



East Grampians  
Health Service

# FIRST NATIONS EMPLOYMENT PLAN

2025-2027



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

East Grampians Health Service (EGHS) acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagalk and Eastern Maar peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands of which we operate.

We acknowledge that their holistic approach to health; harmony between body, mind, spirit and environment, has been practiced on these lands for thousands of years. We thank past and present Elders for this knowledge to help improve health and wellbeing for all Australians.

## CONTRIBUTORS

East Grampians Health Service would like to acknowledge all those who contributed to the development of the EGHS First Nations Employment Plan.

We thankfully acknowledge the review of this Plan by First Nations contributors Faye Clarke and the Barengi Gadjin Land Council.

A special thanks to Claire Sladdin and Tarnya Mair (EGHS) and Benjamin Bailey Webb (Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network).

## TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this document the term First Nation/s is used to refer to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The terms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous are retained in the names of specific external programs and initiatives.

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

The artwork by Talitha Podger is titled "Spiritual Healing". The eagle represents the creator "Bunjil", the blue represents the sky or the river, green represents the community coming together using native plants for their physical and spiritual healing (medicine), yellow represents the sun and red represents the desert/land.

## LOCAL FIRST NATIONS CONTEXT

**East Grampians Health Service operates on the lands of the Eastern Maar Traditional Owners, whose land extends along the Hopkins River and as far north as Ararat and encompasses the Warrnambool, Port Fairy and Great Ocean Road areas. It also operates on the land of the Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC) who represents Traditional Owners from the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk peoples.**

Places of cultural significance in the region include Lake Bolac where clans people gathered in Autumn for the annual migratory season of eels and Mount Langi Ghiran (home of the yellow tailed black cockatoo) where rock art sites, rock-shelters, scarred trees and other artefacts are present.

During the early days of European settlement (c1836), there were many killings of First Nations people as they responded to the European invasion and the settlers sought retribution. With the commencement of the gold rush during the 1850s, many First Nations people were used as station hands in the wake of the labour shortage and paid a fraction of their non-First Nations counterparts.

Also, during the late 1850s there was a dramatic reduction in population due to a low birth rate and high mortality (from introduced diseases and alcohol abuse). As a result, the Select Committee recommended that reserves be formed on traditional hunting ranges to encourage people into agriculture and grazing. As no reserve locations were identified, four honorary correspondent depots were set up in the region, including at Buangor and Ararat. By the late 1860s, many First Nation people had moved to Lake Condah or Framlingham, near Warrnambool.

Content accessed from: <https://budjabudjacoop.org.au>

Today, there were 225 people who identify as First Nations in the Ararat Local Government Area (LGA), consisting of 71 First Nation families (2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census). The median age was 30 years and 67% were male.

Of the 225, 2.2% (4) had completed a bachelor's degree (or higher) qualification which is lower than the Victorian average of 11%. Completion to Year 10 was most common (78, 43.3%) which is higher than the Victorian average (14.3%). For the 35% reported to be in the labour force (Vic result 58%), the top three jobs were labourers (29.6%), community and personal service workers (22.2%) and managers (18.5%).



## CHIEF EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

**I am proud to introduce the inaugural East Grampians Health Service (EGHS) First Nations Employment Plan. EGHS is committed to working collaboratively to improve the health and wellbeing of our local First Nations community.**

EGHS is based in Ararat and Willaura and takes its name from the magnificent mountain range that provides a backdrop to both townships. EGHS is committed to providing quality care and services that meet the needs of the community, whilst continuously striving for improvement and aiming to lead the way in provision of health-related services. With over 600 employees, EGHS provides meaningful employment opportunities for the local community.

Evidence supports the close relationship between a person's health and the living and working conditions which form their social environment, and that every step up the socioeconomic ladder is accompanied by a benefit for health.

The 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics census highlighted that we have over 200 people in our community who identified as First Nations, representing 1.9% of the Ararat Local Government Area (LGA) population. The census indicated that First Nations people in employment (35%) was lower than the state average (58%). The average family income (\$1553) was also less than the Victorian average (\$1638).

Using the Barring Djinang First Peoples Workforce Development Framework 2024-2028, we hope to make a difference in addressing this gap.

I am grateful to all those who contributed to this plan by sharing their expertise and experience, facilitating the development of a 3-year plan that is meaningful and tailored to local needs. We look to increase the number of First Nation people we employ.



**Nick Bush**

*Chief Executive*

## OUR VISION

**To be leaders in rural health care.**

## OUR MISSION

**East Grampians Health Service will improve our community's health and quality of life through strong partnerships and by responding to changing needs.**

## OUR VALUE STATEMENTS



### INTEGRITY

We value integrity, honesty and respect in all relationships.



### EXCELLENCE

We value excellence as the appropriate standard for all services and practices.



### COMMUNITY

We respect the dignity and rights of our community and acknowledge their beliefs, regardless of their cultural, spiritual or socioeconomic background.



### WORKING TOGETHER

We value equally all people who make a contribution to EGHS to achieve shared goals.



### LEARNING CULTURE

We strive to continually learn and develop through education, training, mentoring and by teaching others.





## WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED

EGHS strives to create an environment that is culturally safe for First Nations people.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- Employing Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers (AHLO) to support our First Nations community to navigate the health system.
- Displaying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait flags at both of our campuses, and Acknowledgement Plaques at all entrances.
- Undertaking an Acknowledgement of Country before meetings.
- Celebrating First Nations days of significance.
- Offering Cultural Awareness training to all staff, and Cultural Safety education to all managers and Executive.
- Developing a First Nations native garden.
- Completing the Lowitja Institute Cultural Safety Audit Tool.

We have five staff who identify as First Nations. These staff work in both direct care roles (nursing, health care workers), support services and administrative roles.

## OVERVIEW

This First Nations Employment Plan was developed through an initial workshop which created a draft Plan. Further input from key stakeholders was sought to refine the draft.

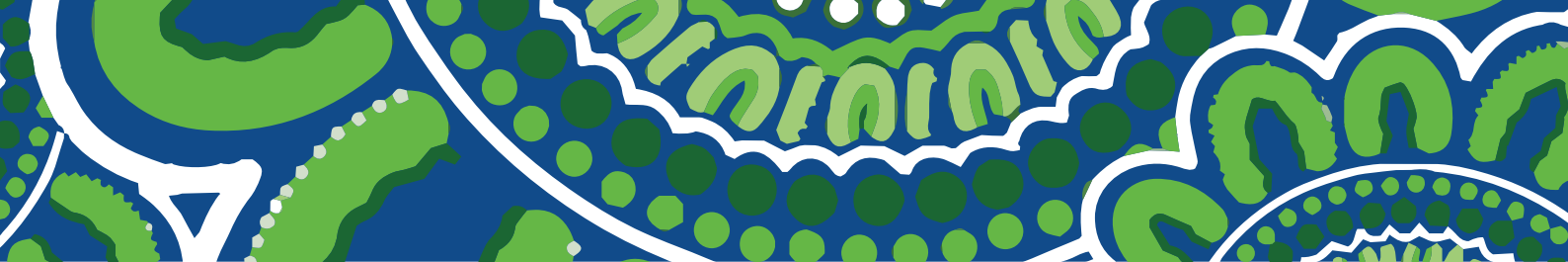
Invitations to contribute to this First Nations Employment Plan were extended to the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative, staff who identify as First Nations as well as other First Nations connections throughout the region.

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The plan has six focus areas which align with the priorities outlined in the [Barrng Djinang First Peoples Workforce Development Framework 2024 -2028](#).

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The intention was to create a First Nations Employment Plan that is both achievable and relevant to the local community, considering the demographics of the population. Given our small baseline of First Nations employees, we plan to share stories as evidence of the effectiveness of this plan and increase the number of First Nation people employed at EGHS.



## FOCUS AREA

### INCREASING ENTRY-LEVEL CAREER PATHWAYS



#### Background

This plan focuses on Vocational Education Training (VET) pathways, rather than graduate entry pathways. VET pathways are more likely to appeal to the local community due to their greater connection with country and community. VET pathways also draw from the local community more so than universities which are predominately located in regional or metropolitan areas.

#### What we will do:

1. Create workplace opportunities for First Nations persons in the VET pathways areas of nursing, gardening / maintenance and catering. This might be work experience, a structured learning opportunity or a formal work position (e.g. 12-month role).

#### Our success measures

- By the end of 2027, we will have piloted a program that offers workplace opportunities for First Nations persons through VET pathways.

#### Responsible team

Development and Improvement

## FOCUS AREA

### FOSTERING CAREER GROWTH AND MOBILITY



#### Background

With the low population of local First Nation people and staff who identify as First Nations, this plan will focus on facilitating mentoring opportunities from external sources.

#### What we will do:

1. Continue to offer the EGHS Scholarship for a First Nations employee to upskill in their chosen field.
2. Facilitate attendance by First Nations employees at industry events (e.g. yarns) to help build connections that may foster career growth.
3. Establish First Nations health industry connection days for the Western region.

#### Our success measures

- The EGHS Scholarship for a First Nations employee to upskill is offered annually.
- By the end of 2026, First Nations employees will have been offered the opportunity to attend an industry event or activity.
- By the end of 2027, we will have facilitated a First Nations health industry connection day.

#### Responsible team

Development and Improvement

## FOCUS AREA

### SUPPORTING THE LEADERSHIP PIPELINE



#### Background

This plan focuses on facilitating opportunities to link in with culturally safe leadership programs.

#### What we will do:

1. Identify First Nations aspiring leaders and promote the Victorian Public Service Barring Djinang leadership program to them.
2. Facilitate access to First Nations mentors through the strategies outlined in Focus Area 2.

#### Our success measures

- The Barring Djinang leadership program is offered to First Nations aspiring leaders.

#### Responsible team

Development and Improvement

## FOCUS AREA

### CONNECTING AND SHARING



#### Background

This plan focuses on understanding what would make our First Nations staff members feel more connected to their culture in the workplace.

#### What we will do:

1. Consult with First Nation employees to ask what would make them feel more connected (e.g. which First Nations days to acknowledge and how).
2. Provide more opportunities for story telling (e.g. involvement in orientation and the First Nations Garden).

#### Our success measures

- By the end of 2025, we will have developed a plan in conjunction with First Nations employees for celebrating of First Nations days of significance in 2026.

#### Responsible team

Development and Improvement

## FOCUS AREA

### STRENGTHENING CULTURAL CAPABILITY



#### Background

This plan focuses on building on the cultural awareness training provided to our staff, and introducing Cultural Safety training.

#### What we will do:

1. Update our Acknowledgement of Country to explicitly mention the Traditional Owners.
2. Provide Cultural Safety training for all senior staff in accordance with the Victorian Department of Health Statement of Priorities.
3. Make available Cultural Awareness e-learning available to all staff.

#### Our success measures

- By the end of 2025, we will have an Acknowledgement of Country that explicitly mentions the Traditional Owners.
- By the end of 2025, all senior staff will have undertaken Cultural Safety training.
- By the end of 2025, 80% of staff will have completed Cultural Awareness e-learning modules (1 & 2).

#### Responsible team

Development and Improvement

## FOCUS AREA

### IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING AND INSIGHTS



#### Background

This plan focuses on obtaining a better picture of our First Nations workforce. Some long serving staff may not have been asked whether they identify as First Nations. Similarly, some staff may not have felt comfortable in the past.

#### What we will do:

1. Update our human resources data on those who identify as First Nations by undertaking a health service census.
2. Request the details of First Nations students who are attending for work experience and student placements so that they can be culturally supported.
3. Gather stories from First Nations employees and share these stories.

#### Our success measures

- By the end of 2025, we will have completed a census to identify First Nations staff.
- By the end of 2025, we will have a process to know of First Nations people who are attending for work experience and student placements.
- By the end of 2026, we will have shared a First Nations employee story.

#### Responsible team

Development and Improvement





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