



## 2009 VICTORIAN PUBLIC HEALTHCARE AWARD DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES SECRETARY'S AWARD

*The Department of Human Services Secretary's Award accepts entries from new as well as established programs or initiatives that are working to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Victoria. The judging panel for this Award will have experience and expertise in judging aboriginal health and wellbeing initiatives.*

Organisation	Gippsland Lakes Community Health
Entry contact person	Peter Muldoon
Email	peterm@glch.org.au
Telephone	51 558 349
CEO endorsed (Y/N)	Yes

Title of entry	More than just flag raising
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### Abstract

In late May, Lakes Entrance proudly launched the opening of the Spirit Poles project marking the end of Reconciliation Week in the town. The Spirit Poles now stand proudly at the entrance to Gippsland Lakes Community Health and are the first permanent visible expression of local aboriginal culture in Lakes Entrance.

The Spirit Poles, significant in themselves, also symbolize the progress that has been made in the partnership between Gippsland Lakes Community Health and Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association towards improving reconciliation in the town.

The partnership between Gippsland Lakes Community Health and Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association has had three major focuses:

- Better access to health services by the Lakes Entrance Indigenous community
- Increased employment opportunities for Indigenous workers; and a
- Stronger local identity for the Indigenous community of Lakes Entrance.

Through strong and committed leadership from both organisations we can proudly say we are seeing great changes in access to health services by the local Indigenous community; increases in employment of Indigenous workers, growth in Indigenous Health programs; the increased legitimacy of the Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association as an independent voice for the Lakes Entrance Indigenous community.

### Background

The partnership model emerged in January 2005 from a community meeting held between GLCH and local Indigenous community members who were concerned with their community's access to GLCH health services. The Lakes Entrance Indigenous community has historically missed out on much needed funding for health and community support services, and members of the community had become more isolated over the years.

With the support of the GLCH Board and Executive team an agreement was reached committing GLCH to supporting and resourcing a number of initiatives including the establishment of the Lakes Entrance Koori Elders Group (now the lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association). The Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association has met regularly since and aims to progress local reconciliation; provide advice and support to Gippsland Lakes Community Health in shaping its service delivery; attract new funds to expand much needed health and community support services; and strengthen Indigenous and non Indigenous health partnerships.

For its part GLCH recognised that while there was a solid history of working with the Lakes Entrance Indigenous community there was an urgent need to improve this relationship to see improvement in the health and wellbeing of the community.

GLCH needed the support and active involvement of the Lakes Entrance Indigenous community to increase employment opportunities; provide a community space within the GLCH site; shape services and programs to make them more accessible, and strengthen governance structures. Reconciliation lay at the heart of this improvement.

Funding opportunities were becoming available through chronic disease management programs to give impetus to the partnership. Added to this was the commitment of resources and time of key GLCH staff such as the CEO and the strength and goodwill of local Indigenous Elders to make the partnership model work

## **Objectives**

At the initial meeting of the Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Group identified a number of key priorities for the partnership to address: These were: the establishment of a resource or community centre within the GLCH Lakes Entrance site; commitment of reconciliation from the board of GLCH; increased access to medical services; and running of a range of community events and activities.

## **Methods**

Four key processes have been used over the last 5 years to build the partnership model and achieve the original outcomes. These were to increase employment of Indigenous workers at GLCH; increase the number of Reconciliation events and celebrations; increase the range of Indigenous health programs delivered by GLCH or other agencies in Lakes Entrance; resource and support the role of the Lakes Entrance Koori Elders Group (now the lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association).

## **Service improvement and innovation**

So what has changed?

Since the establishment of the Koori Community Centre in 2007 at GLCH there has been significant change in attendance by Koori people to the site and its multiple range of services. Local community have voiced that they feel more comfortable accessing services as the services offered are more culturally appropriate and made more accessible through support from the team working within the Koori Community Centre and other GLCH programs.

Outcomes have included increased level of access to GLCH services by Koorie clients; increased funding for Koori health services such as Healthy for Life/ Aboriginal Chronic Care and Health Promotion and Yoowinna Wurnalung Healing Service; as well as emerging signs of greater harmony within the community; and moves towards local reconciliation occurring.

## **Outcomes**

- Employment: Increase from 2 to 22 Indigenous Staff at GLCH (currently 6.5% of current total EFT at GLCH are Indigenous workers)
- Governance: LEAHA has met continually since 2005 becoming incorporated in late 2007. The organisation has a Board of Management consisting of 9 local Elders and a general membership of over 50. LEAHA and GLCH have a signed Membership of Understanding
- Governance: LEAHA has formal representation on the GLCH Board of management.
- Access: Since 2006 there has been a doubling of Koori client contacts to Gippsland Lakes Community Health including a 50% increase in Indigenous clients accessing allied health services which is significant for clients with a chronic disease. Improvements in clinical outcomes have also been recorded as part of the Healthy for Life/ AHAPCC Chronic Disease and Health Promotion program

## **Status and sustainability**

As demonstrated the outcomes of the partnership model are well advanced. The integration of service delivery, community space and governance provides the model with a sustainable base. LEAH and GLCH are actively seeking both government and corporate sponsorship of its current and planned activities

## **Budget**

GLCH receives \$386,859 dedicated funding for Indigenous Primary Health Care programs for the *Lakes Entrance* community. Of this funding 41% is C'wealth funding with only 15% being recurrent funding. Taking into account all Indigenous funding received by GLCH for all of its sites including a share of regional service delivery programs auspiced by the agency GLCH receives total funding of \$529,442 for service delivery in the Lakes Entrance community. This is less than 3% of total income received by GLCH in 2008/2009.

## **Referees**

**1. Jeff Wilson, Chair Gippsland Lakes Community Health Board of Governance**  
**Ph: 0418 595 903**

**2. Len Hayes SNR Chair Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association**  
**Ph: 51 555 338**

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## **Conditions of entry**

Your submission must meet the Awards entry requirements, otherwise it may be declared ineligible. Entry requirements are available from the website at: [www.health.vic.gov.au/healthcareawards/](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthcareawards/)

## **Supporting material**

You can supply one support document up to three single-sided A4 pages, which may include graphs, charts tables or other illustrative material.

## **Entry layout**

Delete the shaded descriptions before you submit your entry. Use Arial font size 11.