



Peter Mac

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
Victoria Australia

First Nations Employment Strategy

2024 - 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

The Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, who hold the healing traditions, lore, memories, and hopes of First Nations peoples. Peter Mac recognises the continuing connection to land, waters, and community, and the role these connections play in strengthening approaches to First Nations peoples' health and wellbeing. We honour the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people, Dja Dja Wurrung people, and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nations, on whose lands we meet and work each day, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.



An original design by Marcus Lee Design. This concept is a visual representation of a possum skin cloak symbolising Peter Mac as a place of protection, healing and cultural safety. The background depicts a cloak that is laid out, showing the possum pelts sewn together. The five outer coloured forms represent the bringing together of the five language groups of the Kulin Nation. These interconnecting shapes, and the radiating line work within, symbolise the communication lines between patients and staff, with staff listening to their patients. Pathways lead to the centre of the design, symbolising Peter Mac as the gathering place. This concept visually expresses Peter Mac as a culturally safe place, providing First Nations cancer patients and their families with a sense of belonging, understanding, compassion, warmth and empathy. The artwork was developed in close consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee, RAP Working Group, patients and staff for the 2021-2023 Reconciliation Action Plan.

Message from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee

As co-Chair of the Peter Mac Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee, and Aboriginal Support Project Officer at Peter Mac, I am excited about the First Nations Employment Strategy. It's important for so many reasons and in so many ways to have a targeted approach to attracting and retaining First Nations staff to Peter Mac.

Peter Mac has been making progress in the areas of cultural awareness and cultural safety for First Nations people attending Peter Mac. Our commitment to Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing is at the heart of our Reconciliation Action Plan along with the work being done to ensure a culturally safe and responsive service. Providing tailored processes and engagement plans to increase First Nations staff numbers goes hand in hand with our commitment to reconciliation and Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing. The plan is not only a roadmap to recruiting First Nations staff members but also a document which provides opportunities for staff to flourish and grow through the support and commitment of senior leaders.

A bigger and stronger First Nations workforce at Peter Mac will also provide cultural connection for First Nations staff and community. The impact on First Nations patients, seeing and interacting with more First Nations staff, can only increase feelings of cultural safety and I look forward to welcoming new staff.

Andrea Casey

Aboriginal Support Project Officer
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee Co-Chair
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre



Message from the Executive Director, People and Culture

On behalf of the Peter Mac Executive Committee, I am proud to launch and share with you our inaugural First Nations Employment Strategy for 2024-2026.

I do this acknowledging the various members of the Kulin nation that are the Traditional Custodians of the lands upon which Peter Mac delivers its important services to the community, whilst also acknowledging the connection First Nations people have with these lands, and their history and tradition as inventors and scientists.

This important Employment Strategy has been developed in close consultation with our people, including First Nations staff, and we are pleased to have the endorsement of the Peter Mac Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee. I am indebted to their wisdom and guidance in its preparation.

As a world leader in cancer care, education, and research, we aim to lead the way in providing a culturally safe experience for First Nations people, both those who work with us and those we serve as patients and their families. We do this whilst recognising there is still much more to do to improve access to, and outcomes of, cancer care. This strategy sits hand in hand with our Reconciliation Action Plan and is aligned with the workforce goals of the Victorian Aboriginal Cancer Journey Strategy to see our number of First Nations staff grow and gain greater access to meaningful development opportunities and supports. It also sets our plan to build cultural competence and improve education for our non-Indigenous staff, to reach a new and higher standard of care and respect for our First Nations colleagues and patients.

Cancer does not discriminate and, as such, our working population must always reflect the community we serve and operate in, and the people that need our cancer care, education, and research. Ensuring we have a strong representation of First Nations staff members within Peter Mac is a key part of this commitment.

I personally encourage all our people to embrace this Employment Strategy and consider their role in implementing it. I am proud to share it with you and look forward to collaborating across Peter Mac to bring this strategy to life.

Sean Curtain

Executive Director, People and Culture
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre



Our Journey

Peter Mac is committed to building an organisational culture which values and deepens our understanding of, and commitment to, First Nations staff, patients, families, and communities. We acknowledge that policies, laws, and practices since colonisation have affected First Nations people and caused harm and distrust. We also acknowledge the ongoing dispossession and intergenerational trauma which continue to impact First Nations people today. We recognise that this journey requires space and time to listen, build meaningful connections, and work alongside First Nations people.

As Australia's only public hospital solely dedicated to cancer treatment, research, and education, our responsibility to deliver culturally safe care and promote self-determination for First Nations people is essential. First Nations Victorians are twice as likely to be diagnosed with cancer and three times more likely to die from cancer than other Victorians. On average 301 First Nations Victorians were diagnosed with cancer between 2016-2020¹. Peter Mac is a main care provider, with 269 admissions and 2294 outpatient appointments across campuses attended by First Nations peoples last year. Supporting and investing in our First Nations workforce is important in and of itself, but we know that prioritising First Nations leadership and lived experience also leads to better engagement and outcomes in cancer prevention, early detection, treatment and care for First Nations peoples.

3.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 and over are employed in health-related occupations, with 1.2% of registered health professionals identifying as First Nations.² However, at Peter Mac, First Nations staff currently make up less than 0.005% of the workforce. The overarching objective of the Peter Mac First Nations Employment Strategy is to increase employment participation of First Nations people at Peter Mac to one per cent of the total workforce over the two-year period, in addition to providing supports to current First Nations staff and removing barriers to career progression to ensure that the workforce we build remains strong, with First Nations leadership prioritised. The strategy covers four focus areas (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Actions in the First Nation Employment Strategy cover four focus areas.

We have made the first steps in our journey with the introduction of the Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer in 2016; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and Wominjeka welcome signs installed in the foyer; the introduction of an Aboriginal Support Project Officer role; our first Reconciliation Action Plan in 2020; events for NAIDOC week and National Reconciliation Week; the creation of Peter Mac's possum skin cloak; the introduction of compulsory Cultural Awareness eLearning; the

¹ [Cancer Council Victoria, Cancer statistics and trends for Aboriginal Victorians](#)

² [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, National Indigenous Australians Agency, Tier 3 – Health System Performance, 3.12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the health workforce.](#)

provision of scrubs and lanyards featuring First Nations artwork; cultural leave provisions and dedicated supports through our EAP provider. However, we recognise significantly more work is required to grow and support Peter Mac's First Nations workforce. There is much more to be done to alleviate the impact of the cultural load for First Nations staff, and in educating employees and creating environments and policies that make First Nations employees feel safe, supported, and respected.

Peter Mac is therefore committed to the implementation of this First Nations Employment Strategy, which has been developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and community. Non-Indigenous staff and managers were also consulted to identify gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The strategy has been informed by, and where relevant strongly aligns with, the:

- Peter Mac Aboriginal Cultural Audit 2017
- Victorian Public Service Commission [Barring Djinang employment strategy](#)
- VACCHO [Victorian Aboriginal Cancer Journey Strategy 2023-2028](#)
- [marra ngarrgoo, marra goorri](#): Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical and Wellbeing Research Accord
- Peter Mac Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2026
- VACCHO [Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2022-2026](#)
- Cancer Council [Optimal care pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with cancer](#)
- Peter Mac [Statement of Priorities 2022-2023](#)
- [National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards](#)
- [NACCHO Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cancer Plan](#)
- [The Australian Cancer Plan](#)

The First Nations Employment Strategy will not be static. Our hope for this strategy is that it be dynamic and flexible and that, as outcomes are met and momentum provides fresh opportunities for initiatives around cultural safety and workforce participation, changes can and should be reflected in reporting.

The implementation of the First Nations Employment Strategy will support Peter Mac to become an employer of choice for First Nations people, build our First Nations workforce, and establish a more culturally safe community. Our aims by the end of 2026 are that:

- **First Nations applicants and staff** will be supported and safe within the Peter Mac community.
- **Executive leadership** will have the tools and training they need to lead Peter Mac's cultural safety initiatives by example.
- **Managers** will have the information and resources they need to support First Nations staff in their teams.
- **Team members** will understand their responsibilities to educate themselves, build cultural competence, and promote cultural safety.
- **RAP Allies** will feel confident to promote Reconciliation and Peter Mac's associated strategies, plans, events, and resources to other staff.
- **All of us** will benefit from a culturally safe and inclusive culture, where First Nations employees are valued.

Implementation

Implementation of the First Nations Employment Strategy is a priority of Peter Mac. As actions impact the entire organisation, oversight and accountability will sit across several areas.

People and Culture

The People and Culture RAP Working group will be the key driver of the implementation of this strategy. This working group includes the Executive Director, Director, Organisational Development Manager, Employee Relations Manager, and Diversity and Inclusion Consultants. This group will provide an annual update to the Executive and the People and Culture Board Committee.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee and RAP Working Group

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee and RAP Working Group will have oversight of this strategy, as the development and implementation of a First Nations Employment Strategy is an action under the Peter Mac Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2024-2026. In addition, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee will provide expert cultural guidance on relevant actions in the strategy. A yearly update on the progress of the strategy will be provided to the Advisory Committee and RAP working group.

Executive

The Executive Director of People and Culture will hold other Executive and senior leaders accountable for actions which relate to their divisions and departments.

All Executive Directors have reviewed the First Nations Employment Strategy, recognise their expectations in delivery of relevant actions, and have signed below.

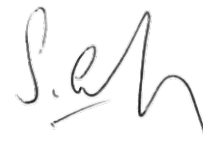
Professor Jason Payne
CEO



Ms Karen Fox
Chief Operating Officer



Mr Sean Curtin
Executive Director People and Culture



Mr Andrew Dimech
Chief Nursing Officer



Ms Libby Secomb
Chief Finance Officer



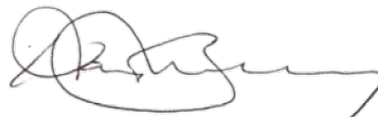
Professor Ricky Johnstone
Executive Director Cancer Research



Dr Sonia Fullerton
A/Chief Medical Officer



Associate Professor Kate Burbury
Executive Director Digital Healthcare Innovation



Associate Professor Dominic Wall
Executive Director Business Ventures





Cultural Safety and Relationship Building

Outline of actions to ensure Peter Mac is a culturally safe space for First Nations staff. Implementation of this focus area will ensure that all staff have the skills and knowledge to contribute to a culturally safe workplace and will require work across divisions to establish strong relationships with relevant First Nations networks.

Outcome Measures

- Increase in the number of staff identifying as First Nations, either in People Matters Survey and/or People Hub.
- Increased participation in the Peter Mac Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network.
- Increase in completion rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Training for both managers and employees.
- Increased staff attendance at relevant events.
- Increased utilisation of 'Day in Lieu of Public Holiday' leave type during NAIDOC Week by staff.

YEAR	PROPOSED ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
2024	1.1.1 Establish a First Nations cultural space, to ensure the Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers have a dedicated space to meet and support First Nations patients, carers, families, and visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Financial Officer • Chief Nursing Officer
	1.1.2 Actively participate in the Victorian Aboriginal Employment Health Network Community of Practice to share information and collaborate with other hospitals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture • Chief Nursing Officer
	1.1.3 Under the guidance of First Nations staff, communicate to all staff the option to identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in People Hub and People Matters Survey. Include information about privacy, who has access to this data, and why we ask for it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture • Communications
	1.1.4 Support senior leadership to lead by example and arrange for them to undertake cultural awareness training through First Nations-led organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • People and Culture
	1.1.5 Support the growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network at Peter Mac. This includes the development of a framework for Employee Resource Groups that ensures groups have an Executive sponsor and dedicated resources. Regularly consult with network to learn more about their specific support needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture

	1.1.6	Establish a network of RAP Allies across Peter Mac who are responsible for promoting Reconciliation and its associated strategies, plans, events, and resources to other staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • People and Culture • Aboriginal Health Unit (CNO)
	1.1.7	Develop, implement, and communicate an anti-racism policy, prioritising consultation with First Nations staff and community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture
	1.1.8	Develop a communications campaign to encourage staff to Acknowledge Country in all relevant meetings; publicise the Acknowledgement of Country guide and example videos .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • Communications (CEO)
2025	1.2.1	Develop a process to identify the cultural learning needs of staff through the analysis of quiz data from the Cultural Awareness Training, feedback from leadership and education programs, and relevant People Matter Survey questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture • Cancer Education (CNO)
	1.2.2	Establish relationships with and support First Nations staff to become members of relevant groups including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Collaborations in Health Research (OCHRe), a national network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers • Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) • Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) • Indigenous Allied Health Australia • National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NAATSIHWP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive
2026	1.3.1	Informed by the findings from 1.2.1 and further consultation, identify if a Cultural Learning Strategy is required for staff and/or managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture • Cancer Education (CNO)
Ongoing	1.4.1	Publicise and increase uptake of the eLearn modules, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Training, for both employees and managers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • Communications (CEO)
	1.4.2	Encourage staff attendance at National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week events, including raising awareness of the available leave provisions to swap a public holiday for a day in NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • Communications (CEO)
	1.4.3	Send delegates to relevant conferences including the World Indigenous Cancer Conference and Lowitja Institute Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference to learn about the latest research, share with the Peter Mac community, and build new relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • People and Culture



Attraction

Outline of actions to ensure Peter Mac is known as an optimal employer for First Nations staff, including the continuation of existing supports and the development and promotion of new resources. This builds on the networks fostered in the Cultural Safety and Relationship Building focus area.

Outcome Measures

- Increased pool of First Nations applicants.
- Increased representation of First Nations staff across a range of roles.
- Increased uptake of the Indigenous Cancer Research Scholarship.
- Increase representation of First Nations students in the Cancer Research Work Experience program.

YEAR	PROPOSED ACTION	RESPONSIBLE TEAMS
2024	2.1.1 Build our understanding of the types of roles at Peter Mac that could be targets for First Nations employment, including identifying areas that see a higher volume of First Nations patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture
	2.1.2 Review and update the Peter Mac Careers website to include a page about First Nations employment providing information about Peter Mac's commitments and available supports. Ensure this resource is mentioned in all new job profiles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture • Communications (CEO)
	2.1.3 Build stronger partnerships with universities to promote the Indigenous Cancer Research Scholarship and review the cultural safety of the program to encourage greater participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Education (Cancer Research)
	2.1.4 Establish new networks and consider cultural safety needs to ensure all five places designated for First Nations secondary school students in the annual Cancer Research Work Experience program are filled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Education (Cancer Research)
2025	2.2.1 Establish a process to undertake targeted recruitment for specific roles and recruitment rounds, including accessing First Nations job boards and social media campaigns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture • Communications (CEO)
	2.2.2 Building on 2.1.1, develop a business case to establish a dedicated First Nation internship, cadetship, or graduate position in areas of highest need, and identify opportunities for support from Victorian Department of Health . Initial scoping anticipates a nursing focus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive • People and Culture
2026	2.3.1 Review and update the Talent Network functionality of the Peter Mac Careers website to establish a candidate pool of First Nations applicants who wish to be considered for roles at Peter Mac, and actively reach out to them when suitable roles become available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture



Recruitment and Onboarding

Outline of actions to ensure the recruitment and onboarding experience is positive and safe for First Nations employees, including the establishment of a key contact in People and Culture.

Outcome Measures

- First Nations staff remain at Peter Mac for at least 24 months following commencement.
- Increased representation of First Nations staff across a range of roles.

YEAR	PROPOSED ACTION	RESPONSIBLE TEAMS
2024	3.1.1 In consultation with First Nations staff and community, develop and integrate into existing management training a First Nations Employment Guide for Managers.	• People and Culture
	3.1.2 Develop a workflow to identify First Nations applicants in the recruitment process, so they can be proactively contacted and offered recruitment assistance.	• People and Culture
2025	3.2.1 In line with 3.1.2, establish a dedicated contact in People and Culture who reaches out to First Nations applicants to offer support during the application and/or recruitment process. <i>Deliver alongside 2.1.2 to ensure that this service is known to applicants.</i>	• People and Culture
	3.2.2 In line with 3.1.2, develop a suite of support resources for First Nations candidates (for example templates for cover letters on how to address selection criteria, resumes, interview guidance) <i>Deliver alongside 2.1.2 to ensure that this service is known to applicants.</i>	• People and Culture
	3.2.3 Connect all new First Nations staff with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network and provide support for the network to establish a buddy program.	• People and Culture
2026	3.3.1 Review the impact of 3.2.2 to build a business case for the appointment of a dedicated First Nations Employment Officer. This role would continue to support First Nations applicants and staff, support managers who have First Nations staff in their teams and drive the development of the First Nations Talent Network proposed in 2.3.1.	• People and Culture



Retention and Progression

Outline of actions to ensure that First Nations staff are supported to develop their careers and skills at Peter Mac.

Outcome Measures

- Increased First Nations staff satisfaction and engagement reported in the People Matters Survey.
- Increase in number of First Nations staff participating in Peter Mac leadership and mentoring programs.
- Increase in the number of career development opportunities First Nations staff are undertaking whilst at Peter Mac.
- Increase in the number of First Nations staff in leadership positions.

YEAR	PROPOSED ACTION	RESPONSIBLE TEAMS
2024	4.1.1 Encourage First Nations staff to participate in existing Peter Mac leadership programs such as Emerging Leaders and People Leadership Fundamentals.	• People and Culture
	4.1.2 Encourage First Nations staff to participate in the Mentoring Program. Where a First Nations staff member is paired with a non-Indigenous mentor, ensure they have completed training on creating cultural safety.	• People and Culture
2025	4.2.1 In consultation with Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, establish and promote a career progression pathway for Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers.	• People and Culture
	4.2.2 Identify and publicise external leadership and professional development opportunities for First Nations staff. Establish a First Nations Career Development Fund to be able to facilitate access to these programs. Identify a position that could provide support with applications.	• People and Culture
	4.2.3 Provide First Nations staff and their managers the option for their Professional Development Review template to be reviewed by People and Culture. <i>The People and Culture contact identified in 3.2.1 could work with managers of First Nations staff to ensure their goals and objectives are met.</i>	• People and Culture
2026	4.3.1 Explore funding options to offer all First Nations staff access to cultural supervision services and culturally safe debriefings.	• People and Culture

	4.3.2	Develop a business case for the appointment of a Director of Aboriginal Health and Support Services (identified position) to expand the capacity and impact of the Aboriginal Health Unit and to increase visibility and support for First Nations programs and staff at a senior leadership level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture • Executive • Board
Ongoing	4.4.1	Offer exit interviews for First Nations staff. Use these findings to inform and adjust the First Nations Employment Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and Culture

Acknowledgements

This strategy was built on a foundation of consultation and the principle of self-determination, and we thank first and foremost Peter Mac's First Nations staff and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee for their guidance and endorsement.

Thank you to all the members of the Peter Mac community who took the time and care to contribute to the development of the First Nations Employment Strategy, including the RAP Working Group and Research Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee.

We extend our thanks and solidarity to all Peter Mac staff for their commitment to taking these important next steps on our journey to Reconciliation.

Language

There is a wide range of nations, cultures, and languages across mainland Australia and throughout the Torres Strait. Given this diversity, respectful language use depends on what different communities find appropriate. For consistency, we have use First Nations people throughout the strategy to refer collectively to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, unless referring to a proper noun such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee. In using the terminology First Nations people, we recognise that there is no single 'First Nations' identity, that individuals may use different words to describe their identity, and that, where possible, traditional place names should be used.

CONTACT

Peter Mac welcomes community feedback or questions regarding our First Nations Employment Strategy.

Please contact:

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