Queensland Health – Addressing institutional barriers to health equity

26 November 2018

In March 2017, the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland (ADCQ) and the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council (QAIHC) presented Queensland Health with a report Addressing Institutional Barriers to Health Equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Queensland’s Public Hospital and Health Services.

Since receiving the Report in March 2017, Queensland Health has put in place a number of strategies to address institutional racism in the health system.

Statement of Action

- The Statement of Action towards Closing the Gap in health outcomes (the Statement of Action) commits all areas of Queensland Health to undertake organisational, system-level changes to build sustainable cultural capability across the organisation.

- The Statement of Action was developed and agreed through a collaborative partnership between Hospital and Health Boards and the Department of Health. It was launched in December 2017 and is available on the Queensland Health website.

- The system-wide change required under the Statement of Action must be driven from the highest level – the Hospital and Health Boards and Executive Management must champion change and carefully monitor implementation. It is only with this level of leadership that sustainable change will be made.

- The vision of the Statement of Action is to develop a health system that offers culturally appropriate, culturally capable, safe and responsive health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

- The Statement of Action identifies the need to take a coordinated approach to embedding system-wide change – building cultural capability and reducing institutional racism in the health system.

- The Statement of Action commits all areas of Queensland Health to three key actions:
  1. Promoting opportunities to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in Queensland Health leadership, governance and workforce.
  2. Improving local engagement and partnerships between Queensland Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations.
  3. Improving transparency, reporting and accountability in Closing the Gap progress.
Closing the Gap Health Plans

- All Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) have been required to develop *Closing the Gap Health Plans* to demonstrate activities across the three key areas in the Statement of Action.
- In recognition of the importance of addressing institutional racism across the health system, the responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Plans sits with the HHS Boards and Executive.
- HHS Plans are currently being analysed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Branch to develop a system-level response.

Key Performance Indicators

- In order to improve transparency and accountability, HHSs are required to report against two new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific key performance indicators (in relation to low birthweight babies and workforce) from 2018-19.

Workforce

- HHSs are currently developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Action Plans in response to Queensland Health’s *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework 2016—2026*.

Refining the matrix audit tool

- On 12 November 2018 ADCQ, QAIHC and Queensland Health hosted a workshop of experts to review the matrix, with an aim to having a tool which can be used repeatedly to measure change and improvements in the health system over time.
- Queensland Health is supportive of using the tool in the future.