



Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement Action Plan 2023-2025



AHWPF

Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing
Partnership Forum



VACCHO



Department
of Health

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the strength of Aboriginal people across the Country and the power and resilience that is shared as members of the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge Aboriginal people as Australia's First Peoples.

We acknowledge the impact of colonisation to this day and seek ways to rectify past wrongs, including through truth-telling and the development of treaty. We acknowledge that Victoria's treaty and truth-telling processes may result in reforms addressing systemic injustice including reforms relating to this Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Action Plan. We recognise that treaty will have wide-ranging impacts for the way we work and will provide a framework for the transfer of decision-making power and resources to Aboriginal control. We are deeply committed to Aboriginal self-determination and to supporting Victoria's treaty and truth-telling processes.

We acknowledge this Action Plan was developed on Aboriginal lands and recognise the richness and diversity of all Traditional Owners across Victoria. Aboriginal people and communities have cared for Country, Songlines, waterways and sky for thousands of years. Holistic practice of Aboriginal health and healing is an inherent part of Aboriginal culture and resilience in surviving colonisation.

We pay our deepest respect and gratitude to ancestors, Elders, and leaders—past and present. They have paved the way, with strength and fortitude, for our future generations.

Pictured: Wurundjeri Country



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Foreword

Together, we are proud to jointly lead the Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum to work together in reforming the healthcare system and commit to shifting decision-making about Aboriginal health and wellbeing to Aboriginal people.

We know it is time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make the decisions that affect them and their communities. Aboriginal health must be held in Aboriginal hands, where it can be managed in a holistic and culturally appropriate way, as it was for over 60,000 years.

The development of the Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Agreement and this document, its first Action Plan, is an important step forward in achieving the best health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people.

Victoria has a long and proud history of Aboriginal Community-controlled healthcare where healthcare for Community is delivered by Community, and no one is turned away. The Agreement and Action Plan seeks to take this legacy forward by strengthening the Aboriginal Community-controlled sector while building a mainstream sector that is free of discrimination, is culturally safe, and where the specific needs of Aboriginal people are recognised and delivered upon.

This process began when the Partnership Forum's Aboriginal members decided the priorities we should focus on and has continued during the development of our inaugural Action Plan.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap rightly prioritises creating formal partnerships so that governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people embark on shared decision making. Community voices must be at the forefront of decision-making and old ways of working where Aboriginal people are not in the driver's seat in developing policies and services, are done away with.

This Action Plan is drawn from extensive contributions from Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations who provided ideas, experience and invaluable expertise. Further strengthening this foundation are valuable insights from the Department of Health and mainstream health services. This combined effort has delivered an Action Plan we all stand behind. This Action Plan is both ambitious and achievable.

Our challenge as a Partnership Forum is to collectively ensure that we deliver on this plan and in doing so uphold our promises to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Victoria. This will require the commitment of all parties and close working among Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, government and mainstream health services in the spirit of shared decision making.

The Agreement, this first Action Plan and the wider Partnership Forum can serve to continue something that has been ongoing for millennia; Aboriginal people in Victoria caring for their Community, bound by strong connections to Culture and Country.

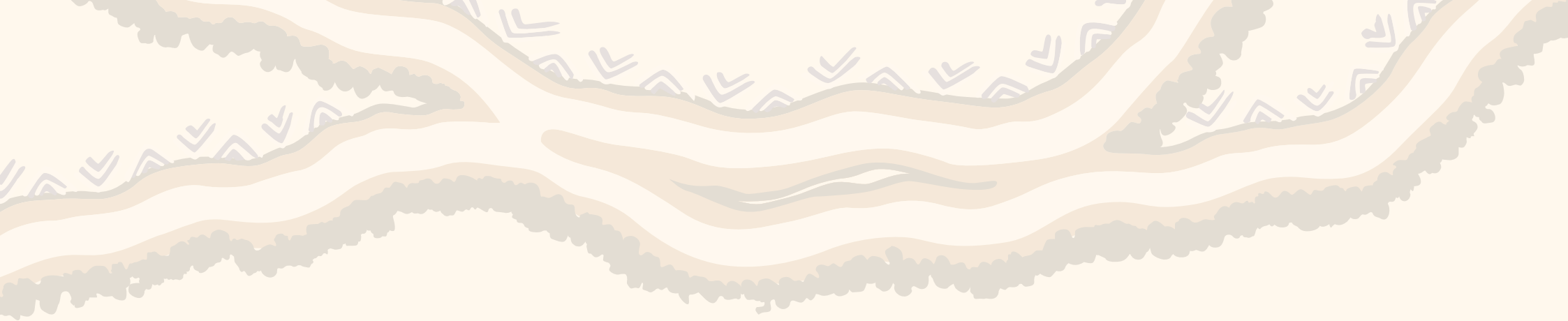
It is our privilege to be part of it.



The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Health
AHWPF Co-Chair



Michael Graham
VACCHO Chairperson
AHWPF Co-Chair



Introduction

The **Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum** (AHWPF) is the lead decision-making body for Aboriginal health and wellbeing in Victoria and is co-chaired by the Chairperson of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and the Victorian Minister for Health.

AHWPF members, comprising the Victorian Aboriginal Community controlled health sector, the mainstream health sector and the Victorian Department of Health, identified a set of priorities for reforming the health system to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal people living in Victoria (see Appendix 1)

One of the priorities was the development of a 10-year **Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement** (the Agreement), which was endorsed in principle in 2022. The Agreement is a commitment from AHWPF members to work together to implement the key reforms through the development and implementation of two-year **Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Action Plans** (Action Plans). The Agreement and Action Plans are strongly aligned to Victoria's commitments under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (see Appendix 2).

This is the first of the recurring Action Plans and stipulates what actions AHWPF members must take in 2023–2025 to reform the healthcare system for Aboriginal people living in Victoria. This Action Plan has been guided by comprehensive Community consultation through 1:1 sessions, workshops and public feedback (see Appendix 3).



The actions in the Action Plan address five domains and fifteen self-determined priorities (see Appendix 1) to improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing outcomes.

Domains:

1. Prevention and early intervention are central to health
2. Culturally safe healthcare
3. A self-determined health system
4. Working from a shared evidence base
5. Building a sustainable health sector

In 2023/24, a **data dashboard** will also be developed to effectively and transparently monitor progress towards domains and outcomes.

It is acknowledged that Treaty and Truth processes in Victoria may have a significant impact on Government policy, governance and funding across all areas that affect Aboriginal people, including reforms relating to the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement and Action Plans.

The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Action Plan will be reviewed and amended based on the commencement and progress of Treaty negotiations in Victoria as well as findings and recommendations made by the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

The AHWPF commits to amending the Agreement and Action Plans, policy and governance as required to align with progress in Treaty negotiations and acknowledges opportunities to progress actions through the Victorian Treaty process and the self-determination fund. This will include ensuring Action Plans are sufficiently flexible to take into account the broad and changing environment.

Domain: Prevention and early intervention are central to health

The below priorities and accompanying actions seek to better enable Aboriginal people living in Victoria to participate in early intervention and prevention programs. We know that a focus on prevention is crucial to achieving improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Actions in this domain focus on understanding where prevention funding is going in Victoria with the intent of strengthening investment in the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector for delivery of prevention services.

SELF-DETERMINED PRIORITY	ACTION
<p>Further funding allocation to Aboriginal health service programs that focus on prevention</p>	<p>Complete an audit of the Victorian Department of Health funding for prevention related to Aboriginal health and wellbeing as part of the Expenditure Review in accordance with s 113 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Engage with Local and Commonwealth governments to advocate for conducting similar audits.</p>
	<p>Establish a policy that all funding for Prevention and Early Intervention programs/services related to Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing in Victoria is first offered to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, through appropriate procurement processes.</p>
	<p>Establish guidance for all mainstream organisations applying for and receiving Department of Health funds for prevention related to Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing in Victoria, which includes expectations and guidance for working with and resourcing Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), where appropriate.</p>
	<p>Develop a dedicated, coordinated, statewide Aboriginal early intervention and prevention program in Victoria that prioritises investment in self-determined, Aboriginal led initiatives that build connection to Community, Culture, Country and Kinship.</p>

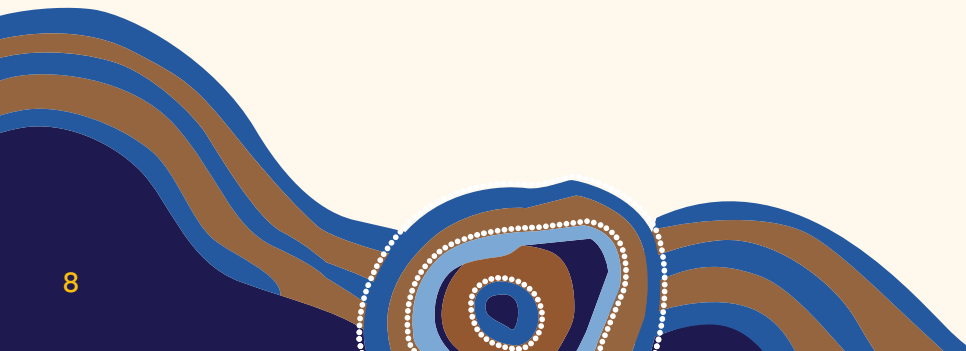


Domain: Culturally safe healthcare

The below priorities and accompanying actions work to enable a culturally safe healthcare system that supports Aboriginal people living in Victoria to have equitable access to health services.

Actions in this domain focus on strengthening cultural safety in the mainstream health system at all access points. This includes the mandating of cultural safety training, improving the identification of Aboriginal people in health services and strengthening the alcohol and other drugs sector.

SELF-DETERMINED PRIORITY	ACTION
<p>Strengthen cultural safety in the mainstream health service system</p>	<p>Mandate cultural safety training that addresses racism, stigma and discrimination, in all public and community health service settings, and for this training to be delivered by a relevant Aboriginal organisation.</p>
	<p>Create culturally safe service standards to be met by public and community health services and explore the feasibility of setting up an accreditation process that is led by an Aboriginal organisation with experience in the health sector.</p>
	<p>Improve identification of Aboriginal people in mainstream health settings and embed discharge plans and formal referral pathways across the healthcare sector.</p>
	<p>Use the Partnership Forum as a mechanism for monitoring the process of the implementation of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System.</p>
	<p>Ensure the delivery of all health infrastructure projects (including engagement, design and delivery) is informed by the requirements for cultural safety through an intergenerational trauma lens and the preservation of Aboriginal culture. Specific actions include cultural safety training, and a review of current policies and guidelines.</p>





SELF-DETERMINED PRIORITY	ACTION
Support Alcohol and Other Drugs service delivery	Design the service model of a culturally safe, gender-specific residential detoxification and rehabilitation facility for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women with drug and/or alcohol dependence, with the aim of this service being operational by 2030. This is in line with the recommendation from the Inquest into the death of Veronica Nelson.
	Ensure government is adhering to commitments made on decriminalisation of public intoxication, informed by the advice of the Aboriginal Advisory Group.
	Review the current AOD care mechanisms to ensure they are culturally appropriate and safe, prioritising intake and assessment processes.
	Ensure that mainstream AOD organisations embed a consistent cultural safety practice in their models of care.
	Undertake whole-of-system Aboriginal specific AOD service demand and planning assessment.



Domain: A self-determined health system

The below priorities and accompanying actions seek to ensure that Aboriginal voice determines the healthcare received by Aboriginal people in Victoria.

Actions in this domain focus on legislative reform to recognise the role of the ACCHO sector in the health system by enabling Aboriginal health practitioners to administer vaccines, as well as by increasing Aboriginal representation on Boards in mainstream services.

SELF-DETERMINED PRIORITY	ACTION
Legislative reform to advance Aboriginal self-determination in health and wellbeing	Implement regulatory reform of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to enable Aboriginal Health Practitioners to administer vaccines and for Department of Health to support training processes.
Ensure that governance structures adequately and fairly represent the Aboriginal health sector	Take action to increase Aboriginal representation on the Boards of public hospitals, through the Whole of Victorian Government Diversity on Victorian Government Board Guidelines, and to strengthen membership requirements of public hospital Quality and Safety Subcommittees of Board to include Aboriginal identified positions.
	Explore possible regional structures to increase coordination and joint decision making among the ACCO, mainstream and government sectors.
Reform of budget process and cabinet in confidence rules to advance Aboriginal self-determination	Scope and establish a mechanism for ACCOs and VACCHO to provide input into Department of Health budget bids to ensure they consider Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing and program delivery at the outset.
Establishment of a formal agreement between the Minister for Health, Aboriginal health services and mainstream health services	Create an Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement between the Minister for Health, Aboriginal health services and mainstream health services.

Domain: Working from a shared evidence base

The below priorities and accompanying actions seek to ensure information and policies are shared and aligned across the health system, and Aboriginal research is self-determined and culturally respectful.

Actions in this domain focus on facilitating data sharing agreements as a step towards progressing data sovereignty and embedding self-determination in research that impacts Aboriginal Communities through the Aboriginal Research Accord.

SELF-DETERMINED PRIORITY	ACTION
Alignment of State and Commonwealth Aboriginal health and wellbeing policies and associated actions	Work with the Commonwealth through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Collaboration to ensure a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to driving national First Nations health priorities.
Self-determined data sharing agreements	Facilitate a Data Sharing Agreement between the Department of Health and VACCHO to access Government held data.
	Develop a funding proposal for government consideration for the long-term maintenance of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Information System (Deadly Data) and support for ACCOs to participate in it.
	Develop a funding proposal for government consideration for the introduction of a single and sovereign client management system for the ACCHO sector, including a staged operational transition plan which is responsive to the unique needs of the ACCO service model.
Aboriginal Research Accord established and fully funded	Seek government endorsement of the Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical and Wellbeing Research Accord ('the Accord') and develop a funding proposal for government consideration for the implementation of the Accord in FY23-24.
	Develop a funding proposal for government consideration for sustainable implementation funding of the Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical and Wellbeing Research Accord post FY23-24.

Domain: Building a sustainable health sector

The below actions and accompanying priorities seek to ensure funding and resourcing to the Aboriginal health sector is long term and responsive to needs, and that reporting and accreditation suits the needs of the sector.

Actions in this domain focus on investing in infrastructure for the ACCHO sector, moving towards longer-term outcomes based funding, supporting the Aboriginal workforce, and revising the Department’s budget processes to ensure the community-controlled sector can provide meaningful input.

SELF-DETERMINED PRIORITY	ACTION
Investment in infrastructure for Aboriginal services	<p>Develop business cases for government consideration for land acquisitions and capital funding for ACCOs to meet the self-determined immediate, medium and long term identified infrastructure needs of a minimum of 12 sites. This includes exploring potential opportunities to use the self-determination fund through Victoria’s Treaty process.</p> <p>Develop the framework for an ACCO Perpetual Infrastructure Fund to provide long-term ongoing self-determined minor capital, maintenance, planning and management resources for ACCOs across all holistic wrap-around services.</p> <p>Prepare and submit a business case for government consideration to establish the ACCO Perpetual Infrastructure Fund, including funding to meet all immediate needs, and consideration of potential opportunities to use the self-determination fund through Victoria’s Treaty process.</p>
Long-term, outcomes-based funding for Aboriginal health services	<p>Develop and implement a policy so that operational funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services delivery is recurrent or multiyear (4-year minimum) unless it meets strict criteria that justifies it being issued as a 12-month (or less) contract. This would be for existing and new funding arrangements and would include indexation.</p> <p>Develop the overall plan, including detailed steps and timeline, for transitioning Department of Health funding to outcomes-based funding for ACCOs so that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > aims to combine existing contracts into a single grant the ACCO can manage flexibly > is based on self-determined outcomes > measurably reduces the reporting burden > provides adequate resources to manage the transition to outcomes-based funding <p>The shift of operational funding to multiyear will also include indexation.</p>

SELF-DETERMINED PRIORITY	ACTION
<p>Accreditation and reporting for Aboriginal health sector is needs-based and streamlined</p>	<p>Undertake a mapping exercise across multiple frameworks, using a systems-based approach, to understand duplicated requirements for multiple accreditations and the costs of accreditation.</p>
	<p>VACCHO and Department of Health to engage other Victorian Government departments and the Commonwealth to investigate the feasibility of an integrated auditing system and reduction of costs.</p>
	<p>VACCHO and Department of Health to work with Victorian and Commonwealth government departments to support quality improvement among ACCOs.</p>
	<p>Develop interpretative guides across multiple standards i.e., RAGCP, Rainbow Tick, QIC, NDIS, NSQHS and NSMHS accreditations that contextualise the ACCO's 'ways of Knowing, Being and Doing across everything we do.'</p>
<p>Aboriginal health and wellbeing workforce is strong and sustainable</p>	<p>Scope how to extend student placements, internships, cadetships and graduate placements across the ACCO sector.</p>
	<p>Scope the establishment of a mentorship and support program for ACCO sector and mainstream Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.</p>
	<p>Review guidelines of existing funding programmes to promote training, upskilling and leadership for ACCO sector workforce.</p>
	<p>Prioritise training, upskilling and leadership development of all staff in the ACCO sector in the forthcoming Victorian Health Workforce Strategy, and ensure ACCOs to have a self-determining role in how this is implemented.</p>
	<p>VACCHO to complete a salary review to identify disparities between the ACCO sector and the mainstream health sector and commit to work together with Department of Health on a plan to achieve pay parity.</p>



Appendix 1

Koori Caucus (the Aboriginal members of the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum (AHWPF)) identified immediate priorities for health system reform and presented them to the first meeting of the AHWPF in April 2021.

These self-determined priorities were accepted by the Chairs as shared priorities of the AHWPF (Minister Foley, Minister for Health at the time and Jill Gallagher, CEO of VACCHO). This is in recognition of the importance of putting Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands for improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people in Victoria. The Koori Caucus added a fifteenth priority in March 2023.

The Action Plan has been established in order to deliver on these self-determined priorities through defined actions.

Self-determined priorities:

1. Legislative reform to advance Aboriginal self-determination in health and wellbeing
2. Ensure that governance structures adequately and fairly represent the Aboriginal health sector
3. Government commitment to funding reform to ensure that funding going to Aboriginal health services is not piecemeal and based on short-term funding commitments
4. Supporting self-determining data sharing agreements
5. Strengthen cultural safety in mainstream services
6. Ensure that Aboriginal health services' infrastructure needs are addressed and remedied
7. Further funding allocation to Aboriginal health service programs that focus on prevention
8. Reform of budget process and cabinet in confidence rules to advance Aboriginal self-determination
9. Establish free ambulances services provided to Aboriginal people across Victoria
10. Address and reduce the accreditation and reporting burden placed on Aboriginal health sector
11. Support alcohol and other drugs service delivery
12. Alignment of State and Commonwealth Aboriginal health and wellbeing policies and associated actions
13. Funding to implement the Aboriginal Research Accord
14. Aboriginal health and wellbeing workforce is strong and sustainable
15. Establishment of a formal agreement between the Minister for Health, Aboriginal health services and mainstream health services

Appendix 2

Alignment to national policy commitments

The Agreement and Action Plan are strongly aligned to the Aboriginal policy architecture that drives health and wellbeing outcomes. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap) is recognised as the highest-level policy driver that aims to transform the systems and structures governing health and wellbeing outcomes at a national level.

With alignment to the four Priority Reforms under Closing the Gap and the priorities identified in the Health Sector Strengthening Plan, the Agreement and Action Plan ensure consolidated effort and leverage of investment to achieve these commitments as endorsed by National Cabinet.

In the below table, the Priority Reform areas identified in Closing the Gap have been aligned to the 15 priorities for health system reform of the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum.

In the development of the mechanism to monitor progress towards outcomes, alignment will be made with Closing the Gap health and wellbeing outcomes and targets, to clearly show how the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement and Action Plans are making progress against Closing the Gap outcome targets and improving health and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal people in Victoria.

Domains	Aboriginal Health Wellbeing Partnership Forum Priority	Closing the Gap Priority Reform	Closing the Gap Priority Reform Target
Prevention and early intervention	Further funding allocation to Aboriginal health service programs that focus on prevention	Building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector	Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

Domains	Aboriginal Health Wellbeing Partnership Forum Priority	Closing the Gap Priority Reform	Closing the Gap Priority Reform Target
Culturally safe healthcare	Strengthen cultural safety in the mainstream health service system	Transforming Government Organisations	Decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experiences of racism.
	Establish free ambulance services provided to Aboriginal people across Victoria		
	Support Alcohol and Other Drugs service delivery		
Self-determined health system	Legislative reform to advance Aboriginal self-determination in health and wellbeing	Formal Partnerships and Decision Making + Transforming Government Organisations	Formal partnership arrangements to support Closing the Gap in place between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments in place in each state and territory enshrining agreed joint decision-making roles and responsibilities and where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have chosen their own representatives. + Decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experiences of racism.
	Ensure that governance structures adequately and fairly represent the Aboriginal health sector		
	Reform of budget process and cabinet in confidence rules to advance Aboriginal self-determination		
	Establishment of a formal agreement between the Minister for Health, Aboriginal health services and mainstream health services		

Domains	Aboriginal Health Wellbeing Partnership Forum Priority	Closing the Gap Priority Reform	Closing the Gap Priority Reform Target
Shared evidence base	Supporting self-determining data sharing agreements	Transforming Government Organisations + Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level	Decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experiences of racism. + Increase the number of regional data projects to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to make decisions about Closing the Gap and their development.
	Alignment of state and Commonwealth Aboriginal health and wellbeing policies and associated actions		
	Funding to implement the Aboriginal Research Accord		
Sustainable Health Sector	Government commitment to funding reform to ensure that funding going to Aboriginal health services is not piecemeal and based on short-term funding commitments	Building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector	Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.
	Ensure that Aboriginal health services' Infrastructure needs are addressed and remedied		
	Address and reduce the accreditation and reporting burden placed on Aboriginal health sector		Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.
	Aboriginal health and wellbeing workforce is strong and sustainable		



Appendix 3

Consultation process

The consultation process to inform this Aboriginal Health & Wellbeing Partnership Action Plan 2023-2025 was comprehensive and delivered in partnership between VACCHO and the Victorian Department of Health (DH). The consultation process lasted three months – from January to April 2023.

At the community level, 15 consultation sessions targeted at the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) sector were delivered online and were co-facilitated by VACCHO and DH. There was a total of 169 attendees at these sessions, representing 26 different Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. The rich insights and ideas that came out of these sessions were vital in informing the final actions identified, and VACCHO and DH are extremely grateful for the generous investments of time from the attendees.

An Engage Victoria consultation was available online for broader community level input, from 21 February to 13 March 2023. There was a total of 99 responses received, all of which were valuable in informing the actions.

At the government level, the Aboriginal Health Division of DH also consulted broadly with all DH divisions and informed and sought input from the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of Treasury and Finance, Department of Justice and Community Safety, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Department of Education. Additionally, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care were jointly consulted by VACCHO and DH.

VACCHO and DH also worked together to consult the mainstream health sector on this Action Plan, through attendance at public health service Chief Executive Officer forums, engagement with the Victorian Healthcare Association, Local Public Health Units and Primary Health Networks and a joint presentation at the Department of Health's Health Sector Summit.

Decision-making process

A robust process was undertaken to inform which actions were selected as part of this 2023-2025 Action Plan. The information and insights from all consultations were collated by VACCHO and DH, and VACCHO and DH then worked together to rank the identified actions based on a list of 5 criteria. These criteria were:

1. **Need** – How needed is this action to the ACCHO sector? Is this something the ACCHO sector thinks will work for Community?
2. **Impact** – Will this action directly help to achieve the priorities and outcomes identified by the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum?
3. **Timing** – Noting this is an action plan that will be renewed every 2 years, is this action critical and needs to be implemented now?
4. **Feasibility** – Is this action practical and achievable?
5. **Budget** – Are there any budget considerations impacting delivery of this action?

Once the actions were ranked based on the 5 criteria, a final draft list was decided upon by VACCHO and DH and was submitted to VACCHO's Koori Caucus for endorsement.

About the artwork

From the Rivers to the Trees, 2022

Simone Thomson | Woi-Wurrung Wurundjeri / Yorta-Yorta

We are children of the Dreamtime. We are part of this land, and this land is part of us. Our spirit sings with ancient songs of ceremony and dance, it is in our blood and veins. Our Culture is our heartbeat, and we will always keep it beating.

We are taught that we must care for Country, and in return, Country will always care of us. This is where we gain our healing and life source from, from the rivers to the trees.

Like the roots of the tall proud grandfather tree that breathes along the river, Aboriginal Culture is resilient and deeply entrenched within the songlines this land. The scar tree and its carved warrior shield represent Cultural safety and self-determination – they are strength in Culture.



A woven dilly bag and basket carry medicine leaves and medicinal plants taken from along the waterways, they are the connection to our traditional way of preparing nourishing food and vital health giving, they are self-love and care. Yellow ochre is painted on the ceremonial possum skin cloak that lay on the woven healing mat. These represent the ancient sacred cultural practices of mindfulness and meditation, they symbolise the spiritual, mental and physical healing gained when one is still, gained with connection to Culture. Elders' hands extend gum leaves towards the carved coolamon dish fuelling the cleansing healing smoke, they represent unity and togetherness in the shared health journey. This ancient ceremony represents Cultural safety and protection, it is our healing tradition passed down over time.

Blue wavy lines hug the banks of the rich red soil – our sacred waterways play a significant place in our healing journey and bound us spiritually to our connection to Country. Chevrons represent the strength gained from our presence on Country and the healing plants taken from the bush and mountains.

The map of connecting circles represent the clans throughout Victoria and their coming together in unity for health and self-determination, it is strength in connection. The larger circles to the left and right symbolise communities throughout the state and their coming together on their self-care and healing journeys. They meet in the centre circle represented by the healing sun, the giver of life.

It is restoration and spiritual therapy.

It is cultural well-being.

