

# **Reconciliation Journey 2019 -2023**

## Executive Summary

Echuca Regional Health (ERH) has been on a journey to Reconciliation since 2019. A journey of learning and unlearning to better understand and address the ongoing impacts of colonisation. Through a co-design process, ERH have assessed the cultural safety of the organisation and are committed to improving the experience of First Nations people who attend the health service. ERH further commit to continuous workforce assessments and development to ensure improvements in First Nations health outcomes. The work so far aligns with the Victorian State Government's 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework'. Our goal has been to enhance cultural safety, mitigate the risk of racism and discrimination and strengthen relationships with First Nations communities.

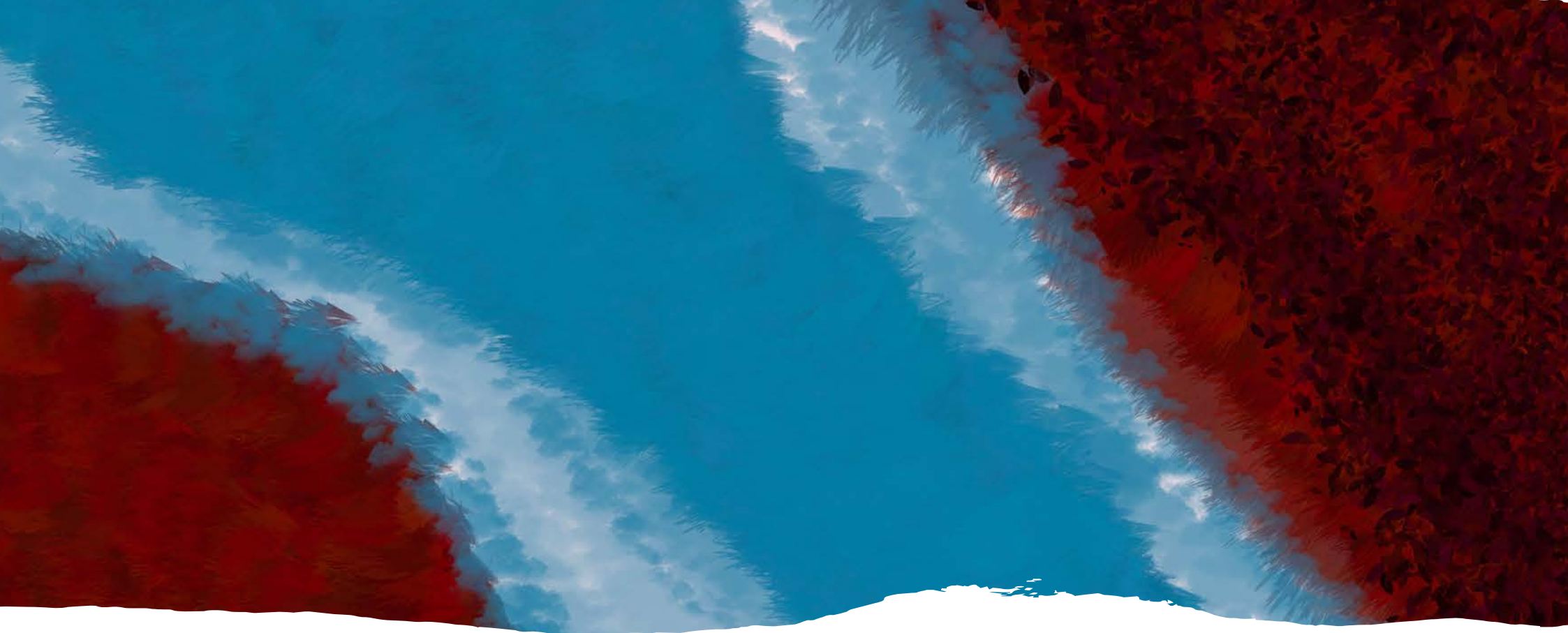
The 2019 plan to work towards Reconciliation was led by Executive and aimed to educate staff, promote understanding, empathy and compassion plus, contribute to improving the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Since its inception in 2019, ERH's Reconciliation journey has led to significant achievements in fostering engagement with First Nations communities and promoting cultural safety.

The initiatives and achievements in the journey so far reflect ERH's commitment to reconciliation, cultural safety, and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.







**Artist: Jack Dorgan**

*'I am an Indigenous Australian born and raised in Echuca and I am a part of Wemba Wemba on my father's side. I started creating artwork during 2020 to help give myself something to focus on outside of the stress of year 12 and the pandemic but it grew to be something I deeply enjoyed. It allowed me to express myself and connect with my heritage. I have a deep connection with the local community having a large family history in the area.'*

*Jack 's vision was to create an abstract piece about the rivers and the land and the traditional stories about the rivers connecting at Echuca (meeting of the waters). The story of this piece being about the formation of the Murray River and connecting the health of the land with the health of the people.*

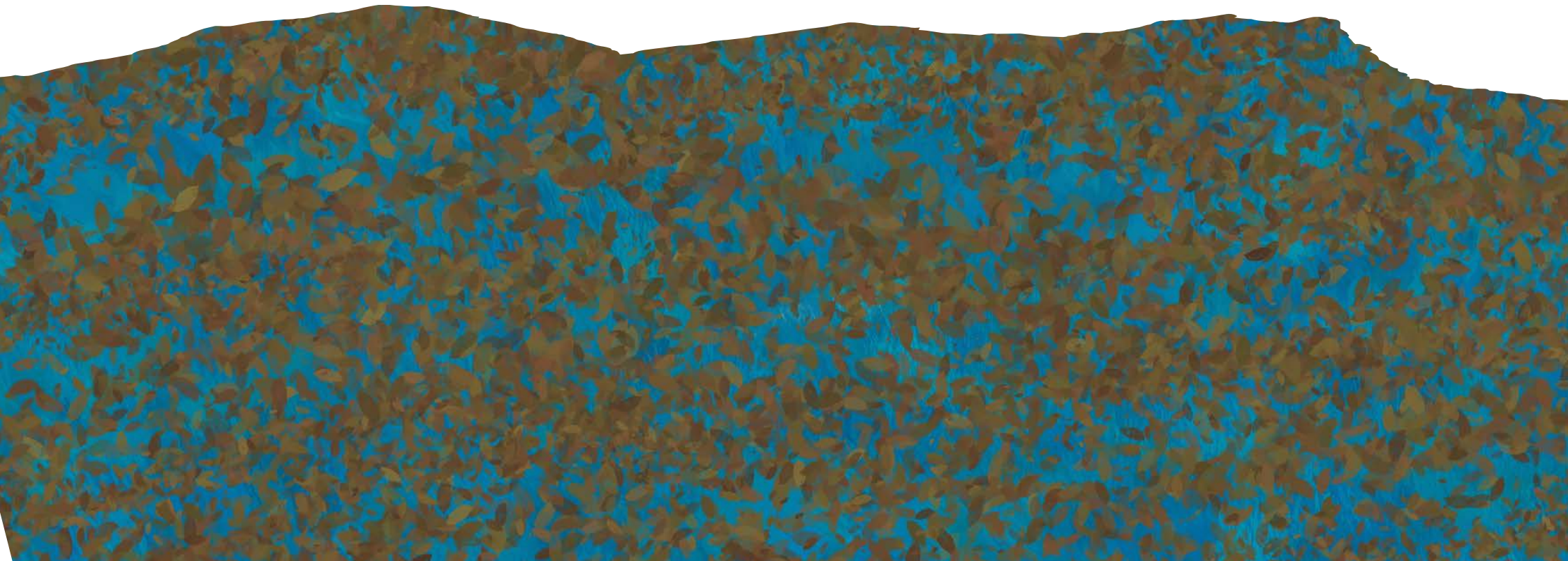
*The land is living and continues to live thanks to the flow of the river that provides lifeblood to everywhere that it flows to and connects us deeply with the land .*

## Relationships

ERH committed to strengthening existing and building new relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community members and staff, to seek insight, advice and guidance on the advancement of Reconciliation across the organisation. ERH committed to applying systemic changes that are culturally responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and culture in order to bring about positive change to achieve Reconciliation.

ERH has achieved the following to improve relationships;

- Increased engagement with Viney Morgan Medical Centre with the implementation of monthly visits with the CEO and Practice Manager.
- Increased engagement with Njernda Aboriginal Corporation through the Aboriginal Health Partnership Group.
- Memorandum(s) of Understanding: signed with both Njernda Aboriginal Corporation and Cummeragunja House and Development Aboriginal Cooperation (CHADAC).
- Loddon Mallee Health Network partnership with La Trobe University commenced to develop the Aboriginal workforce across our region.
- Ongoing support and partnership provided to Njernda's Aboriginal Best Start Program.





## Respect

ERH's vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was that their heritage, cultures and spirituality are valued, respected and celebrated to ensure access to health services and employment and training opportunities that are culturally safe, free from racism and enriched by a strong living culture, dignity and justice.

ERH has achieved the following to improve respect;

- Partnership in annual local National Aboriginal and Islanders Observance Committee (NAIDOC) events.
- NAIDOC events planned and implemented internally in 2020, 2021 and 2022.
- Participation in National Reconciliation Action Week events including ERH celebrations conducted 2020, 2021 and 2022.
- Raising of the Torres Strait Islander flag at the front of our health service to sit alongside the Aboriginal flag.
- Unveiling celebration of the Aunty Vera Cooper artwork plaque.
- Development of staff Yorta Yorta badge to wear as part of the uniform.
- Traditional Owners Acknowledgement plaques featured within all entrances to our Health Service.
- ERH Executive and Board Directors participated in Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) Cultural Awareness Training.
- Mandatory participation for staff in 'Share our Pride' e-learning.
- Annual development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Plan.
- Unveiling of plaque acknowledging all AHLOs that have historically worked at ERH.
- Participation in 2022 CHADAC Women's Health Day on country at Cummeragunja.
- Update to meeting agendas to include a standardised approach to Acknowledgment of Country.
- An internal suite of First Nation branded collateral developed to assist in multiple areas across the service, i.e. invoicing, services brochure, AHLO information, patient file identification.



## Opportunities

ERH aimed to work towards increasing organisational capacity and focused opportunities to grow the First Nations workforce, improve employment opportunities, education as well as health and wellbeing outcomes.

ERH has achieved the following to improve opportunity;

- Re-introduction of Secondary School Work Experience programs in partnership with four local Secondary Schools. Each week the sessions prioritised 2 places for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to work areas/departments of their choice.
- In 2020 an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainee was appointed to the Education team under an administration traineeship studying Certificate IV in Leadership and Management.
- Commencement of the Possum Skin Project in maternity.
- Commencement of Birth Registry Project in partnership with Njernda.
- ERH online orientation package developed and includes Welcome to Country and information on AHLO services, supporting our First Nation Community, and “Asking the question.”
- Staff orientation education sessions delivered by AHLO to new employees.
- Strategies implemented to improve cultural safety through improved systems for asking consumers if they identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

## What's Next

- Launching our new Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2024 - 2026

