Working in the Third Space: Bridging between cultures in Aboriginal mental health
“I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we meet on today. I acknowledge the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders both past and present.”
- The largest country health service in Australia covering 2.5 million km²
- 65% of WA’s Aboriginal population live in WACHS areas.
- 7 regions, vast distances and spread of population.
- 40% of state ED presentations
- Integral partner for telehealth services
Mental Health Services

54 FTE: SSAMHS and AMH

- Kimberley – Broome, Kununurra, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek
- Pilbara – South Hedland, Karratha, Newman
- Midwest – Geraldton, Carnarvon, Meekatharra
- Goldfields – Kalgoorlie, Esperance
- Wheatbelt – Northam
- Southwest – Bunbury, Busselton
- Great Southern – Albany, Narrogin, Katanning

Outreach to surrounding areas and communities
Aboriginal Mental Health Workers are part of the multidisciplinary team and are fully integrated within MHS.

Their role is to strengthen cultural competence of the MHS and facilitate access between services for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities.

Leadership provided by regional Aboriginal Mental Health Coordinators (AMHC).

AMHCs form the WACHS Aboriginal Mental Health Leadership Subgroup providing information, advice and cultural guidance on the implementation of mental health services at the local, regional and across WACHS.
Bhabha theorised 3 cultural spaces;
- the dominant,
- the minority, and
- A 3rd cultural space where people interact in a hybrid cultural context.

- Aboriginal cultures are diverse, dynamic and evolving.
- Aboriginal people have a holistic view of health that includes physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.
- Culture and identity are central to our perceptions of health and ill health.
Key Themes:

- **Culture** - Cultural Competence and Culturally Informed Practice
- **Our People** - Consumer Focused Care
- **Respect with Dignity** - Substantive Equality

Principles:

- **Be Strong** - Build strength and resilience
- **Learn** - Enhance knowledge and health
- **Listen** - Consult with communities and respond
- **Trust** - Engage in internal and inter-agency partnerships
- **Work Together** - Co-locate, collaborate and communicate

Artwork thanks to Denise Ellis
Partnerships

- Foundation of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} space.
- Partnerships support the successful delivery of appropriate services in a collaborative manner.
- Many ongoing partnerships exist across regions including AMSs, NGOs, alcohol and other drug services, Education, Police, child protection and corrective services.
“Mural Art Project 2016”

- Partnership project between Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service (KMHDS) and North Regional TAFE.

- The aim of the project is to engage consumers of our service to design and paint a mural artwork on the fascia of the KMHDS Clinic Building in Broome.
Partnerships
The Aboriginal Traditional Healer can play a significant role in the mental health of Aboriginal clients and family members. The process for engagement of an Aboriginal Healer is an accepted part of MHS delivery if requested by the client or family.

The Healer is endorsed by an appropriate local Aboriginal Elder and any costs or expenses are approved by the AMHC, client’s Case Manager or the Mental Health Manager.

The AMHW and the family will take care of the arrangements for healing because only an appropriate Aboriginal person can facilitate this process.

The AMHW may accompany and be present during the healing if requested by the client/family.
Impact on WACHS MH Staff

- Mandatory cultural awareness training
- Commitment to two way learning is essential
- Mental Health Managers, clinicians and the AMH workforce have worked together to develop trust, respect and acknowledgement of culturally informed practices
“This coming together in the third space has enabled a culturally secure service, improved client health outcomes, more efficient and effective service delivery, ensured more Aboriginal consumers stay on country and improved consumer satisfaction thereby ‘closing the gaps’ in the mainstream mental health system and, in the context of Aboriginal engagement with services, addressing inadequacies of the traditional medical model whilst consistently delivering services attuned to the local community”

Tessa Grimshaw
Thank you

- Email: sharon.clews@health.wa.gov.au
- Acknowledge the entire AMHW
- Aboriginal Mental Health Leadership Subgroup
  - Vernon Dann (Kimberley)
  - Katie Papertalk (Pilbara)
  - Violet Evans (Midwest)
  - Sidney Carruth & Raylene Cooper (Goldfields)
  - Glenda Humphries & Tessa Grimshaw (Southwest)
  - Lee-Anne Woods (Great Southern)
  - Leonie Dick (Wheatbelt)
  - Sharon Clews & Laura Veleff (Area Office)