



Media statement

For immediate release

From: Bill Lane, Mercy Health, Senior Media and Communications Advisor

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More culturally safe health care for Aboriginal patients

Increasing access to culturally safe health care for Aboriginal patients is an ever-increasing priority for Victorian health services as they look to continually develop new ways of supporting Aboriginal people through their health care journey.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited Werribee Mercy Hospital (WMH) to meet with Aboriginal Programs' team members, who provide support and advocacy to Aboriginal patients during their time in hospital.

It is one of 40 health services across the state sharing in \$28 million of Victorian Government grants to enhance cultural safety across the health care system and address the inequities in Aboriginal health outcomes.

Aboriginal Programs at WMH has gone from strength to strength in recent months, making significant progress in improving the cultural competence of the broader hospital workforce and breaking down barriers for Aboriginal people when accessing health care.

By steadily increasing their representation around the hospital, the Aboriginal team is boosting hospital-wide understanding of the role they play in securing better health outcomes for Aboriginal patients, so that doctors, nurses and other health care staff know who to call on to offer Aboriginal patients access to their services.

They are also reaching into the local community to expand the hospital's referral network, making it known to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and leaders what kinds of supports are on offer to Aboriginal patients not only while in hospital, but also once they've returned home.

WMH Aboriginal Programs Manager, Marika Jackomos says strong word of mouth within the local community is an important element of the current progress.

"Team members often connect with patients who are on their way to hospital, allowing appropriate supports to be set up ahead of time so they are made available to the patient upon arrival."

Ms Jackomos says the role of the Aboriginal staff across the hospital is highly varied and can include attending appointments with patients and serving as their advocate, offering them and their families a culturally safe place to talk and reflect.

“We aim to provide more practical supports to assist patients in coming to and remaining in hospital to receive the care they need.”

Aboriginal Programs at WMH also has a dedicated space located within the main hospital, Weelam-ik Murrup Dornong, a culturally welcoming environment for patients and their families to gather and access support.

Creating a culturally safe health care environment which acknowledges, understands and respects the strength and diversity of Aboriginal peoples, communities and cultures is central to Victoria’s ongoing journey to remove unnecessary barriers to the optimal health and wellbeing of all Aboriginal people in Victoria.

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