

# Evaluation of Traineeships for Aboriginal workforce development in Victoria

## Summary of findings

**Evaluator:** Australian Healthcare Associates

**Focus:** To evaluate Aboriginal traineeships, cadetships and graduate programs provided through the Closing the Gap and Koolin Balit Training Grants Program

“*Development for the sake of development is useless if there is nowhere to put people.*”  
(Organisational representative)

### Organisational Influences

Pathways from traineeships to employment are more likely to succeed when organisations focus on..

#### Organisational Readiness

- Culturally informed and supportive senior management
- Policies to increase Aboriginal employment
- Zero tolerance to culturally inappropriate behaviour
- Strong connections with Aboriginal community organisations.

#### Targeted and Culturally Appropriate Recruitment

- Advertising through appropriate media and community networks
- Aboriginal Elders and community representatives on selection panels
- Diverse selection methods.

#### Trainee Support

- Use of trained culturally aware mentors
- Clinical supervision and peer support
- Study support and access to resources
- Work readiness support.

#### Career Development

- Reserving positions that become vacant
- Use of 'casual staffing pools' with guaranteed hours per week
- Offer traineeships to existing staff as a development opportunity.

### External Influences

External factors are those which host organisations have limited or no control.

#### Trainee Characteristics

- **Work readiness**—retention in the health workforce is limited for trainees who cannot meet structured demands of working in the health system
- Inadequate **literacy and numeracy** skills limits the opportunity for access to the Program and also for career advancement through further training
- Adverse **personal circumstances** may impact trainees' ability to complete training, continue their roles and develop careers.

#### Program Design and Administration

- **Uncertainty** about timing of **grants availability**
- Lack of clarity around **grant eligibility**, which are seen to be prioritising clinical roles ahead of non-clinical roles
- **Career development** limitations of programs that focus on entry-level positions—further training is needed for career advancement and lack of clarity about career progression opportunities.

## Policy Considerations

- **Lack of funding surety**—Difficulty in planning for program involvement, meeting in-kind costs to support grant recipients and providing post-program employment opportunities.
- **Salary disparities** between Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCHOs) and mainstream organisations, where perceived better opportunities in mainstream organisations may lead to 'poaching' of trained participants from ACCHOs.



The evaluation report is available on the [health.vic](https://health.vic.gov.au) website.  
In your search engine, type 'Koolin Balit evaluations'

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### Other Findings

Of 313 traineeships;



**75.4%**  
(236)

either completed (146)  
or are ongoing (90)



**24.6%**  
(77)

either withdrew (62)  
or did not commence (15)

This profile was similar for ACCHO and mainstream organisations, irrespective of whether the organisation hosted few or many trainees.

Of the 79 total trainees hosted in Hume and Gippsland regions

In these regions, the employment rate was higher for ACCHO hosted trainees

than for mainstream hosted trainees

**54.4%**  
(43)

are considered to have established a career in the Victorian health sector

**94.4%**  
(17 of 18)

**85.7%**  
(36 of 42)

*'A mentor needs to be an experienced person who is culturally ready and culturally acceptable.'*

(Trainee)

*'When recipients start to feel overwhelmed, they don't speak up. It takes a lot of time to build relationships and it's time consuming to get people back on track'*

(Mainstream organisational representative)

ACCHOs were more organisationally ready to accept trainees than their mainstream counterparts with ACCHOs providing more Aboriginal-friendly, accommodating and understanding workplaces.

Racism was identified as an important barrier in the workplace for Aboriginal people and indicates the organisation's cultural commitment.

Both ACCHOs and mainstream organisations had to actively work on securing the support of their local Aboriginal Elders to promote the range of career pathways available through the Program.

Provision of a range of supports to trainees was crucial to Program completion in both ACCHOs and mainstream organisations.

Host organisations combined different strategies and combinations of initiatives from other jurisdictions.

Host organisations suggest there is a need to increase awareness of strategies from other organisations by sharing best practice examples.

The Department could have a greater role in facilitating and supporting network opportunities.

*'I got accused of playing the Koori card'*  
*'I got it from staff members – why are Aboriginals not whites getting this funding? I felt deflated'*  
*'Cultural awareness courses need to be compulsory across all the seniors of departments because that's where it starts.'*

(Trainees)

*'It would be useful to have access to Aboriginal people who went through that particular course, and now work in the area or can provide information about other scenarios/pathways.'*

(Trainee)