

Position Description

Position title	Senior Aboriginal Practice Lead
Program/Unit	Nanyubak Unit – First Nations Practice and Partnerships, Office of the CEO
Classification	SCHCADS Level 6 – Dependent on qualifications & experience
Position reports to	Nanyubak Unit – First Nations Practice and Partnerships

The position/s will only be open to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander applicants.

The filling of this position is intended to constitute a special/equal opportunity measure under section 8(1) of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) and s 12 of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) and s 8(4) of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)

Organisational context

Established in 1997, MacKillop Family Services (MacKillop) strives to ensure all families are supported to provide children with a safe and permanent home, and the best possible start to their lives.

Continuing the child and family welfare programs of our three founding agencies – the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of St Joseph and the Christian Brothers – we provide early intervention programs to support the most vulnerable families, and provide education, disability support, home-based care and out of home care for vulnerable children and young people in Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

MacKillop has approximately 2400 staff, operating out of more than 50 sites, and has forecast annual revenue for the 2026/2027 financial year over to \$340 million.

Like our founders, we are deeply committed to our work, and are driven by social justice. We believe every child should be protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation, and are a child-safe organisation that is committed to protecting and advocating for the best interests of children and families across all our programs.

Our work is underpinned by our values, and by a deep understanding of the impact of trauma, informed by the Sanctuary Model. Sanctuary is a blueprint for organisational change, which supports organisations to provide a safe, non-violent environment for people affected by trauma. It also supports staff and carers to form communities that are safe and caring, and to maintain a culture that reflects these qualities at every level within the organisation. MacKillop is the only licensed provider of training in the Sanctuary Model in Australia.

MacKillop is deeply committed to promoting diversity. Our diversity encompasses differences in race or ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, intersex status, sexual orientation, language, age, religion, socio-economic status, relationship status, physical and mental ability, thinking styles, experience, and education. We believe that the wide array of perspectives that results from such diversity makes us more creative, flexible, accessible and productive.

Our purpose

MacKillop Family Services continues our founders' passionate commitment to social justice – to work for the rights of children, young people and families to be safe, to learn, feel nurtured and connected to culture. We provide high quality services to promote healing from trauma and loss, and to enable hopeful futures.

MacKillop Family Services will care compassionately, respond large-heartedly and advocate courageously.

Our vision

Children, young people and families are welcomed and supported by MacKillop to be empowered and thrive.

Our values

We commit to the following five foundational values which we continue to embed in the culture of our organisation and practice:

JUSTICE. We believe in the right of all people to experience respect and to have access to quality services irrespective of sex, race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, marital status, disability, sexuality or age. We advocate for inclusiveness and social justice in the wider community and commit to these principles across our organisation and all services we provide. *We believe in the right of all people to be treated justly and fairly.*

HOPE. We commit to creating positive and hopeful relationships where people find meaning in their experiences and relationships and are able to learn, explore their strengths and create possibilities for growth and change. *We seek to foster hope that assists people to find meaning.*

COLLABORATION. In our work with individuals, families and other organisations and groups, we commit to working in a collaborative spirit through cooperation, coordination, partnership and empowerment. *We commit to working in a collaborative spirit through cooperation, coordination, partnership and empowerment.*

COMPASSION. Compassion is an attitude of the heart, an expression of our shared humanity and a deep desire to alleviate another's suffering. We commit to creating an attitude of openness to others and to their circumstances. *We seek to foster compassion, an attitude of the heart and a response to exclusion and suffering.*

RESPECT. We value ourselves and other people, the earth and all creation. We seek to listen and learn from each other and build relationships with respect, being proud of what we hold in common and with understanding and tolerance of our differences. *We seek to act with respect with regard to each other, the earth and all creation.*

Our Sanctuary Commitment

Our values are brought to life through our commitment to the Sanctuary Model. Sanctuary is an evidence-supported, whole-of-organisation framework that guides how we practice as an agency. Sanctuary enables a shared language, knowledge, and response to the impact of trauma and loss on all of us.

Our eight Sanctuary Commitments are as follows:

- Non-Violence - Mean what you say and don't be mean when you say it
- Emotional Intelligence - Look out for yours and other people's feelings
- Social Learning - We all learn from, and teach each other
- Democracy - Everyone is heard
- Open Communication - Be honest and share information
- Social Responsibility - We all help each other ... It takes a village to raise a child
- Growth and Change - Open to new ideas and ways of thinking
- Cultural Humility - We practice deep, ongoing self-reflection to cultivate safety for all

Position purpose

The Aboriginal Practice Lead, working with Aboriginal children, young people, and families, is a member of the Nanyubak Unit – First Nations Practice and Partnerships. The role reports to the National Director, Nanyubak, and is based at the Cecil Street South Melbourne office, working across metropolitan and regional MacKillop service areas.

This position is a key contributor to the **National Agreement on Closing the Gap priority targets**, particularly in addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. It recognises the importance of a coordinated, culturally informed, and cross-sector approach to service delivery.

The role is responsible for raising awareness of:

- **Culturally safe and responsive practice** across all service areas, ensuring Aboriginal children, young people, and families receive support that respects their identity, culture, and connection to Country.
- **The significance of kinship systems, family, and community connections**, and their central role in the safety, wellbeing, and development of Aboriginal children and young people.
- **The impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, and systemic disadvantage**, and how these continue to influence current outcomes for Aboriginal communities.
- **Best practice approaches to Aboriginal child and family welfare**, including Aboriginal self-determination, cultural authority, and community-led decision-making.
- **Strategies to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in care**, including early intervention, family strengthening, and culturally informed placement practices.
- **Organisational capability and accountability** in embedding Aboriginal perspectives, building cultural competence, and strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).
- **Advocacy and system reform opportunities** that support improved outcomes for Aboriginal children, families, and communities in alignment with Closing the Gap priorities.

Primary objectives

The Aboriginal Practice Lead will provide culturally safe, professional child and family counselling and advocacy support services based on trauma informed cultural healing practices in supporting recovery from complex trauma and assist in establishing connections with culture, family, mob, and broader communities of care. The role operates in consultation with the broader clinical team within MacKillop Family Services and the National Director, Nanyubak Unit- First Nations Practice and Partnerships.

The Aboriginal Practice Lead aims to assist children and young people to recover from harmful impacts of complex trauma (current, transgenerational, and intergenerational), child sexual abuse and/or family violence, and assist families, communities of care and communities of practice to support children and young people in the healing process through culturally sound healing, professional practice and therapeutic outcomes.

Key result areas and responsibilities

- Provide strong leadership, vision and cultural oversight in line with MacKillop's values and sanctuary principles.
- Establish, maintain and liaise with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, including ACCO's, families and community members.
- Ensure effective processes of engagement and participation in the delivery of MacKillop services, by breaking down the barriers that exist between First Nations families and mainstream service providers.
- Provide Cultural Healing Based Practice & Counselling to Aboriginal children and young people based on identified needs, consultation, and capacity.

- Review and monitor Cultural Support Plans and compliance, to maintain and support ongoing implementation and identify, raise and address any constraints.
- Develop, nurture and maintain strong respectful relationships with Aboriginal Elders and communities.
- Provide secondary consultation and reflective practice for carers and other professional staff.
- Maintain relevant and appropriate record keeping.
- Maintain up to date knowledge of professional trends and literature relevant to the areas of child development and the impact of trauma, ~~on clinical work with children, young people and families,~~ family violence, mental health, drug and alcohol, disability, or other trauma related behaviours.
- Assist with developing educational and therapeutic groups for parents and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within OOHC settings.
- Participate and assist with organisation-wide service provision and development and culturally sensitive, trauma informed training, quality assurance mechanisms and improvement frameworks for trauma informed services delivery and assist with the promotion and delivery of culturally safe programs.
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with key internal and external stakeholders, particularly with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and the Department of Families, Fairness & Housing (DFFHS) case workers.
- Improve health and well-being outcomes including reunification processes and advocate for Aboriginal Family Led Decisions Making (AFLDM) to be promoted for Aboriginal children & young people in Out of Home Care (OOHC) as they rebuild cultural connections and wider community and kin connections.
- Ability to travel is required.
- Undertake other relevant duties as required.

Key selection criteria

The incumbent will have:

- Demonstrated lived experience, with strong knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal culture, values, and community protocols, alongside a deep awareness of the contemporary issues impacting Aboriginal children, young people, and their families. This includes an understanding of cultural identity, connection to Country, kinship systems, and the ongoing effects of intergenerational trauma, systemic disadvantage, and social inequities.
- Ability to apply this knowledge in a respectful, culturally safe manner, supporting positive outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people, and families through culturally informed practice and engagement.
- Demonstrated extensive knowledge and understanding of the issues impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, their families, kin and communities, including those related to identity, culture, and connection. This includes the ability to recognise the ongoing effects of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, systemic disadvantage, and social determinants of health and wellbeing.

- Proven capacity to communicate effectively, respectfully, and sensitively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, applying culturally safe and trauma-informed approaches. This includes building trust, fostering genuine relationships, and engaging with individuals and communities in a way that honours cultural values, traditions, and lived experiences.
- Demonstrated ability to work with individuals, families, and communities from a strength-based culturally responsive perspective.
- Effective communication skills and the ability to manage priorities in a structured and organised way.
- Strong capacity to develop and maintain culturally responsive community connections and partnerships.
- Deep understanding knowledge of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles, Victorian Child Protection system, Out of Home Care legislation, National Agreement on Closing the GAP priority areas, Victorian Treaty Legislation, Yoorrook Justice Commission Recommendations and standards and practices.
- A Degree in either Family Therapy, Social Work, Psychology or Counselling.
- Counselling experience, working with Aboriginal children, young people, and families in a therapeutic setting with the foundation approach focussed on building connections back to cultural strengths, if previously unknown or disconnected from.
- Demonstrated practice knowledge in areas relevant to working with traumatised and vulnerable Aboriginal children, young people and families which may include child development and the impact of trauma including cultural trauma, mental health, family violence, drug and alcohol, disability, or other trauma related behaviours.
- Evidence of a well-developed understanding of attachment and trauma theories.
- Willingness to gain further knowledge of current theory, practice and issues related to complex trauma, both historical and current environments for Aboriginal children, young people, and families.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with a demonstrated capacity to work collaboratively with others and exercise influence in a diversity of contexts.
- Ability to participate collaboratively and constructively within teams of peers, staff, and other stakeholders, as well as initiative and effective personal judgement when working alone.

Other information

The incumbent is required to:


- Sign and actively abide by MacKillop's Code of Conduct.
- Observe and actively support MacKillop's P.8 People and Workplace Policy.
- Observe and fulfil health and safety responsibilities as contained within 'WHS-P-001 Responsibility Statements' document.
- Attend mandatory and other training as required.
- Actively participate in MacKillop's Bid Management process as required.

- Participate in and promote continuous quality improvement processes.
- Promote an environment that is culturally safe and strengths focussed.
- Abide by principles and commitments of the Sanctuary Framework.
- Incorporate cultural safety into your practice with Aboriginal families.

The incumbent must possess a:

- Valid and current Driver’s Licence.
- Valid and current Working with Children Card.
- Valid and current NDIS Worker Check (for NDIS risk assessed roles).
- Satisfactory criminal history check conducted by MacKillop Family Services.

Approval

Director or General Manager’s full name:	Esmai Manahan	Date:	16 June 2026
Director or General Manager’s position title:	National Director, Nanyubak Unit – First Nations Practice and Partnership		
Incumbent’s full name:			
Incumbent’s signature:		Date:	



MacKillop Family Services acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia’s First Peoples and as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we live, work and play. We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge all Aboriginal children, young people, families and staff who are a part of MacKillop Family Services.



MacKillop celebrates and draws strength from diversity and respects the dignity of all people. Every person at MacKillop has the right to be safe and to be treated justly. We value every person’s ability, cultural or linguistic backgrounds, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, intersex status, relationship status, religious or spiritual beliefs, socio-economic status, and age.