership and management).
 - hh.** Conduct training programs for and with Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff.

6 Recognition and Appreciation

Regularly acknowledging the unique insights and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

- Regular acknowledgement of individual and team achievements.
 - ii.** Establish systems of recognition of achievements that have considerable status throughout the organization.
 - jj.** Establish ways to spread the news about individual and collective achievements and awards amplify the importance of achievements.
- Personalised appreciation such as Employee-of-the-month type programs and other recognition initiatives.
 - ii.** Establish systems of recognition of achievements that have considerable status throughout the organization.
 - jj.** Establish ways to spread the news about individual and collective achievements and awards amplify the importance of achievements.
- Celebrating milestones and personal achievements.
 - kk.** Within work units establish a system of recognition for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff that highlights personal achievements.
 - ll.** Feed information about milestones and achievements to the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff network.

Key Criteria for Strong Social and Emotional Wellbeing (cont.)

7 Indigenous Empowerment

Empowering Aboriginal staff to spearhead projects and initiatives that showcase their rich heritage, deep-rooted wisdom, and cultural knowledge.

- **Opportunities for employees to lead projects or teams.**

mm. Through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network (see also 1.2 e) individual Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff should be afforded opportunities to lead special projects and teams. This should also allow for goal setting, the establishment of work processes, problem solving and development of independent initiatives.

- **Allowing staff to set their own goals and work methods.**

mm. Through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network (see also 1.2 e) individual Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff should be afforded opportunities to lead special projects and teams. This should also allow for goal setting, the establishment of work processes, problem solving and development of independent initiatives. Empower staff by granting autonomy to set their own goals and choose their preferred work methods.

- **Encouraging innovation and creative problem-solving.**

mm. Through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network (see also 1.2 e) individual Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff should be afforded opportunities to lead special projects and teams. This should also allow for goal setting, the establishment of work processes, problem solving and development of independent initiatives. Allow space for a culturally appropriate problem solving methods to be nurtured.

- **Providing resources and support for independent initiatives.**

mm. Through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network (see also 1.2 e) individual Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff should be afforded opportunities to lead special projects and teams. This should also allow for goal setting, the establishment of work processes, problem solving and development of independent initiatives. Foster a culture of innovation and autonomy by allocating resources and providing support for staff-driven initiatives, through a cultural lens, enabling staff to take ownership of their projects and drive positive change within the organisation.

Strategic Actions

Summary of action items identified as part of the consultations:

KEY THEME: 1. KNOWLEDGE AND VOICES			
Implementation focus	Direct actions	Responsibility & Timeline goal	Success metrics
1.1 Foster a culture of respect and empathy among colleagues	<p>a. Provide reminder statements/resources that encourage all employees to focus on a caring environment where all people are valued and where discussions and decisions are driven by the needs of the people served by the organization.</p> <p>b. Establish protocols for all staff (regardless of job position) to engage in when meeting that includes open, regular, empathetic and honest two-way communication, active listening, opportunities to share ideas and views, and provide respectful feedback on work through a cultural lens.</p> <p>c. Encourage interactions, both formal and informal, that help build greater understanding of culture and cultural respect.</p> <p>d. Establish protocols for written and visual material that supports cultural respect and empathy among colleagues.</p>	<p>All staff Executive</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>a. Development of statements/resources.</p> <p>b. Establishment of protocols.</p> <p>c. Number of formal and informal interactions organized.</p> <p>d. Protocols for written and visual material developed.</p> <p>e. Feedback on each of these initiatives from CHS staff.</p>
1.2 Strongly encourage open-mindedness and acceptance of diverse viewpoints	<p>e. Organise (periodically) work tasks with staff from across different areas of the workforce where different viewpoints are fostered and encouraged. These work groups should be small (no more than six people) and have set tasks, protocols of interaction, and reflection on the process of interaction (see 1b). This is done through a cultural lens and conversations about ensuring and embedding cultural safety across CHS.</p> <p>See also 1c.</p>	<p>All staff Executive</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>e. Number of work task groups from different areas organized.</p> <p>Participant staff member's feedback on the acceptance of diverse viewpoints and open-mindedness encouraged through the work task groups.</p>
1.3 Incorporate a review and revision of all policies to ensure they support and promote respect	<p>f. All policies, strategies and guidelines should be reviewed, using the questions identified at Attachment A as a guide. Supporting Cultural respect, understanding and acknowledgement.</p>	<p>Staff responsible for overseeing specific policies, procedures and/or guidelines.</p> <p>Ongoing to Dec 2026</p>	<p>f. Review undertaken of CHS policies using the identified questions.</p> <p>Feedback of the process is undertaken and questions are refined.</p>
1.4 Ensuring physical safety and comfort in the workplace	<p>g. Develop visual and other educational resources that remind staff of their need to ensure physical safety and a comfortable workplace for all.</p> <p>h. Identify processes that should be undertaken in response to workplace issues associated with a culturally safe and comfortable workplace.</p>	<p>All staff Executive</p> <p>Strategies in place within all work environments by 2025.</p>	<p>g. Development of resources.</p> <p>h. Processes identified in response to workplace issues.</p> <p>Feedback from staff concerning the cultural safety and comfort of the work environment.</p>

Strategic Actions (cont.)

KEY THEME: 2. HEALTH AND WELLNESS			
Implementation focus	Direct actions	Responsibility & Timeline goal	Success metrics
2.1 CHS specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network / email list	<p>i. Establish a draft paper outlining the purpose, aim, objectives and protocol for a CHS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island staff Network and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff specific email list.</p> <p>j. Circulate and gain feedback from Aboriginal staff on the draft paper.</p> <p>k. Finalise purpose, aim, objectives and protocol including network structure and meeting regime.</p>	<p>All Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff</p> <p>i. Aug 2024 j. Oct 2024 k. Dec 2024</p>	<p>i. Draft paper developed.</p> <p>j. Feedback on draft paper received.</p> <p>k. Paper finalized with feedback incorporated.</p> <p>CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander interest in a network and appropriateness of the network's purpose to their needs.</p>
2.2 Culturally appropriate support services	<p>l. Under the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff network develop and circulate a listing of culturally appropriate support services for staff (and those associated with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff and CHS).</p>	<p>All Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff</p> <p>March 2025 and ongoing revision and update.</p>	<p>l. Culturally appropriate support services for staff are identified and listed and circulated to staff.</p>
2.3 Training programs focused on culturally respectful and safe communication skills	<p>m. Identify, in consultation with either the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff network or specific CHS Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff members, appropriate training programs/training providers that can deliver practical outcomes for culturally respectful communication skills.</p> <p>n. Conduct programs for all CHS staff members.</p>	<p>All staff</p> <p>m. Mar 2025 n. 2025-2026 (and ongoing)</p>	<p>m. Appropriate training programs and providers are identified.</p> <p>n. Programs conducted.</p> <p>Feedback from staff as to the appropriateness of the programs in developing culturally respectful and safe communication skills.</p>
2.4 Appropriate platforms for sharing ideas and feedback	<p>o. Utilise the CHS Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander network as a platform for sharing and distributing ideas and providing feedback and reflection on work-based issues.</p> <p>p. Contribute to other existing Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander networks to share ideas and feedback.</p>	<p>All staff</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>o. Gain feedback about the appropriateness of the CHS Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander network as a platform for sharing and distributing ideas.</p> <p>p. Measure the contribution of staff to other existing Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander networks.</p>

Strategic Actions (cont.)

KEY THEME: 3. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION			
Implementation focus	Direct actions	Responsibility & Timeline goal	Success metrics
3.1 Flexible scheduling and remote work opportunities	q. Through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network, develop protocols for flexible scheduling and remote work opportunities as part of a professional development program for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander CHS staff. This is to be taken to the executive as a work initiative for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff. This can also provide an opportunity for staff to work from other community organisations throughout Canberra.	Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff Managers/ Executive June 2025	q. Protocols developed. Feedback from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff about flexible scheduling and remote work opportunities.
3.2 Work and personal/ Community obligations balance	r. The CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network can develop an ongoing support or training program to empower Aboriginal staff in respectfully establishing boundaries between their work and personal lives while respecting cultural protocols and community expectations. This program can provide clear guidelines for managing stress, burnout and effective work practices. Provisions for one-on-one cultural supervision sessions to address individual challenges related to work protocols, personal, cultural, and community commitments.	Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff Managers Sept 2025 and ongoing	r. Development of a program of training about work/personal obligations time. - Cultural Supervision sessions. - Feedback from individuals about their understanding of and ability to respond culturally respectfully to boundaries between work / personal time and cultural protocols.
3.3 Encouraging regular breaks and time off to connect with culture/country	See 3.2r above. - Training for managers to be aware of the need for support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffs need for culture, community and connection.	Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff Managers Sept 2025 and ongoing	Feedback from individuals about their understanding of and ability to respond to the need for regular breaks and time off, cultural connection.
3.4 Providing support for cultural obligations, family and personal commitments	See 3.2r. - Training for managers to understand the expectations that may conflict with western values and priorities.	Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff Managers Sept 2025 and ongoing	Feedback from individuals about the provision of support for cultural obligations, and family and personal commitments. Training for managers to assist in increasing knowledge.
3.5 Peer support groups or buddy systems	s. Through the CHS Aboriginal network and specific work areas and managers, establish peer support or a buddy system whereby individuals and groups are selected for the best possible, sustainable outcomes.	All staff Managers Sept 2025 and ongoing	s. Number of peer support groups or buddy systems created. Individual feedback about the success or otherwise of the support systems.

Strategic Actions (cont.)

KEY THEME: 4. PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT			
Implementation focus	Direct actions	Responsibility & Timeline goal	Success metrics
4.1 Opportunities for continuous learning and skills building	<p>t. Managers, in consultation with their individual staff members, are to identify and discuss specific opportunities for continuous learning and skills building that will help them in their work environment. These opportunities will also include capacity to undertake cultural skill building as relevant to the individual.</p> <p>u. A register of learning and skills opportunities is to be maintained and evaluated through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network for future reference and sharing of knowledge. This will be professional skill building and also cultural skill, knowledge and wisdom building by learning traditional ways. (Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, being and doing).</p>	<p>Managers in consultation with individual staff</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>t. Number of individuals for whom professional, personal / cultural development programs have been developed.</p> <p>u. Register developed, shared and maintained</p>
4.2 Clear pathways for career progression and growth	<p>v. Managers and/or the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network to build an understanding of Aboriginal staff member's career pathways through discussion with the individual staff member, and specific learning opportunities are to be identified that will support that pathway.</p>	<p>Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff with managers</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>v. Number of individuals for whom career pathways have been developed.</p>
4.3 Mentoring programs and professional coaching	<p>w. A register of mentoring program possibilities and professional coaching is to be developed and built upon through review and feedback.</p> <p>x. Through discussions with managers/ executive, mentoring programs and coaching opportunities to be proposed to respond to individual and collective workplace priorities.</p>	<p>Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff with managers</p> <p>w. From July 2025</p> <p>x. From Aug 2025</p>	<p>w. Register of mentoring program possibilities developed.</p> <p>x. Number and quality of mentoring opportunities undertaken.</p>
4.4 Regular performance reviews with constructive feedback	<p>y. A system of performance review including a feedback component is to be undertaken on a regular basis that includes discussion and feedback about any mentoring, coaching, and other learning opportunities undertaken (as identified under 4.1-4.3).</p>	<p>Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff with managers</p> <p>Ongoing from July 2025</p>	<p>Number of performance reviews undertaken.</p> <p>Feedback from participants in the performance review.</p>

Strategic Actions (cont.)

KEY THEME: 5. ADMINISTRATION			
Implementation focus	Direct actions	Responsibility & Timeline goal	Success metrics
5.1 A Zero tolerance policy for racism across CHS	<p>z. Develop a Zero tolerance to racism policy and campaign using the Racism. Nobody Wins. Racial Discrimination Policy Template: https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/ahrc_sr_2021_2_racialdiscrimination_policy_word_r2.pdf</p> <p>aa. Circulate the policy to all staff and follow-up and reiterate the organisation's commitment to the policy through meetings and work gatherings.</p>	<p>All staff Executive</p> <p>z. From Feb 2025 aa. Ongoing from Feb 2025</p>	<p>z. Development of Zero tolerance policy and campaign.</p> <p>aa. Circulation of policy. Number of people aware of and who understand the policy.</p>
5.2 Supportive and culturally safe processes, procedures and practices	<p>bb. Develop supportive and culturally safe processes, procedures and practices policy specific for CHS, using CHS existing resources as well as drawing from other existing documents such as Cultural Safety in Health Care for Indigenous Australians: Monitoring Framework (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2023): https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/cultural-safety-health-care-framework/contents/background-material</p> <p>cc. Circulate the policy to all staff and follow-up and reiterate the organisation's commitment to the policy through meetings and work gatherings.</p>	<p>All staff Executive</p> <p>bb. Oct 2025 cc. From Nov 2025</p>	<p>bb. Development of supportive and culturally safe processes, procedures and practices policy.</p> <p>cc. Circulation of policy. Number of people aware of and who understand the policy.</p>
5.3 Resources for handling personal crises or work-related stress	<p>dd. Identify and access resources that support the handling of personal crises and work-related stresses (for example, Taking Care of Yourself (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, https://healthinfolnet.ecu.edu.au/key-resources/health-professionals/health-workers/taking-care-of-yourself/).</p> <p>ee. Identify individuals either within the workforce or from other professional settings who can support personal crises or work-related stress and provide culturally appropriate support.</p> <p>ff. Maintain a register of resources through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff network.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff Managers & executive</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>dd. Resources have been identified, (or developed) and made available.</p> <p>ee. Register of individuals who can support those experiencing personal crises or work related stress such as culturally appropriate EAP providers, counsellors or support services.</p>
5.4 Training in culturally respectful resilience, coping strategies or other helpful modalities	<p>gg. Identify providers of training in culturally respectful resilience, coping strategies or other helpful modalities that would be appropriate for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff (such as trauma, grief, empowerment, leadership, management)</p> <p>hh. Conduct training programs for and with Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff.</p>	<p>Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander staff Managers & executive</p> <p>ff. From Aug 2025 gg. From Sep 2025</p>	<p>ff. Training providers identified.</p> <p>gg. Training programs undertaken.</p> <p>Feedback from training participants.</p>

Strategic Actions (cont.)

KEY THEME: 6. RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION			
Implementation focus	Direct actions	Responsibility & Timeline goal	Success metrics
6.1 Regular acknowledgement of individual and team achievements	<p>ii. Establish systems of recognition of achievements that have considerable status throughout the organization.</p> <p>jj. Establish ways to spread the news about individual and collective achievements and awards amplify the importance of achievements.</p>	<p>Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff</p> <p>Managers & executive</p> <p>From July 2025 and ongoing</p>	Award and recognition system developed and highlighted across the organization. Specific dashboard or portal.
6.2 Personalized appreciation, Employee of the month programs or other recognition initiatives	See ii and jj above.	<p>Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff</p> <p>Managers & executive</p> <p>From July 2025 and ongoing</p>	Award and recognition system developed and highlighted across the organization.
6.3 Celebrating milestones and personal achievements	<p>kk. Within work units establish a system of recognition for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff that highlights personal achievements.</p> <p>ll. Feed information about milestones and achievements to the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff network.</p>	<p>Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff</p> <p>All staff</p> <p>Managers & executive</p> <p>From July 2025 and ongoing</p>	<p>Award and recognition system developed and highlighted across the organization.</p> <p>Feedback from participants/awardees.</p>

Strategic Actions (cont.)

KEY THEME: 7. INDIGENOUS EMPOWERMENT			
Implementation focus	Direct actions	Responsibility & Timeline goal	Success metrics
7.1 Opportunities for employees to lead projects and teams	mm. Through the CHS Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander network (see also 1.2 e) individual Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff should be afforded opportunities to lead special projects and teams. This should also allow for goal setting, the establishment of work processes, problem solving and development of independent initiatives.	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff Managers	II. Identification of opportunities and leadership and learning obtained by participants.
7.2 Allowing staff to set their own goals and work methods	See mm above. Empower staff by granting autonomy to set their own goals and choose their preferred work methods.	Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff Managers	Identification of opportunities to set goals and work methods by participants.
7.3 Encouraging innovation and creative problem solving	See 1.2 e and mm above. Allow space for a culturally appropriate problem solving methods to be nurtured.	All staff Managers	Identification of innovation and creative opportunities by participants.
7.4 Providing resources and support for independent initiatives	See 1.2 e and mm above. Foster a culture of innovation and autonomy by allocating resources and providing support for staff-driven initiatives, through a cultural lens, enabling staff to take ownership of their projects and drive positive change within the organization.	Managers & executive in consultation with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander staff	Support received for independent initiatives by participants.

Implementing Strategies for Enhanced Social and Emotional Wellbeing

- **Provide a hard copy of the strategy:**

Staff members should have the opportunity to obtain a hard copy of the strategy.

- **Review the Strategies for Enhanced Wellbeing:**

Executive to review the Strategies for understanding.

- **Review the Strategic Actions:**

Executive to review the strategic actions and consult relevant staff on the priorities for which actions should be implemented first. Look for quick wins.

- **Communications:**

Communicate to the team how the strategy will be implemented (email, face-to-face meetings) and timeframes for the implementation.

- **Regular Check-Ins:**

Use regular meetings or surveys to check on staff wellbeing and get feedback from staff.

- **Leadership Involvement:**

Ensure leadership actively participates and endorses the Strategies principles.

- **Visibility and Accessibility:**

Keep the principles visible (posters, emails) and ensure all staff know how to access resources and support.

- **Flexibility:**

Be open to adapting the components as per staff feedback and changing needs.

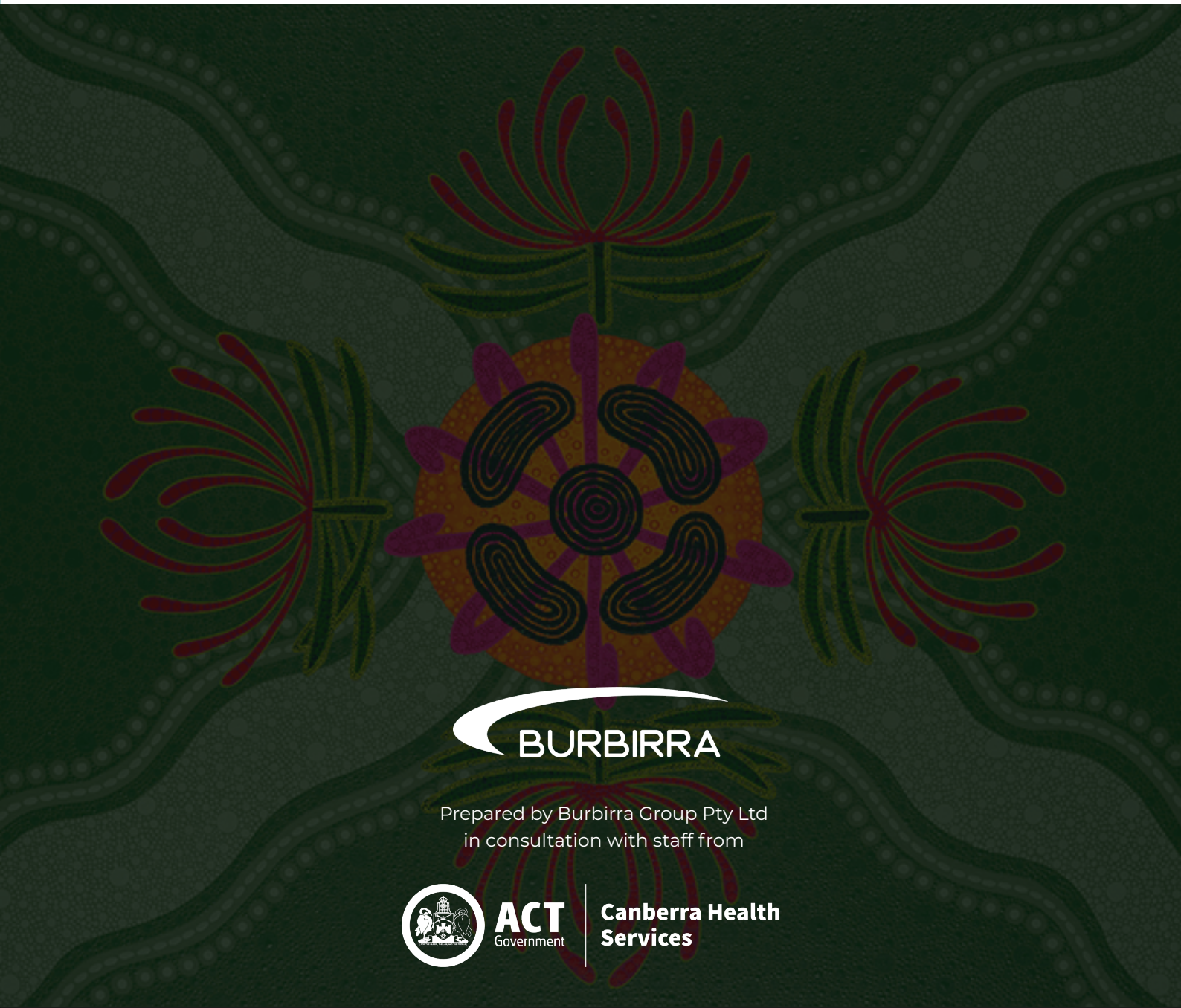
- **Evaluation:**

undertake an evaluation of all feedback surveys and completed activities in the first 12 months.



Attachment A

- 1.** How will this document impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
- 2.** How will the document ensure equity of service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
- 3.** How can the document be designed to be inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their needs and their culture?
- 4.** What might be the impacts (strengths and areas for improvement/ potential unwanted effects) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
- 5.** What actions can be put in place to mitigate potential unwanted effects or address areas for improvement?
- 6.** What actions can be put in place to build on strengths?
- 7.** What information will be provided back to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community after consultation, including any impact of the document on the community? How will continued engagement with the community occur during the implementation and evaluation of the document?



BURBIRRA

Prepared by Burbirra Group Pty Ltd
in consultation with staff from



ACT
Government

**Canberra Health
Services**