

Media Release

Blak Butterfly: Reforming Emergency Care for First Nations Communities - Centering 'Culture as Health'

Real-world solutions improving the experiences for Aboriginal people attending emergency departments and urgent care centres has just been released for implementation by health services across the Loddon Mallee Region (LMR), Victoria.

Blak Butterfly, an emergency care Best Practice Framework (BPF) includes 15 components of best practice ranging from simple building design measures through to Aboriginal leadership and increasing Aboriginal health workforce.

Led by Yorta Yorta sisters Mishel McMahon and Jean McMahon, Blak Butterfly is the culmination of funding from the Department of Health - Aboriginal Health Innovation Initiative HSP project and twelve months of leadership from First Nations-led researchers who worked closely with 17 Health Services, 5 ACCHOs and 24 AHLOs across the LMR; who generously participated in over 115 Narrative interviews, monthly Governance meetings and touch base sessions to develop real-world solutions.

'There are so many good things in Blak Butterfly that can be picked up and implemented by health services across the State of Victoria, that would have a major impact for them and the Aboriginal people in their communities. If we are able to replicate this to some degree across the state of Victoria, we're going to see dramatic change for emergency health care of Aboriginal people.' **'I see nothing but positive health outcomes coming from the Blak Butterfly best practice framework'**. **Craig Taylor, Deputy Chief Health Advisor, Aboriginal Health & Wellbeing Division, DoH.**

This framework is required to address urgent areas of concern promptly, including Cultural Safety Education across LMR, Specialist First Nations Mental Health Triage Service for culturally informed assessments, culturally informed 'left to sober' clinical protocols and safe transport home plans for First Nations people.

'Fundamentally, Cultural Safety is the responsibility of Government and mainstream health services, and not really the responsibility of Aboriginal community to redress the inequities that come from a lack of Cultural Safety'. 'There are broad benefits to be had in investing in culturally safe health services'. **Shaun Lohoar, Acting Manager, Systems and Service Innovation, Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Division, DoH.**

An overarching principle for Blak Butterfly has been privileging First Nations voices. Blak Butterfly through an understanding of salutogenesis positions 'Culture as Health', meaning spaces which are culturally strong for Aboriginal people hold the highest potential for improved health outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

This is a story of strength and generosity by Aboriginal people and health professionals and reflects the aspirations of local health services and research partners to embrace an inclusive, culturally safe future. Blak Butterfly is a powerful and transformative emergency care best practice framework for First Nations communities in the LMR.

'Blak Butterfly has given the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander a voice to the workers in the Healthcare sector, and for years we have been wanting to make changes and recommendations for a better healthcare system that supports all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be able to close the gaps and increase the health outcomes for our people' Charmain Anton, Aboriginal Health Manager, Swan Hill District Health.

Blak Butterfly advocates for (not limited to):

- ACCHOs in the LMR to provide 'walk in' health services (face to face and virtual) to address preventable presentations to emergency departments.
- LMR health services to transition from paper based to electronic integrated health systems.
- First Nations expertise / knowledge included in LMR health services mandatory child protection reporting processes.
- ACCHO exemption from Modified Monash Model (MMM) for integrated Aboriginal health services delivered across LMR.
- Bendigo Health Mental Health which services the whole LMR includes a Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs Hub, for patients presenting with dual diagnosis.
- ACCHO medical clinics access more GPs through Federal Government (2024) Pre-Fellowship Program (PFP) through a co-ordinated implementation

The Loddon Mallee Health Network (LMHN) and Violet Vines Marshman Centre, La Trobe Rural Health School research team would sincerely like to thank all those who prioritised their time, knowledge, expertise and wisdom, all of which resulted in the development of Blak Butterfly – First Nations Emergency Care Best Practice Framework. View the framework [here](#).

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