

# position statement committing to truth telling on the National Day of Mourning public holiday

Sep 2022

## Background

The Prime Minister has declared a one-off public holiday on 22 September 2022 for the National Day of Mourning for Queen Elizabeth II.

As an organisation, cohealth understands there are a range of views surrounding this public holiday and we support our staff whatever their view.

Our mission as an organisation is clear: we work to improve health and wellbeing for all, and to tackle inequality in partnership with people and the communities they live in. Colonisation is increasingly understood to be a social determinant of health, which continues to directly impact many of the migrant, refugee and First Nations communities that we serve.

Over 200 years of dispossession and colonisation of these lands has had significant well documented detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As a large community health service, we understand our responsibility to improve the health and wellbeing inequity that exists between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people.

cohealth envisages a time where the rights, sovereignty, cultures and lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are recognised and respected by all Australians. Our vision for reconciliation is one in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have social, health and wellbeing equity, achieved through an understanding of our shared history, deep listening, ongoing learning and reflection.

## cohealth's position

In respecting the importance of truth telling and reflecting cohealth's commitments to reconciliation and health equity, we are offering coworkers the option to substitute this public holiday for another day, should they wish.

Going forward, cohealth will also offer the substitution option to coworkers for the annual King's Birthday public holiday in recognition of the British Monarchy's impact on Australia's colonial history.

cohealth staff who choose to work on 22 September will be invited to use the time for self-led learning via a range of relevant materials about the impacts of colonisation on First Nations peoples

Earlier this year, cohealth introduced a 'change it ourself' initiative, offering coworkers the opportunity to substitute the 26 January public holiday – which for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a day of mourning – for another day.

cohealth will continue to advocate for an inclusive celebration of our national identity, and until the date is officially changed, we will continue offering coworkers the power to change it themselves.