



Workforce mutuality in Melbourne's west

This position statement outlines HealthWest Partnership's commitment to achieving workforce mutuality in the health and community sectors across the western region of Melbourne in order to improve access, equity, health and wellbeing outcomes for diverse communities.

What is workforce mutuality?

Workforce mutuality describes the extent to which the diversity of an organisation or a sector's workforce reflects the diversity of the community. Workforce mutuality is mutually reinforcing for both the community and for health and community organisations. It increases the effectiveness of organisations to support consumers from diverse backgrounds, while improving the social determinants of health by creating new employment pathways and greater engagement with community. Workforce mutuality ensures the participation of people from diverse backgrounds in their own healthcare system.

HealthWest Partnership has identified workforce mutuality as a key priority that is closely related to health literacy, community participation and cultural responsiveness.

Why is workforce mutuality a priority for HealthWest?

HealthWest Partnership's catchment is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) regions in Australia. Across the communities we service 33.0% of the population were born in a non-English speaking country while 41.2% spoke a language other than English at home. There are also over 3,000 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in our catchment area. (ABS Census, 2011) Community members are diverse in other ways, including but not limited to gender and sexual identity, ability, age and religious affiliation.

Workforce mutuality is essential to promoting the equity of diverse communities. A growing body of evidence shows that a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community it serves brings with it unique knowledge, skills and connections that can result in positive health and social outcomes. Workforce mutuality can have the following benefits for diverse communities and the organisations that serve them:

- More responsive and skilled workers.
- More responsive organisations and systems.
- Greater diversity of leadership at board and senior executive levels.
- Improved access to services.
- More jobs, training and employment pathways.
- Greater innovation and new markets.
- Greater understanding, trust and communication with diverse communities.

What is HealthWest doing?

HealthWest Partnership is committed to enhancing workforce mutuality in the health and community sectors across the western region of Melbourne. We recognise that workforce mutuality is not an endpoint but rather an ongoing process and we commit to engaging in this process. HealthWest will support capacity building initiatives and collaborations across our membership that work towards increasing workforce mutuality. We will advocate for workforce mutuality among our members, encouraging the principles and practices of mutuality to be adopted and embedded at all levels of an organisation, including HealthWest's own internal practices and policies. HealthWest will also involve diverse communities in this ongoing process, enabling them to identify their own community needs and to help plan and implement new practices that will help increase our collective workforce mutuality.