



CASE STUDY:

Bairnsdale Regional Health Service

Bairnsdale Regional Health Service (BRHS) located in eastern Victoria, services the East Gippsland Shire area and is 280 kilometres from Melbourne. BRHS has a strong commitment to improving the health and care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which is demonstrated through their involvement in the Lighthouse Hospital Project.

During Phase 2 of the Lighthouse Hospital Project (2014 - 16), BRHS committed to improving the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients. The project team reviewed frontline staff knowledge and confidence to ask: "Are you (is the patient) of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?". The review revealed that:

- 70% of frontline administration, allied health and ward clerk staff were not trained to ask the question
- 50% of staff did not feel comfortable asking patients "Are you (is the patient) of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?"
- Staff also did not feel comfortable answering questions about why they were asking the question.

A bedside audit of patients in 2015 showed that only 21% of patients reported being asked the question "Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?" on admission. Approximately 50% of patients reported they were not asked the question, and approximately 33% were unsure.

To improve identification, the project team trained frontline staff responsible for collecting information on admission or during registration in outpatient services, on how to ask the question. The training included local cultural background information for cultural context and understanding and training on how to ask patients "Are you (is the patient) of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?". The training demonstrated how to ask the question, normalised the process of asking the question and provided an opportunity for staff to openly discuss barriers to identifying patients.

A bedside audit in October 2017 revealed that 88% of patients reported being asked "Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?" Only 6% reported not being asked and 6% were unsure. BRHS' success in training staff motivated them to develop a national e-learning module to support hospital staff across Australia to ask the question.

For more information about the Asking the Question of Origin e-learning module, visit heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/aboriginal-health

