

Key dates

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Monday 3 July | Nominations open |
| Friday 4 August | Nominations close at 5 pm |
| August - October | Nominations assessed |
| November | Finalists announced |
| Tuesday 5 December | VicHealth Awards ceremony |

Enquiries

For further information about the 2017 VicHealth Awards visit www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/awards

Telephone (03) 9667 1315

Email awards@vichealth.vic.gov.au

How to enter

- Download the Awards Category booklet and determine the category you wish to nominate in.
 - Carefully read the awards criteria, eligibility and conditions of entry to ensure your nomination is eligible.
- Download the Awards Tip Sheet for ideas on shaping and refining your nomination.
- Complete the entry form below. **All fields must be completed for your nomination to be accepted.**
- Before uploading your nomination, you must name your files using the following convention:
 - Nomination form – **Category_Organisation_Nomination title**
 - Eg. Promoting healthy eating_VicHeath_Seed Challenge
 - Supporting documents – **Category_Organisation_Nomination title_supporting document number**
 - Eg. Promoting healthy eating_VicHeath_Seed Challenge_1
 - Eg. Promoting healthy eating_VicHeath_Seed Challenge_2
- **Submit your nomination online at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/awards**
- You may include up to up to four separate electronic supporting files as an appendix to your nomination. This could include:
 - photographs/images
 - supporting graphs, data and evidence
 - promotional material
 - Please note - An appendix should only contain supporting information. All material that directly addresses the selection criteria should be included in the body of your nomination form. Please note submissions will be sent to the judges electronically, so where possible, please ensure all appendices are submitted online.
 - **All supporting files are to be uploaded using the separate upload fields at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/awards. Please do not insert any attachments or images into this Word document.**

1. Organisation and contact details

a. Main organisation for all awards correspondence

(in the event this entry receives an award, these details will be used)

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Organisation | City of Whittlesea |
| Address | 25 Ferre Boulevard |
| Town/Suburb | South Morang |
| State | Victoria |
| Postcode | 3752 |

b. Main contact for all awards correspondence

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Name | Benjamin Waterhouse |
| Position | Team Leader Aboriginal and Cultural Diversity |
| Phone | 9217 2179 |
| Email | Benjamin.waterhouse@whittlesea.vic.gov.au |

c. Head of organisation

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Name | Liana Thompson |
| Position | Acting/CEO |
| Email | Liana.Thompson@whittlesea.vic.gov.au |

d. Please complete the following table if this nomination is a joint submission between multiple partner organisations. Add as many rows as required

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Entrant organisation 2 | Whittlesea Reconciliation Group |
| Entrant organisation 3 | |
| Entrant organisation 4 | |
| Entrant organisation 5 | |
| Entrant organisation 6 | |

2. Nomination details

a. Entry title

| | |
|---|---|
| Please write the entry title as you wish it to appear on all promotional materials associated with the award | City of Whittlesea Sorry Space and National Sorry Day Event |
|---|---|

b. Nomination web address

| | |
|--|-----|
| Please enter a web address that relates specifically to the nominated project (if applicable) | N/A |
|--|-----|

c. Budget

| | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Please select the budget range of your nominated project | | |
| \$0 - \$50,000 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | \$50,001 - \$500,000 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$500,001+ <input type="checkbox"/> |

d. Timeframe

| | |
|---|---|
| Over what time period did this project take place? (e.g. month, year, to month, year). <i>NB: entries must have been active between 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017 to be eligible</i> | For over 15 years the City of Whittlesea has worked closely with the Whittlesea Reconciliation Group in the planning, delivery and evaluation of an annual National Sorry day event. The 2017 event which is nominated for an award was held on May 26 following months of health promotion planning. |
|---|---|

e. Award category

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Please list the award category you are entering | Improving Health Equity |
|--|-------------------------|

f. Population groups targeted

List population groups targeted eg. Koori/Aboriginal Victorians, CALD/new migrant groups, local communities, workforce, women, children etc.
Maximum 100 words

The City of Whittlesea National Sorry Day event involves the Mayor, Councillors, the CEO and Council Staff alongside members of our Aboriginal and non-Indigenous community.

Whilst the project is driven by and attracts a high percentage of local Aboriginal families, the target audience for the day are school children, Council workforce and the local wider-community including stolen generations members and our diverse communities and people of faith.

g. Health promotion setting

In what setting did your project/initiative/campaign take place? Eg. Education, workplace, sporting club, arts, local government area etc.
Maximum 100 words

The event is an open community event held within the City of Whittlesea since the event is on Council grounds it is also the work place for over 1000 Council employees.

3. Assessment criteria

Please note, all five criteria, including the executive summary must be completed. Each carries equal weighting when being assessed. See the [Awards Category booklet](#) for specific points that should be addressed in your responses.

1. Executive summary

Outline the project, aims and objectives, settings, timing, population groups, health promotion activities and outcomes achieved

Maximum 400 words

The City of Whittlesea Sorry Space, along with the annual Sorry Walk and the Reconciliation Fire Ceremony are health promotion initiatives worthy of consideration for the 2017 VicHealth Awards – Improving Health Equity category.

In partnership with the Aboriginal led Whittlesea Reconciliation Group, the City of Whittlesea annually delivers a health promotion program concluding in an event that is both educative, committed to sustaining community change and improving social cohesion.

Held on 26 May 2017 the City of Whittlesea Sorry Day initiatives offer a unique and vital opportunity for Whittlesea’s local community to engage with Aboriginal cultures, Australian history, and the legacy of the Stolen Generations; therefore addressing the underlining local socio-economic and political context which contributes to the health inequities experienced by local Aboriginal communities and individuals.

The Sorry Day Program has been delivered in some format for over 15 years and will continue into future years. The program has strong Aboriginal led governance and core funding support from Council. The program (or a similar program) could be easily replicated in other LGA’s.

“Sorry Day for me as a Ngemba and Wiradjuri man is about the remembrance and recognition of our Stolen Generations, it is a day of healing for our people. The acknowledgement and acceptance of our history and the City of Whittlesea’s commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their culture, captured the very essence of reconciliation for me as an Aboriginal man. It really was a beautiful and heartfelt ceremony, that I was so happy and proud to have been a part of the day”. Local Indigenous resident.

The initiative aims to reduce health inequities by;

- Promoting and strengthening Aboriginal peoples’ sense of belonging and connectedness
- Building networks and relationships within and across communities
- Enhancing education in local communities
- Fostering freedom from race-based discrimination and
- Improving health outcomes through the development of mutual respect, increased empathy and breaking down barriers between



groups

This initiative is a significant contemporary Whittlesea-based, school engagement program and public event that seeks to improve health outcomes and strengthen the reconciliation process.

The program also has an ongoing component as the Sorry Space is a permanent fixture and part of the approach to the City of Whittlesea Civic Centre. It includes a seating area, a plinth for fire ceremonies and a paved area in the shape of a teardrop, symbolising the tears of pain and loss. The tear also represents the joy experienced when members of the Stolen Generation reunited with their family members.

2. Catalyst for change

Be a catalyst for change that has potential to result in positive and sustainable improvement in the health of Victorians

Maximum 800 words

A history of colonisation and discrimination has long negatively affected the health of Aboriginal Victorians. The City of Whittlesea's and Whittlesea Reconciliation Groups 2017 Sorry Day program addresses the underlining local socio-economic and political context which contributes to the health inequities and poorer health outcomes experienced by local Aboriginal communities and individuals. The program does this through increasing empathy, raising awareness, breaking down barriers between groups and increasing organisational accountability; all of which are key themes for action in addressing Race-based discrimination within VicHealth's Building on Our Strengths Framework.

Commencing in early April and concluding on National Sorry Day 26 May the 2017 program involved;

- Aboriginal led governance and programming
- An educative school art activity
- Traditional Welcome to Country by a Senior Wurundjeri Elder
- Koorie Youth (expert) Panel
- Mayoral address
- Annual Sorry Walk - led by highly respected Elder Uncle Herb Patten
- Reconciliation Fire Ceremony
- Lowering of Council flags to half-mast
- Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners oral presentation in 10 community languages
- Coordinated social media and communications campaign
- Comprehensive evaluation.

Changing the underlying attitudes that contribute to race-based discrimination and health inequities are a central component of Council's 2017 Sorry Day program. The Koorie youth panel spoke about the ongoing impact that colonisation continues to have on them and their peers. Increasing community understanding of such issues is the first step in a catalyst for change that can affect health outcomes for local Aboriginal people. To capture any attitudinal change and gain participants feedback on the program, community members were invited to reflect on their experience of Sorry Day.

To undertake this reflective process a creative dream catcher based evaluation tool was developed. This tool involved people physically answering a series of questions by winding coloured wool around a question based pin wheel. By answering questions participants simultaneously produced a dream catcher wheel. The dream catcher wheel is comprised of coloured interwoven wool which documents participants' suburb, demographic information, impact of the event, education outcomes and thoughts for future events.

Evaluation results from the program indicate that

- 100% of respondents recognised the importance of Sorry Day
- 76% of respondents stated the event helped "explain the history

of the day”

- 94% of respondents “felt the reconciliation fire ceremony was an important part of the event”
- 91% of respondents agreed the “Sorry walk was a valuable and educative” component.

To supplement the survey based evaluation format undertaken on the day people were invited to reflect on the day and email their thoughts about how the event generated a positive change for them. Below is one of these email responses;

“As a non-Aboriginal person, today’s Sorry Day ceremony was one of the most profound and moving experiences I’ve ever been involved with. The commitment by the City of Whittlesea to recognise the rich Aboriginal heritage of the local area as part of Sorry Day is genuine and this became very obvious to me today. The ceremony was a great educational experience for me to really appreciate the connection to the land, country and culture. I feel proud to work for an organisation that is on the front foot and taking great strides in its journey of reconciliation” Council Program Manager

20% of the participants in 2017 were new arrivals to the Whittlesea community from a wide range of diverse backgrounds. Subsequent feedback through our External Multicultural Advisory Group confirms how empowering the event is for new arrivals whose knowledge and understanding of the issues around the Stolen Generations and the significance of Sorry Day are developed at the event. The Sorry Space provides a focal point for dialogue with our recent arrivals on the history of Aboriginal disadvantage and the importance of cultural maintenance.

As the Sorry Space is prominently located at Council’s Civic Centre’s main entrance over 50,000 people annually walk passed or through the Sorry Space and plaque as they enter Council buildings.

This project is part of a wide ranging set of policies, programs and actions Council is pursuing to address some of the health inequities suffered by our local Aboriginal community members. Many but by no means all are contained within our 2017 Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and Aboriginal Employment Pathways Strategy. With guidance from the WRG, Council continues to look to the future needs of our local Aboriginal community. Council has set an ambitious target of have 2% of all staff identify as Aboriginal by 2020. The Sorry Day program is an important cultural immersion and educative activity that helps create a culturally safe workplace for the current Council Aboriginal workforce. The project looks to the future needs of the target group through the promotion of strong cultural identity, an increased sense of belonging and a measurable increase in employment outcomes for local Aboriginal people. Employment (occupation) is a key determinant of health inequities and one Council is directly addressing.

3. Evidence-informed actions

Demonstrate a firm commitment to health promotion by using evidence-informed actions and initiatives

Maximum 800 words

In May 2011 the Victorian Stolen Generations organisation Connecting Home, gifted a plaque to the City of Whittlesea to acknowledge Council's efforts in commemorating National Sorry Day.

The City of Whittlesea is home to the second largest Aboriginal population in metropolitan Melbourne and numerous families and individuals who are members of the Stolen Generations. It was widely acknowledged that the gift presented an opportunity for the City of Whittlesea to develop a series of community-led initiatives to ensure the plaque was accepted in the spirit of reconciliation and to honour the legacy of our local Stolen Generations.

To do this Council initiated a community lead journey to design and create a permanent commemorative space in which to display the plaque. In partnership with the Whittlesea Reconciliation Group (WRG), Council engaged highly respected Aboriginal artist Glenn Romanis to undertake the artistic design and construction of a space that could promote reflection, understanding, healing and health promotion.

For too long the Australian history of colonisation has had a detrimental impact on the health of Aboriginal Victorians. Council's decision to accept the plaque and ask the WRG to lead the processes and decision making around the housing of the plaque is an example of Aboriginal led mental health promotion. The result is the City of Whittlesea Sorry Space, a space used to facilitate community involvement in acknowledging and understanding our past in order to engage with a future dedicated to reconciliation.

The Sorry Day program's developmental process and delivery are both examples of addressing the social determinants of health inequities by having local Aboriginal community members make a range of definitive and lasting decisions regarding the program. At all stages of the Sorry Spaces and Sorry Day's development the WRG had full autonomy.

WRG working in partnership with Council has created a sustainable process of engagement of a range of stakeholders which enables people to increase control over and improve their health.

Whilst the Sorry Space and Sorry Day program is Aboriginal led and governed, the program is equally evidence-informed. Programmatic aspects such as the deliberative inclusion of a walk to include physical exercise in the program, healthy eating material and smoking cessation material is available during the event.

4. Innovation and leadership

Exemplify innovation and leadership in taking action to improve and promote health and reduce chronic disease and/or address emerging health issues

Maximum 800 words

Leadership is provided by the Whittlesea Reconciliation Group (WRG) which are an Aboriginal led group who function as a key reference group to Council. They create opportunities to increase understanding of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture by bringing all people together to support reconciliation. WRG have spoken movingly about the pride and confidence that has been engendered in the community they represent at having the City of Whittlesea Sorry Space, the annual Sorry Walk and the Reconciliation Fire Ceremony as permanent features in the municipal landscape. They are sustainable symbols that show the local Aboriginal community that they are recognised, remembered and acknowledged. It is one element in the suite of actions and initiatives happening locally that are helping restore respect and dignity.

Innovation is exemplified in the broader community empowerment as demonstrated in the numbers who come each year, join in the Sorry Walk and the Reconciliation Fire Ceremony held at the Sorry Space and go away better informed and empowered to take the message of reconciliation back to their homes, workplaces and schools. In 2017 over 250 people attended the event with a majority being non-Aboriginal. The event specifically engages with local schools so that students are involved in the reconciliation process through educative activities provided as part of the event. Almost 50% of 2017 participants were young people. Since the creation of the Sorry Space more than 1,000 students have been exposed to the educative activities. Evaluations of their experience demonstrate that they are empowered to speak about the reconciliation process and act as informal reconciliation champions

The preventable chronic disease that affects Victorian's and Whittlesea's Aboriginal populations is well known to VicHealth and others. In attempting to close this gap and improve health outcomes Council has been on an innovative, creative, Aboriginal protocol-observant journey that has resulted in the Sorry Space and 2017 Sorry Day program.

Realising the initiative required a tentative, thoughtful process that acknowledged the pain, suffering and sensitivities of the Stolen Generations experience; Council brokered an outcome that enabled others in our community to be involved in a dignified and meaningful collective response that is in essence reconciliation.

The Sorry Space provides an opportunity for reflection and is a symbolic acknowledgment of past wrongs and injustices inflicted upon Aboriginal people, in particular the Stolen Generations. The Sorry Space includes a paved area in the shape of a teardrop, symbolising the tears of pain and loss, the tear also represents the joy experienced when members of the Stolen Generation reunited with their family members.

Further, the Sorry Space is paved with ochre coloured Castlemaine slate, surrounded by a band of bluestone. Topographical lines are carved into the stone, representing the Darebin Creek and the Plenty River. The design also incorporates two large leaf-shaped red gum seats and a plinth



to hold a carved wooden bowl used for smoking ceremonies.

5. Value for money

Demonstrate value for money relative to the health outcomes achieved

Maximum 800 words

The initial capital investment to create the Sorry Space was the most significant financial investment but will be seen as a modest investment that will return great health benefits to the target groups.

The 2017 Sorry Day program inclusive of the former mentioned components was completed with a modest budget of \$5,000 and is extremely effective in relation to its financial investment.

Another low-cost component of the program is the social media coverage that Council and the WRG generate. In 2017 Facebook Posts prior to the event reached over 2,100 people and twitter feed during the event also reached over 4,200 people. Event pictures posted online reached approximately 3,000 people and almost 4,000 people watched the live post of the Reconciliation Fire.

The Reconciliation fire is performed by Wurundjeri Elder and Traditional owner, Ian Hunter. After traditionally starting the fire Uncle Ian passed the sacred flame to the City of Whittlesea's Acting CEO Russell Hopkins; the fire is then carried into the Sorry Space and presented to Aboriginal Elders, symbolising Council's apology to the Stolen Generations and commitment to reconciliation.

The City of Whittlesea National Sorry Day event involves Councillors, the CEO and Council Staff alongside members of our Aboriginal and non-Indigenous community. The whole-of-organisation commitment to reconciliation is reflected in Council's recent RAP barometer survey results that show 96% of staff have participated in a Council arranged reconciliation activity, well above the national average of 73%.

Every year the whole organisation reflects on and enacts a process with our local community that is dedicated to reduce the preventable chronic disease that unnecessarily affects our local community.

As Mick Gooda, the Close the Gap campaign co-chair, stated; *"There is no quick fix for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and well-being. We need rock solid commitment with structures in place that will survive terms of government"*. The City of Whittlesea's and Whittlesea Reconciliation Groups ongoing Sorry Day event and supportive components such as the school based activities and media reach are an innovative and evidence informed program that has rock solid Council commitment regardless of Councillor terms.