



walk together, learn  
together, work together

A Practical Guide for the Training of Aboriginal  
Mental Health Professionals in New South Wales







## cover image

“MEETING PLACE” by members of ‘Connections’ 2010.

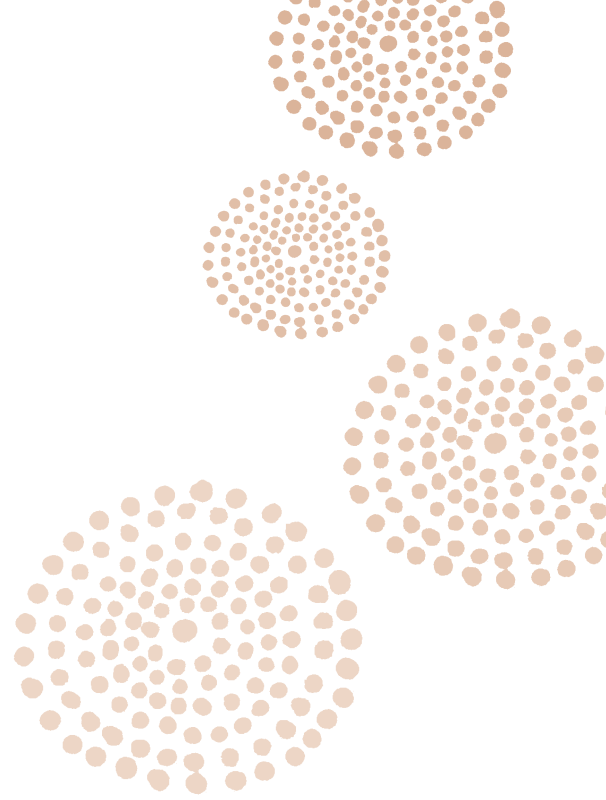
### **The Artists describe the painting as follows:**

All the elders meet at the campfire. They establish a meeting place of communication and welcome the community around the campfire. The children, the next generation, learn by listening to the stories around the campfire and by following the footsteps of the elders.

## about ‘connections’

‘Connections’ is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Art Therapy Project held at the recreation centre at Chippendale every Monday. ‘Connections’ provides a culturally safe environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are dealing with social and emotional wellbeing issues can come together for mutual support. The group is highly valued by the women participating in it. Most had never painted before joining ‘Connections’. The Project was initiated in 2001 by Kaylene Simon, an Aboriginal Mental Health Specialist, while working at Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service. Since 2006, Kaylene has been employed by St Vincent’s Mental Health Service.

A member of the ‘Connections’ group, Carriette Lillian Pangas (Aunty Lee), painted the artwork featured on the cover of the *NSW Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy 2006 – 2010*. It seemed fitting to ask the group to produce the cover for this Practical Guide, especially given the importance of the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program in the Policy. Several women worked together to translate the concept of the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program into the visual representation on the cover. Their participation in producing the cover effectively links the Policy and the Practical Guide.



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Mental Health Professionals in New South Wales

**NSW**  **HEALTH**

**Disclaimer**

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information in this document at the time of publication, it is the responsibility of users to check the currency of key documents, policies and procedures.

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# Foreword

The burden of mental health issues for Aboriginal people is well documented and represents a significant challenge for mental health services in NSW.

In recognition of this challenge, the NSW Government released the *NSW Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy 2006–2010* in July 2007 to provide a framework for improving mental health for Aboriginal people in NSW. The Policy set a target of expanding the Aboriginal mental health workforce to provide one Aboriginal Mental Health Worker for every 1000 Aboriginal people.

Funding was committed under the Policy to build a workforce valued for its specialist expertise and cultural competency through the Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program. The cornerstone of the Workforce Program is the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program. Using a traineeship model, Aboriginal Mental Health Workers obtain permanent employment within NSW Health while they undertake a degree course, clinical placements and on-the-job training over three years. NSW Health funds 19 Trainee positions across NSW in all eight Area Health Services and Justice Health.

The success of this Program is reflected in the completion rates of the first group of Trainees to complete the Program. Nine out of ten Trainees successfully completed their Traineeship at the end of 2009. This is a major success and a first step in capacity building for mental health services to address the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing needs of Aboriginal people in NSW. The 2009 graduates now work in a range of clinical roles as first-year mental health practitioners.

The Program has built on local initiatives that began in Greater Southern Area Health Service in 1993 as the Koori Mental Health Outreach Worker Program. I would particularly like to acknowledge the work of Greater Western Area Health Service (GWAHS) to develop the traineeship model, which has provided the basis for the current State-wide Program. Over the past few years GWAHS also generously shared resources, such as its Training Manual, to support the State-wide roll out of the Training Program. This resource has been invaluable in guiding the implementation of the Program.

As well as being built on strong foundations, the Program was designed with strong internal support mechanisms. I would particularly like to acknowledge the tireless contribution made by the State-wide Coordinator in managing the Program and providing support to both Trainees and the teams they work in.

The Program would not be possible without the huge contribution made to the Program by team leaders, managers, clinical supervisors, cultural supervisors, preceptors, tutors and mentors. A large part of the success of this Program results from the commitment of these individuals, who create the supportive environment that allows Trainees to learn and develop during the Traineeship.

NSW Health also acknowledges the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH, now renamed the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health under the Lowitja Institute), which developed the State-wide manual. The CRAH has had a long and positive working relationship with NSW Health, and contributed to the Program's development over several years, including developing the Training Manual for GWAHS, and conducting the implementation review of this Program. The passion of the consultants—Carol Watson and Nea Harrison—to ensure this document has at all times been accurate and forward thinking has been invaluable. NSW Health congratulates them on a document that is both comprehensive and easy to use.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the State-wide manual for the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program, entitled *Walk Together, Learn Together, Work Together: A Practical Guide for the Training of Aboriginal Mental Health Professionals in New South Wales*. I commend all the individuals who have contributed to the development of this Program.



**David McGrath**

Director

Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Programs

NSW Health

# contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Purpose of guide</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Overview of the Training Program</b>	<b>1</b>
Background—a brief history	2
Description of the Training Program	9
The Learning Model	11
Governance and support	13
Benefits of the Training Program	17
Achievements of the Training Program	18
Resources	19
<b>Chapter 2: Workplace preparation and Recruitment</b>	<b>23</b>
Preparing the workplace	24
Recruiting a Trainee	30
Planning the orientation and induction	35
Considering culture	37
Supporting documents and resources	42
<b>Chapter 3: Workplace Training and Support</b>	<b>53</b>
Trainees as team members	54
Planning the workplace learning experience	59
Supporting Trainees and teams	71
Glossary	81
Supporting documents and resources	83
<b>Chapter 4: University Study and support</b>	<b>89</b>
Trainee as a student	90
University course: Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health)	92
Education provider: Roles and responsibilities	104
University study support and entitlements	107
Supporting documents	112

<b>Chapter 5: Clinical Placements and Support</b>	<b>115</b>
The placement component	116
Planning and organising a clinical placement	120
Djirruwang Program requirements	123
Entitlements	127
Supporting documents	128
<b>Chapter 6: Linking Work and Study</b>	<b>129</b>
Progressing from year one through year three	130
Year One	131
Year Two	135
Year Three	138
Transition from Trainee to graduate	141
Continuing professional development	142
Supporting document and resources	144
<b>Chapter 7: Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<b>145</b>
Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework	146
Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program Logic	151
Monitoring and evaluation plan	154
Glossary	163
Supporting documents	164
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>166</b>

## Tables and figures

<b>Table 1:</b> Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program chronology	5
<b>Table 2:</b> Allocated days over a year at a glance	66
<b>Table 3:</b> Clinical subject placements	117
<b>Table 4:</b> Monitoring and evaluation matrix	155
<b>Figure 1:</b> Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program Learning Model	11
<b>Figure 2:</b> Relationships and governance of the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program	15
<b>Figure 3:</b> Relationships of the NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program	16
<b>Figure 4:</b> New South Wales Area Health Services Aboriginal Nations map	39
<b>Figure 5:</b> Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program logic model	152
<b>Figure 6:</b> Program logic flow diagram for Training Program	153



# Preface

*Walk Together, Learn Together, Work Together: A Practical Guide for the Training of Aboriginal Mental Health Professionals in New South Wales* builds on the work of many people throughout NSW Health over a long period of time, especially over the past five years. It had as its starting point the *Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program Manual*, which was developed for Greater Western Area Health Service (GWAHS) in 2006 by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH). The services and teams who used the Manual found the information, templates and examples to be practical and useful and there was a strong recommendation to develop a State-wide manual that would be applicable across Area Health Services.

This Practical Guide has been further informed by the results of the review of the New South Wales Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program, undertaken in 2007/08 by the CRAH. The published report, the *New South Wales Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program: Implementation Review*, covered Phase One of the Program and drew on both the positive and negative experiences of Trainees, Aboriginal Mental Health Workers, clinical supervisors, team members and managers. Information gaps identified during the implementation review have been addressed in this Guide. The thoughtful and detailed reflections and suggestions for improving and strengthening the Program were related as ‘case stories’ in the report and, from these, a list of ‘sound practices’ was developed to guide future Program implementation. These ‘sound practices’ are included in this Practical Guide.

In mid-2009 the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office (MHDAO) approached the CRAH to develop a State-wide manual. The project has been a truly collaborative endeavour to produce a resource to meet the needs of those involved in the training and support of Aboriginal Mental Health Workers as mental health professionals. Stakeholders determined what would be informative and practical for them. The result is this user-friendly resource to guide and support those involved in the Training Program. It is intended that this Practical Guide will continue to develop as a web-based resource that can be updated and expanded to keep it current and ever useful.

We hope this Practical Guide is able to answer your questions, provide you with helpful strategies and resources, and guide and affirm your sound practices and that it serves to strengthen the Traineeship Program within your teams.

## The editorial group

**Carol Watson** and **Nea Harrison**, Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (CRCATSIH).

**Tom Brideson**, State-wide Coordinator Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program, GWAHS.

**Cathy Greenwood**, Senior Project Officer, Aboriginal Mental Health Programs, MHDAO.

## Acknowledgments

The development of this Practical Guide would not have been possible without the input of many people working in the mental health area within NSW Health, Area Health Services and partner organisations such as Charles Sturt University. We would like to acknowledge their contribution.

For the initial stages of guide development, we thank the following people:

- The 33 people who responded to the online survey about what would and would not be useful in the resource, the format that would be most user-friendly and so forth. The information gathered informed the next stage of consultation.
- The 111 stakeholders who attended consultation workshops and meetings held in all Area Health Services to refine the guide's content. Participants were asked about the specific topics and issues they wanted included in the guide, about templates and examples that would be useful, and about their preferences related to format and medium.
- Vicki Stanton, Mental Health Consultant, who provided input to the consultation phase and researched and initially drafted the 'Considering culture' and the orientation and induction sections in the guide.
- Members of the Manual Project Advisory Group: Jackie Jackson, Donna Stanley, Gabrielle Williams, Matthew Eldridge, Barry Kinnard, Tom Brideson and Cathy Greenwood. The group met monthly with the consultants via teleconferencing during the early drafting phase to discuss and advise about the content, format and design of the resource, including the name, and best ways to disseminate information about it.

A special thank you to Charles Sturt University staff, Professor Elaine Duffy (Head of School), Wayne Rigby (Director of the Djirruwang Program), Kara Eddington (Clinical Coordinator) and Ray Eldridge (Manager of the Ngungilanna Indigenous Support Unit), who met with us to discuss the Training Program learning model, the sections on the Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health) course that stakeholders indicated would be useful to include in the guide, and the supports available to Trainees.

During the writing stage of development, draft sections of the Guide were sent to a number of stakeholders for comment and suggestions. We would like to thank them for reading the sections, checking for accuracy, and providing useful suggestions and editorial comments:

- Area Health Service staff: Elizabeth Abbott, Taryn Banks, Kylie Briggs, Julie Carter, Verina Crawford, Eda Devoti, Shai Grigg, Jackie Jackson, Len Kanowski, Sandra Kelty, Robyn Manzie, Joe Medway, Bronwyn Pascoe, Tuana Sanders, Vanessa Smith, Kathy Thompson, Tyrone Toomey, Gabrielle Williams and Lyle Young
- Charles Sturt University staff: Kara Eddington, Ray Eldridge and Wayne Rigby.

For contributing materials for supporting documents, thank you to:

- Area Health Service staff: Julie Carter, Verina Crawford, Carolyn Frazer, Robyn Manzie, Krystina Micke, Joe Medway, Bronwyn Pascoe, Tuana Sanders, Lelde Taylor and Tyrone Toomey
- Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation: Kate Gooden
- Charles Sturt University: Rebecca King, Wayne Rigby.

For the final stage of development, draft copies of the completed Practical Guide were sent to a cross-section of mental health staff and to Charles Sturt University staff for final review.

Thank you to the following people who reviewed sections, or the whole guide, and provided comments and suggestions for improvement: Elizabeth Abbott, Tom Brideson, Julie Carter, Verina Crawford, Eda Devoti, Elaine Duffy, Matthew Eldridge, Justin Files (Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation), Cathy Greenwood, Jackie Jackson, Len Kanowski, Sandra Kelty, Barry Kinnard, Diana Lenz, Robyn Manzie, Joe Medway, Robyn Murray, Bronwyn Pascoe, Wayne Rigby, Leanne Scholes-Asper, Steven Stanton, Nathan Whitton and Lyle Young.

Thank you also to 'Connections', the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Art Therapy Group, for providing the thoughtful cover design, to Cathy Edmonds for careful editing and to Andrea Gill and Nasrin Moradmand from Inprint Design for their sensitive web and document design and skillful layout.

Particular appreciation goes to Tom Brideson, State-wide Coordinator, Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program, and Cathy Greenwood, Senior Project Officer for Aboriginal Mental Health Programs, for their ongoing commitment and support of the Guide. Tom provided invaluable input into the framing and content. He read and commented on numerous drafts and provided practical and critical comments. Cathy unstintingly supported the project, organised the advisory group and provided useful comments on the various drafts. Both served on the Editorial Group with Carol Watson and Nea Harrison to bring the project to completion.

# Abbreviations

<b>ACCCHS</b>	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service
<b>AMHW</b>	Aboriginal Mental Health Worker
<b>AMS</b>	Aboriginal Medical Service
<b>AOD</b>	Alcohol and Other Drugs
<b>CRCAH</b>	Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health
<b>CRCATSIH</b>	Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
<b>CSU</b>	Charles Sturt University
<b>DCAT</b>	Djirruwang Clinical Assessment Tool
<b>GSAHS</b>	Greater Southern Area Health Service
<b>GWAHS</b>	Greater Western Area Health Service
<b>HNEAHS</b>	Hunter New England Area Health Service
<b>ITAS</b>	Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme
<b>MATISSE</b>	Monitoring AOD Treatment Information System for Services Everywhere
<b>MHDA</b>	Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol
<b>MHDAO</b>	Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office
<b>NETPO</b>	Network Education and Training Project Officer
<b>NHMRC</b>	National Health and Medical Research Council
<b>NSW</b>	New South Wales
<b>OATSIH</b>	Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health
<b>RHSET</b>	Rural Health Support Education and Training
<b>SCI MH-OAT</b>	Service Contact Information & Mental Health Outcomes and Assessment Tool

# Purpose of guide

Mental health workforce development is a priority for the NSW Government. Developing the Aboriginal mental health workforce is a key strategy for enhancing the cultural appropriateness and responsiveness of mental health services for Aboriginal people.

A highly skilled, stable and well-supported workforce is crucial for leading the reforms necessary to enhance the quality, effectiveness and responsiveness of services.<sup>1</sup>

In the *NSW Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy 2006–2010*, a key strategy for enhancing the effectiveness and responsiveness of mental health services is ‘Strategy Five: A supported and skilled workforce’.

The foundation of an expert and experienced Aboriginal mental health workforce has been built in NSW over the last ten years. [Strategy Five: A supported and skilled workforce] aims to further develop the Aboriginal mental health workforce as health professionals and increase the education, retention and representation of Aboriginal people in specialist and primary mental health service delivery.<sup>2</sup>

The Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program is a workplace-based training program under the broader NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program. NSW Health has allocated specific funding for employing, training and educating additional Aboriginal Mental Health Workers within mental health services. They are recruited as Trainees to full-time, permanent positions to undertake on-the-job training and a relevant degree course. Upon the successful completion of the workplace training, university study and clinical placement requirements, new graduates are fully qualified to provide mental health services to any person presenting with a mental health problem or concern. There is also funding for State-wide coordination, Aboriginal clinical leadership positions, support and resources.

This Practical Guide is a resource designed especially for the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Training Program (henceforth the Training Program, Traineeship or Program). It aims to focus, direct and support the different people, teams and mental health services participating in the Program. It draws on the experiences of those individuals and teams who have employed and trained Trainees and on the views of Trainees themselves about what has worked well for them and what needs greater attention.

It sets out and explains sound practices for preparing the workplace, recruiting the Trainees, planning and implementing the on-the-job Training Program, and supporting the Trainee and the team throughout the three-year Traineeship. It gives an overview of Charles Sturt University’s Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health) that Trainees are currently enrolled in. The Guide links work and study together and documents the entitlements and supports associated with the Traineeship and the course. It includes information about monitoring and evaluating the Program, why it is important and what data to collect. Included at the end of each chapter are a number of supporting documents (for example, templates, examples of items referred to in the text) and a list of resources (for example, articles, websites).



## Who the guide is for?

This Practical Guide is specifically designed for mental health staff implementing the Training Program. It is recognised that the main responsibility for developing the Trainee as a mental health professional is located in the workplace with the Line Managers, clinical supervisors and team members, supported by clinical leaders and complemented by the knowledge gained through university study. The sound practices outlined in this Guide form the basis for workplace training programs that will lead to the development of competent and confident mental health clinicians who are Aboriginal.

It is also useful more broadly for those involved in Aboriginal health workforce development.

## How to use the guide

The Guide is written and designed to be a practical, useful, up-to-date resource. Users can draw on it to:

- learn about the Training Program, its purpose, history and how it works
- clarify roles and responsibilities of those involved
- discover the best ways to go about preparing the workplace and recruiting a Trainee
- determine which entitlements apply to the Traineeship
- design a realistic on-the-job training program
- find out about setting up support structures and processes for the Trainee and team
- understand the course curriculum that Trainees will be studying
- assist with linking the practical on-the-job training with the more theoretical university study
- ascertain the best way to monitor Program implementation and evaluate Program effectiveness.

This Practical Guide is designed to be web-based. Each chapter has a number of supporting documents and resources. The explanatory text and some of the supporting documents are PDF files and cannot be changed. Other supporting documents are Microsoft Word documents and can be downloaded, modified (for example, specific Area Health Service information and logos can be added) and printed as needed to suit the different teams in the different Area Health Services. Acknowledgment of the original source of these documents is expected when they are adapted for local use.

A limited number of printed copies will be made available to stakeholders directly involved in the Program to introduce them to the Guide. Supporting documents are accessible on an accompanying CD-ROM. New information or changes will be made to the text on the website and alerts sent to users. Users will be encouraged to send useful templates, examples, documents, resources and references to be uploaded onto the website to make them available to other users. A process for approving additions and changes to the website content will be overseen by the NSW State-wide Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program Reference Group.

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### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> NSW Department of Health (2006). *New South Wales: A New Direction for Mental Health*, NSW Department of Health, page 15.

<sup>2</sup> NSW Health (2007a). *NSW Aboriginal Mental Health and Well Being Policy 2006–2010*, NSW Health, page 26.