

HAVE YOU ASKED  
THE QUESTION?

***“Are You  
of Aboriginal or  
Torres Strait Islander  
Origin?”***



## HOW TO USE THE “HAVE YOU ASKED THE QUESTION?” RESOURCES TOOLKIT

This Resources Toolkit contains information about the development of the NEPCP ‘Have You Asked the Question? “Are You of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin?”’ resources and instructions on how these items can be used within your agency to support self-identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. If you would like further information about these resources, please contact Sally Berger, NEPCP CthG Coordinator on 9450 2616 or [sally.berger@bchs.org.au](mailto:sally.berger@bchs.org.au)

PLEASE HELP US TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF  
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VICTORIANS



## HAVE YOU ASKED THE QUESTION?

*“Are You of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin?”*



### Background

The NEPCP undertook a number of pieces of work in order to inform the Closing the Health Gap project at NEPCP including the 'Collecting Stories' Project. This project documented individual Aboriginal experiences of the primary health care system in the Northern region. Self-identification was highlighted as one of the key themes that arose from the project. A booklet and DVD were produced. The video can be found at: <http://youtu.be/-x1HPd663QU> and booklet at [www.nepcp.org.au/nepcp-collecting-stories-booklet-2012](http://www.nepcp.org.au/nepcp-collecting-stories-booklet-2012)

### 2012 NEPCP Working with Aboriginal People and Communities Survey.

A very comprehensive workforce survey was developed that aimed to identify trends, strengths and opportunities to develop the skills and capacity of NEPCP member agencies. The Survey elicited almost 500 responses and provided valuable qualitative and quantitative data.

The Executive Summary and full Survey report can be found at: [www.nepcp.org.au/survey](http://www.nepcp.org.au/survey)

## The NEPCP "Have You Asked the Question?" Resources

### Why are resources needed alongside training?

Whilst training is a valuable component of improving self-identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members at North East Primary Care Partnership (NEPCP) agencies, the 2012 NEPCP Working with Aboriginal People and Communities Survey (see Background information) found that even with training staff members can have difficulty consistently asking the identity question. The Survey provided evidence as to why staff members do not ask 'the question' and why they stop asking the question including the lack of a consistent approach to correct wording to be used by staff.

In order to tackle some of the issues raised in the Survey which included; use of consistent wording, the incorrect belief that asking the question may be discriminatory or staff stopping asking the question because they are challenged by a community member about why the question is asked, NEPCP felt that a range of resources could be developed to further support self-identification within agencies. Alongside the training, a number of permanent resources were devised to be on-going reminders of the need to continuously 'ask the question' using a consistent approach based on the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) guidelines.

### Why the resources had to be developed locally in consultation with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation?

In order for the NEPCP to continue to work within a Human Rights framework, it is necessary to seek guidance from an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation as experts in Aboriginal health and the issues facing their community members. The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

(VAHS) is the largest provider of health services to the Aboriginal community in Metropolitan Melbourne. Established in 1973 to address the specific medical needs of the Victorian Aboriginal communities, VAHS provides a comprehensive range of medical, dental and social services. Developed in partnership with VAHS, these resources aim to highlight the issue of self-identification with a secondary objective being to promote VAHS as one of the local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations that services clients and has a number of sites located within the City of Darebin, one of the Local Government Areas within the NEPCP catchment.

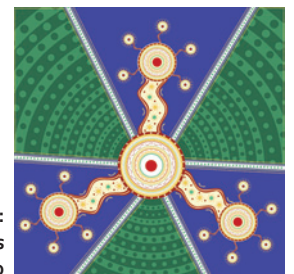
From the 2012 Survey it was found that there were low levels of knowledge of all Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations by the NEPCP workforce. The VAHS logo and contact details have been clearly documented on each mouse-mat and accompanying A5 sticker. By noting VAHS on the mouse mat and accompanying sticker, it is envisaged that this is one means to raise the profile of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, within NEPCP agencies. The same Survey also noted low levels of referrals to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations which would be expected based on the low knowledge of Aboriginal controlled organisations. Again the double-intention of having VAHS details clearly documented on the mouse-mat and stickers means that service providers have quick and easy access to contact details which can then be provided to community members or other workers.

When a community member identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander as part of optimal practice, workers should be able to provide a range of choices, where appropriate, including whether the community member presenting is aware of or would like contact details for their local Aboriginal health service. Not all community members will want to attend an Aboriginal controlled or Aboriginal-specific service, some community members may prefer to use mainstream services. The important

thing is that all community members are aware of the service options available to them. If the community member wants to attend or would like the VAHS contact details, these resources enable easy access to the VAHS phone number and website details.

### Use of locally developed artwork on the resources.

In order to develop locally appropriate resources, it was important to ensure local artwork was incorporated in the resources and acknowledgement provided to the artist. Through key informant interviews done initially and on-going conversations with Aboriginal workers and community members, the use of locally designed artwork when developing local resources was viewed as a key element in the resource production process. A number of workers and community members expressed disappointment when agencies used 'imported' artwork from other states (eg. Northern Territory/Queensland) or regional areas which was not appropriate either for use in Victoria or in the local area. NEPCP commissioned the development of a logo with meaning for use in all its Closing the Health Gap/Koolin Balit work. Gary Saunders from Indigital developed this logo work based on the theme 'Culture is Health'. From this design, Gary was able to provide multiple elements, one element being incorporated into all the 'Have You Asked the Question? "Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin?" resources. Both the mouse-mat and accompanying stickers have acknowledgement of the artwork. Due to size of the monitor/phone stickers it was not possible to make acknowledgement of the artwork.



Pictured right: The NEPCP 'Culture is Health' CthG Logo

## What resources were developed?

In conjunction with the NEPCP CtHG Working Group, the resources developed are;

- Monitor and keyboard stickers,
- Desk-top handset phone/ mobile phone/mobile device stickers
- A mouse-mat and accompanying A5 sticker.

### How to Use the Resources

These products are designed to be distributed alongside the 'Have You Asked the Question?' "Are You of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin?" Training. All resources include an artwork element from the locally designed NEPCP Closing the Health Gap logo that was specifically developed for the NEPCP by Gary Saunders at Indigital.

There is no restriction on how these resources can be used. Although suggestions for use of phone/monitor sticker placement have been given in this booklet, agencies are encouraged to locate the stickers on items or within workspaces that are the most appropriate for individual agency staff needs.

## MOUSE-MAT AND A5 STICKER

The mouse-mat and accompanying sticker have been designed to consider and address a number of issues that were raised by NEPCP agency staff when completing the Survey (2012).

### Mouse-Mat:

The mouse-mat (See Figure 1) includes;

- 'Are You of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin?' wording in accessibly placed print as a reminder to staff to use consistent wording as per AIHW guidelines every time
- Locally designed artwork element. Feedback from agency staff and consumers showed the importance of incorporating locally designed artwork.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags. The use of the flags on the resources aims to promote the importance of these symbols.
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) logo and contact details. Easy access to VAHS phone and website details for staff use but also to provide contact details to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members as a service option.
- The listing of practice reminders for staff such as be sensitive, use exact wording, don't guess, ask everyone etc... reflecting some of the issues raised in the Workforce Survey.

This mouse-mat can be placed alongside your keyboard on your desk. The mouse-mat is environmentally friendly as the mouse mat's base is made from 100% recycled car tyre rubber.

Figure 1: Mouse-mat Sample

Mouse mat base is made from 100% recycled car tyre rubber

Be sensitive  
Be confident  
Respect privacy

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Don't guess  
Ask everyone  
Use exact wording

Figure 2: A5 Sticker Sample

### A5 Sticker:

The A5 sticker (see Figure 2) can be placed on a wall, notice board, desk, filing cabinet or other area that is within easy sight when workers are making contact with community members.

If equipment/furniture is being leased or there are concerns about sticker removal in the future, Blue-Tack can be placed on the back of the sticker to attach it to your desk, board etc. This will ensure you have no difficulty removing it in the future. The sticker can be peeled and placed on a thick piece of cardboard and pinned to a noticeboard or other place where it is in view when you 'Ask the Question'.

The A5 sticker contains local art work, VAHS contact details, tips on how and why we need to 'Ask the Question' as well as providing you some simple responses if either a community member or non-Aboriginal person asks you why are 'Asking the Question'. These stickers are made from durable material that should resist general wear and tear.

Why do you need to ask?  
Determining if a person is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin based on appearance is unreliable. You should ask all members of a family as Aboriginal families are diverse. Sometimes only one partner or only one parent may be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. The only sure way to find out is to ask.  
**Be sensitive**  
An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person may not self-identify for a number of reasons and this may include past experiences of racism or not feeling culturally safe to disclose this information at initial contact. Reassure each individual that their information remains confidential. Respect privacy. You may wish to ask again next time.  
**Be confident**  
There is nothing discriminatory about asking the question. It's the same as asking a person how old they are or what sex they are. If the person was born in Australia, ask them if they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

Possible Staff Responses:  
The answer you provide may depend on the conversation with the consumer and whether they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.  
**Why do you need to ask that question?**  
"This is a routine question that we ask of everybody using this service"  
"We need to collect information about the people who attend our service and what services we provide"  
"It isn't right for us (service providers) to guess or make assumptions about each person. The only way to get this information correct is for us to ask this question and people answer for themselves"  
"We want to make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access some of the services available to 'close the gap', like health checks, immunisations or being able to see an Aboriginal liaison worker if they wish"

Be sensitive  
Be confident  
Respect privacy

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Don't guess  
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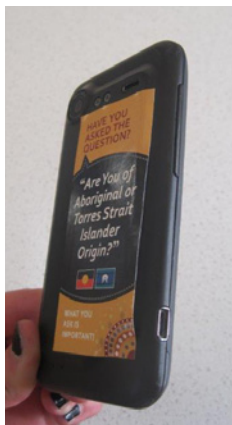
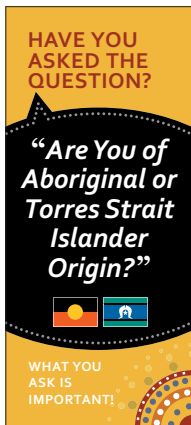
## PHONE HANDSET OR MOBILE PHONE STICKER

This sticker (See Figure 3) has been designed to be placed on the hand-set for a desk-top based phone as per Picture 1. The sticker can be placed on the back of a mobile phone handset (Picture 2). The sticker can also be used on the cover of an iPad (See Picture 3) or other mobile tablet device or a lap-top (See Pictures 4&5) as a reminder when undertaking home-visiting or external assessments where a worker may need to input data on a mobile device/lap-top. The stickers are made from a durable material that should resist general wear and tear.

Figure 3:  
Phone Handset  
Sticker Sample

Picture 1:  
Phone handset placement

Picture 2:  
Sticker placement on iPhone or Android phone



Picture 3:  
iPad/Tablet front cover  
placement



Picture 4:  
Laptop Placement on front lid



Picture 5:  
Placement of both computer monitor  
and phone sticker on a laptop keyboard.



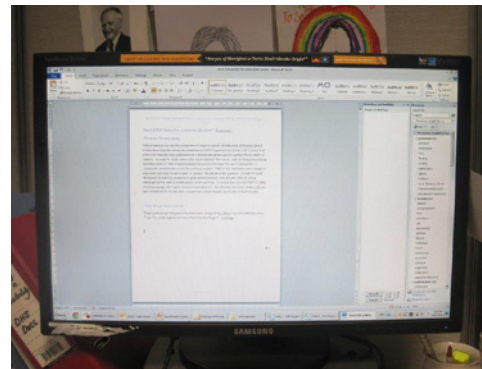
## COMPUTER MONITOR AND KEY BOARD STICKER

This sticker (See Figure 4) has been designed to be located on the outside of a computer monitor in a horizontal fashion as per Picture 6. The sticker can also be placed on the top of a desk-top keyboard (Picture 7) or the keyboard of a laptop (Picture 5) above the keys. These stickers are made from a durable material that should resist general wear and tear.

Figure 4: Computer Monitor/Keyboard Sticker Sample



Picture 6: Computer monitor sticker placement



Picture 7: Keyboard placement



### To Obtain 'Have You Asked the Question?' Resources:

These resources were developed by North East Primary Care Partnership, in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. The resources were distributed alongside the NEPCP training sessions held in August 2014. Further resources may be available by contacting Sally Berger, NEPCP CtHG Coordinator on 9450 2616 or [sally.berger@bchs.org.au](mailto:sally.berger@bchs.org.au)

To obtain a copy of this booklet please go to:

[www.nepcp.org.au/self-identification-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-consumers-1](http://www.nepcp.org.au/self-identification-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-consumers-1)

### Other Resources:

Further resources to support self-identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members at agencies are available on the NEPCP website under Aboriginal Health and Well-being at [www.nepcp.org.au/self-identification-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-consumers-1](http://www.nepcp.org.au/self-identification-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-consumers-1). Resources include documents and/or links to a Sample Policy and Procedure, links with permission to the three VACCHO videos on self-identification, the AIHW National Best Practice Guidelines for Collecting Indigenous Status in Health Data Sets, sample posters, the NEPCP Action Plan with suggestions to improve self-identification within agencies and other documents or resources that support self-identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.



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### Acknowledgements:

Thanks go to the many people who contributed in some way to the development of these resources.

- The community members who participated in the 'Collecting Stories' project who highlighted self-identification as an issue and the almost 500 staff who responded to the 2012 NEPCP Working with Aboriginal People and Communities Survey that provided valuable feedback on this area of work.
- A major thanks to the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, in particular Jo Atkinson, who provided valuable feedback and advice throughout the development of the resources.
- Many thanks to Aboriginal community workers and mainstream agency employees who provided feedback on the initial draft of the resources-too many people to mention here.
- Thanks to Gary Saunders who designed the digital artwork element incorporated into these resources, which comes from the larger NEPCP Closing the Health Gap logo.
- Thanks to the NEPCP Closing the Health Gap (now Koolin Balit) Working Group who has supported the recommendations and activities that have been proposed by the NEPCP CtHg Coordinator.



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NEPCP acknowledges that we work on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation