

BUILDING CULTURAL SECURITY IN THE WORKPLACE

BACKGROUND

Despite all of the efforts to close the gap, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in mainstream organisations report that they are still regularly exposed to racism in the workplace. Inner North West Primary Care Partnership (INW PCP) identified that one-off cultural awareness training and other actions addressing individual employee behaviours and attitudes cannot alone address the systemic nature of this issue.

Between 2012-2016, through Closing the Health Gap and Koolin Balit funding, INWPCP supported partner organisations to embed cultural responsiveness practices and address barriers to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. *The Working in Two Worlds* initiative was established in 2017 in partnership with The Long Walk to further the longer term work required to support mainstream organisations to become more accessible, culturally safe and appropriate for Aboriginal people.

PARTNERS

- The Long Walk
- Inner North West Partnership

METHOD

INW PCP convenes a local Wellbeing Partnership which meets regularly to share information, and drive the direction and implementation of the work. The partnership is made up of Aboriginal and non-indigenous representatives from across the North/West Metropolitan Region.

Using self-determination principles, a working group was established consisting of 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to lead the Working in Two Worlds Initiative.



Supporting
Aboriginal Workers



Asking The Question
Training Package



Welcoming
Environments Guide



Culturally Responsive
Communication Guide



Graphic Artwork
Templates

OUTCOMES

The project has developed a number of resources in collaboration with ACCOs and the Aboriginal community designed to build the capacity of mainstream organisations to recruit, employ and retain Aboriginal employees. Evidence from two external evaluations show that the work has resulted in fundamental and lasting change within over 20 mainstream organisations and leaves a legacy beyond the funded projects.

The benefits and impacts of this initiative are:

1. Increasing the capacity of mainstream service providers and their workforce to engage with and meet the needs of Aboriginal people by facilitating stronger links and relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services.
2. This project contributes toward a vision of all people being valued and treated as active citizens by engaging Aboriginal people in the planning, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all components of the project.
3. The [*Walk With Us*](#) resource video alerts CEOs, Boards and managers to factors impacting on Aboriginal people who work in their organisation and guidance on how to address those

factors. As well as addressing a major information gap, the project created a paid acting, interviewing and video resource production opportunity for a young Koorie journalism student.

4. In 2017 A Working in Two Worlds Forum was held with over 60 Aboriginal people employed in mainstream organisations. The participants shared their thoughts, concerns and ideas about how mainstream health and community service sector work impacts them and how employers can more effectively support Aboriginal workers. Feedback from this forum informed the development of the From Symbols to Systems Framework.
5. The *From Symbols to Systems* cultural security framework has been informed by the local community and also state and national policy frameworks and offers cultural security templates to guide organisations, go seeking to address culturally based hazards and improve cultural security. The framework was piloted in 2018.

“Our participation has been a key enabler in our developing a plan to create meaningful changes for Aboriginal children and their families. The project has been instrumental in providing our organisation with support and practical resources for building our capacity to work with Aboriginal children and their families” **Partner organisation**