BCH POSITION STATEMENTS

Date: October 2019

**ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION**

**Background and Acknowledgement**

Ballarat Community Health acknowledges Aboriginal Communities[[1]](#endnote-1)as Australia’s first Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we live and work. We respect, value and embrace Aboriginal culture, knowledge, heritage and the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal Peoples and Communities to Australian land, waters and society. We acknowledge the devastating impact of colonisation on the Traditional life and on the ongoing health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal Communities. In the spirit of reconciliation and self-determination we commit to working alongside Aboriginal community controlled organisations and Aboriginal Peoples and Communities to improve Aboriginal health, safety and wellbeing.

**BCH Role**

In December 2007 the Council of Australian Governments made a commitment to Close the Gap in health, educational and employment outcomes between Aboriginal Peoples and the rest of the Australian community. BCH notes the limited progress in closing the gap and, as a signatory to the Close the Gap Pledge[[2]](#endnote-2), calls on the Australian government to take action to achieve Aboriginal health equity within a generation.

BCH supports actions and works in partnership with Aboriginal community controlled organisations and Aboriginal Peoples and Communities in accordance with our organisation’s vision and mission to support communities to achieve the best possible health and wellbeing and the vision of Korin-Korin Balit- Djak of self-determining, health and safe Aboriginal Peoples and Communities.

**Key Messages**

BCH’s strategies to support broader Aboriginal reconciliation include:

* Formalising our commitment and actions through a Reconciliation Action Plan
* Maintaining and growing formal relationships with Aboriginal community controlled organisations
* Promoting and celebrating events that support Aboriginal reconciliation such as Reconciliation week and NAIDOC Week
* Increasing cultural responsiveness and safety of our services for Aboriginal Peoples and Communities who choose to participate in our services, respecting the spirit of self-determination
* Growing recruitment and retention of Aboriginal workforce in our organisation and improving cultural safety in our workplace
* Increasing procurement from Aboriginal owned businesses offering goods and services relevant to BCH’s business
* Actively support the *Racism It Stops with Me* campaign
* Consulting with Aboriginal Peoples and Communities on designing services and producing publications that are accessible and culturally appropriate
* Continuing to provide training to staff in Aboriginal cultural awareness and unconscious bias and continuing to evaluate the responsiveness of BCH services
* Ensuring that all BCH activities are consistent with the principles outlined in this Statement.

BCH calls on State and Federal Governments to:

* Recommit to Close the Gap by 2030
* Increase Aboriginal control and participation in the delivery of health services
* Address the critical social issues of housing, education and self-determination that contribute to health inequality
* Continue to engage in a conversation with Aboriginal Peoples and Communities about changing the date for Australia day
* Continue to progress work towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recognition in the Constitution and improving mechanisms for Aboriginal voice and representation in government.

Ballarat Community Health provides direct services including support, information and advocacy to clients in this area.

For more information contact Ballarat Community Health on (03) 5338 4500.

1. The term Aboriginal in this document encompasses both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The Indigenous lead Close the Gap campaign aims to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality by 2030. Publicly launched by Cathy Freeman and Ian Thorpe in 2007, it is now resourced by ANTaR. BCH is committed to hosting and participating in events on National Close the Gap Day. For more information see <https://www.antar.org.au/close-gap> or <https://www.oxfam.org.au/what-we-do/indigenous-australia/national-close-the-gap-day/national-close-the-gap-day-faqs/> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)