



Southern Cross Health Society

MĀTAURANGA MĀORI AWARD

FINALIST



From very small beginnings, Southern Cross Health Society's commitment to te ao Māori has grown until it is now part of the organisation's DNA.

Southern Cross Health Society is a not-for-profit health insurer with almost 700 staff around the country.

Diversity and Inclusion Forum co-chair Rudo Greissworth says the challenge for Southern Cross was to find a way to include the richness and nuances of Māori culture into a corporate world that requires structure and processes. The work began with the formation of a Diversity and Inclusion Forum that has grown and expanded based on staff feedback and experience.

Based on feedback from last year's annual diversity and inclusion survey sent to the entire organisation, the forum created a dedicated group to focus solely on te ao Māori, as an employee support service and educational priority.

“Through this work, we have been able to support our employees and broaden their multicultural world view. We have achieved this by celebrating, educating, and uniting ourselves in the common desire to see the advancement of Māori, and to see their

culture and language thrive. This in turn has made our workplace a more harmonious and supportive place to work,” says Rudo. The group has developed a strategy to grow the organisation’s commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and oversee cultural engagement for all employees. Initiatives have included the opportunity for employees to learn te reo, engaging with them on important dates on the Māori calendar, weekly guided meditation sessions using whakatau hinengaro scripts from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa) and the roll-out of intensive cultural competency training called Te Kaa, facilitated by Maurea Consulting. Time spent organising and taking part in these initiatives is considered work time and participation is encouraged by leaders.

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The Diversity and Inclusion Forum is sponsored and supported by Chief of People & Strategy Officer Vicki Caisley. “She supports us by attending our monthly meetings, keeps us aligned to the overall business strategy, and chooses our forum chairs each year,” says Rudo. “Vicki is also considered to be a member of the te ao Māori rōpū, but she leaves the leadership to its other members. Our success is a shared result of many hours of work done by many hands. He rau ringa, e oti ai.”

Feedback from employees has been overwhelmingly positive. A project co-ordinator commented, “I do not have Māori whakapapa and I used to be at a loss at how to engage with kaupapa Māori and be an ally. Seeing Southern Cross leaders support my personal growth and education is so reassuring. I realised through this application that we have such huge aspirations. I see our desire to do what’s best for our employees, our commitment not only to the use of Māori tikanga, but how to apply context to its use as a real sign of maturity and respect. The most powerful aspect for me personally has been joining our Kapa Haka rōpū, in which I have found a family and a sense of belonging.”



THE AIM

Southern Cross Health Society identified a passion for te ao Māori in its workforce and wanted to find a way to translate the richness and nuances of culture in a corporate world that requires structure and processes.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- A Diversity & Inclusion Forum was formed alongside a Kapa Haka rōpū as a safe place to work collectively and shape engagement from within the organisation.
- Following staff feedback, the forum created a dedicated group to focus on te ao Māori as an employee support service and educational priority.
- Te reo Māori classes were offered to all employees alongside the development of internal te reo resources.
- Weekly guided meditation sessions using whakatau hinengaro scripts from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa are incentivised through the employee wellbeing rewards system.
- Senior leaders completed the Te Kaa cultural course.

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- 200 employees signed up to the weekly whakatau hinengaro (guided meditation scripts inspired by Te Wānanga o Aotearoa).
- 19 employees have graduated from a fully funded Te Ara Reo course (in partnership with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa). In 2020 16 employees took part, and this year 22 people enrolled in Level 2, and 30 in Level 4 courses.
- 20 senior leaders completed the Te Kaa cultural competency course in 2020 and 60 leaders have been enrolled in 2021, with plans to continue the course for all levels of leadership.

KEY LEARNING

“Our success is a shared result of many hours of work done by many hands. He rau ringa, e oti ai.”

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

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