

# MEDIA RELEASE

## For immediate release

From: Bill Lane

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## NAIDOC Week acknowledged across Mercy Health

Werribee Mercy Hospital was last week described as an appropriate and symbolic location for a “Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony” to mark NAIDOC week.

Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Di Kerr told the assembly in a courtyard outside the hospital’s learning precinct that health was a critical and concerning area for the Indigenous.

She said her peoples’ health was poor and consequently it was a frightening topic for Indigenous people.

Standing in front of the smoking leaves, a ceremony she said which dated back 60,000 years, Aunty Di said ‘Aboriginal people assembled now in unity’.

“We are still losing too many of our young people to suicide. Many people (non-Indigenous) have not always understood our journey but we now speak with one voice. The journey is to eradicate racism and stigma,” she said.

Aunty Di said Melbourne had become a big multicultural city and all communities needed to strive to share and understand each other.

Mercy Health Program Director of Ambulatory, Community and Allied Health Services Ms Erin Wilson said Aunty Di was a respected supporter of Werribee Mercy.

Ms Wilson said Mercy was proud to be rolling out a third iteration of an Aboriginal employment plan, “which demonstrates our on-going commitment to Indigenous employment.”

Although she maintained there was still much work to be done she acknowledged some of Mercy Health’s achievements over the past 12 months.

“We have welcomed across Mercy Hospital for Women (Heidelberg) and Werribee Mercy, the arrival in our maternity wards of 120 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies.

“An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing cadetship is currently being completed by Tracey Kearns at Werribee.

“We have hosted our first work experience program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students at Mercy Hospital for Women,” she added.

Ms Wilson said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health was a priority at Mercy Health and its teams and administration would continue to work hard to achieve change.

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