



## Media Release

# VACCHO partners with RACGP to grow the GP workforce for Aboriginal communities

**Thursday 8 October**

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) has partnered with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Victoria (RACGP Victoria) to grow and retain the GP workforce for Aboriginal communities.

VACCHO this week hosted a focus group with GPs in collaboration with RACGP Victoria to better understand how to retain and grow the GP workforce in the Aboriginal Community Controlled health sector.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) provide culturally and clinically appropriate primary care to Aboriginal communities across Victoria.

However, a lack of GPs, particularly in rural Victoria is a pressing issue experienced by many ACCOs across the state.

GPs are vital to the integrated health teams in ACCOs and work with Aboriginal health practitioners, Aboriginal health workers, nurses, other allied health practitioners, and social emotional wellbeing workers to provide culturally appropriate health care.

VACCHO CEO Jill Gallagher AO said ACCOs typically differ from private practice settings as the type of medicine practiced is different.

“Arguably, ACCOs provide GPs with the chance to practice more interesting and challenging medicine,” she said.

“This means longer consultations and more opportunity to contribute to an individual, a family, and a whole Community’s health outcome within an Aboriginal cultural framework.”

GPs have recommended that ultimately ACCOs should be strengthened from within and the rewards of working within ACCOs should be better promoted.

Chair of RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Professor Peter O’Mara, welcomed the partnership.

“The RACGP is committed to building the Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander GP workforce, and ensuring GPs are there to help the Communities that need them in every part of the country,” he said.

“We know we need to do better to attract and grow the GP workforce for the Aboriginal health sector, and this partnership is a positive step forward to that end.

“As a GP who practices in this area myself, I can’t recommend it highly enough to other GPs and registrars.

“ACCOs provide the opportunity for GPs to practice more challenging and varied medicine, and because the consultations are longer you can deliver the best of primary care – that is looking at the ‘whole person’ and exploring any and all issues, such as mental health and preventative care.”

The new partnership between VACCHO and the RACGP Victoria builds upon the RACGP’s broader relationship with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), with the two organisations re-signing a Memorandum of Understanding in November 2019, having first signed in 2014.

**Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc.**

*VACCHO is the peak body for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples living in Victoria.*

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VACCHO and RACGP Victoria wish to thank all GPs involved in the Focus Group meeting held on October 7 plus the many GPs who completed a recent survey.

The survey responses will help inform VACCHO's development of a Victorian ACCO GP Workforce Strategy.

For a copy of the survey or to hear more about VACCHO's work, please email VACCHO's Statewide GP Workforce Strategy Project Coordinator, Stephanie May on [stephaniem@vaccho.org.au](mailto:stephaniem@vaccho.org.au).

VACCHO CEO Jill Gallagher AO and Chair of RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Professor Peter O'Mara are available for interview.

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For media inquiries or interview requests please contact:

- **RACGP** Ally Francis on 0499 555 712
- **VACCHO** Andrew Jefferson on 0427 760 936

## **BACKGROUND**

**VACCHO** is the leading advocate for the health of Aboriginal peoples in Victoria and a peak organisation to its membership of 32 ACCOs. VACCHO also works closely with partner organisations, Government, non-Government community sector organisations across Victoria and nationally.

**RACGP** was established in 1958 and is Australia's peak general practice representative organisation.

The RACGP has more than 41,000 members working in or towards a career in general practice, more than 9,500 of them live and work in rural and remote areas of the country. Nine in every 10 GPs are with the RACGP.

A core objective of the RACGP is to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health needs. As a result, the RACGP established a dedicated Faculty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health in 2010 to help 'close the gap'. The Faculty has more than 10,000 members either working in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare sector or who have a passion and interest in this area. The RACGP undertakes a range of activities to ensure the delivery of high quality culturally responsive care and to assist in the growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander general practice workforce.