

# VACCHO Position Paper 'Summary' 2016

## Response to Department of Health and Human Services' *Discussion Guide for the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan*

27 May 2016

### Background

#### Changes to Government Departments

On 1 January 2015, the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services merged to become the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The goal of DHHS is to develop and deliver policies, programs and services that support and enhance the wellbeing of all Victorians.

With the merging of the Departments, two relevant policy documents were inherited – *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012-2022* and *Human Services Aboriginal Strategic Framework 2012-15*. The former is focused on health and the latter was focused on human services.

#### New Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan

DHHS are now developing an *Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan* (the Strategic Plan) to provide a single policy approach to promote Aboriginal health and wellbeing in Victoria. The Strategic Plan intends to consider all aspects of Aboriginal health and wellbeing in Victoria, and set out an integrated approach that will develop and deliver programs and services from all parts of the Department.

In order to develop the Strategic Plan, DHHS produced a Discussion Guide - <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/cross-departmental-projects-and-initiatives/aboriginal-health-and-wellbeing-strategic-framework> - as a starting point for consultations and input with key stakeholders. The Discussion Guide provided an overview of DHHS's commitment to Aboriginal Victorians, and proposed some elements of the new approach to advancing Aboriginal health and wellbeing that could be incorporated into the Strategic Plan. DHHS has been clear that no elements of the Discussion Guide are

fixed. The aim of the Discussion Guide is to enable wide ranging discussions with Aboriginal people and service providers about how to best improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians.

DHHS invited Aboriginal Victorians and service providers working with Aboriginal communities to have input into the Strategic Plan by attending a symposium, participating in a community consultation and/or providing a Position Paper.

#### VACCHO Position Paper

In April 2016, VACCHO (with funding from DHHS) commissioned PricewaterhouseCooper's Indigenous Consulting (PIC) to support the development of a Position Paper to DHHS to inform the development of the new Strategic Plan.

The primary purpose of the Position Paper is to provide our considered response to the strategic direction outlined in the DHHS Discussion Guide. The Position Paper also provides our key position on other strategic matters for consideration by DHHS in developing the Strategic Plan.

VACCHO, supported by PIC, implemented a five-staged approach to the developing the Position Paper including reviewing the two existing strategic documents; internal workshops facilitated by PIC with staff, Directors and Members; participation of VACCHO staff in a DHHS led consultation; discussions with the CEO and Board Chairperson; and testing and finalising the position paper with VACCHO Directors.

It should be noted that the timing for submissions did not allow for extensive consultation or input from VACCHO members. VACCHO's Position Paper should therefore not be interpreted as the consolidated view of all our Members, however, we believe the general positions presented are supported. It is acknowledged that Members' individual needs and aspirations for the Strategic Plan may have been presented to DHHS in other ways.

# Summary of Key Positions

## Plan Development and Governance Issues

**VACCHO supports health and wellbeing being combined into one Strategic Plan.** However, this combination must:

- Lead to real change and improved outcomes - it cannot be only a 're-badging' or policy approach
- Not dilute the Koolin Balit health funding by stretching that funding to wellbeing initiatives—wellbeing elements must also be properly funded and resourced
- Keep the successful elements of Koolin Balit – a plan that ACCOs invested significant effort into, and runs to the year 2022.

**The support VACCHO can offer to our Member Organisations is increased to include the full range of their wellbeing/human services** – acknowledging the unique Victorian model where ACCOs deliver both health and human and wellbeing services.

**VACCHO and its Members have a lead role in the strategic direction, decision-making and resource allocation across all elements of the Strategic Plan** – we strive for an Aboriginal-led partnership.

**The Strategic Plan must ensure that all stakeholders are accountable** for fulfilling their responsibilities to all Aboriginal people. This means:

- Ensuring non-Aboriginal services are accountable

for operating in a culturally inclusive and culturally safe way (particularly where they receive Aboriginal-specific funding)

- Ensuring DHHS operates in a culturally inclusive and culturally safe way
- Supporting ACCOs, including their sustainability, capacity and position in the service system
- Priority must be given to ACCOs to deliver the Aboriginal-specific programs and initiatives of the Strategic Plan.

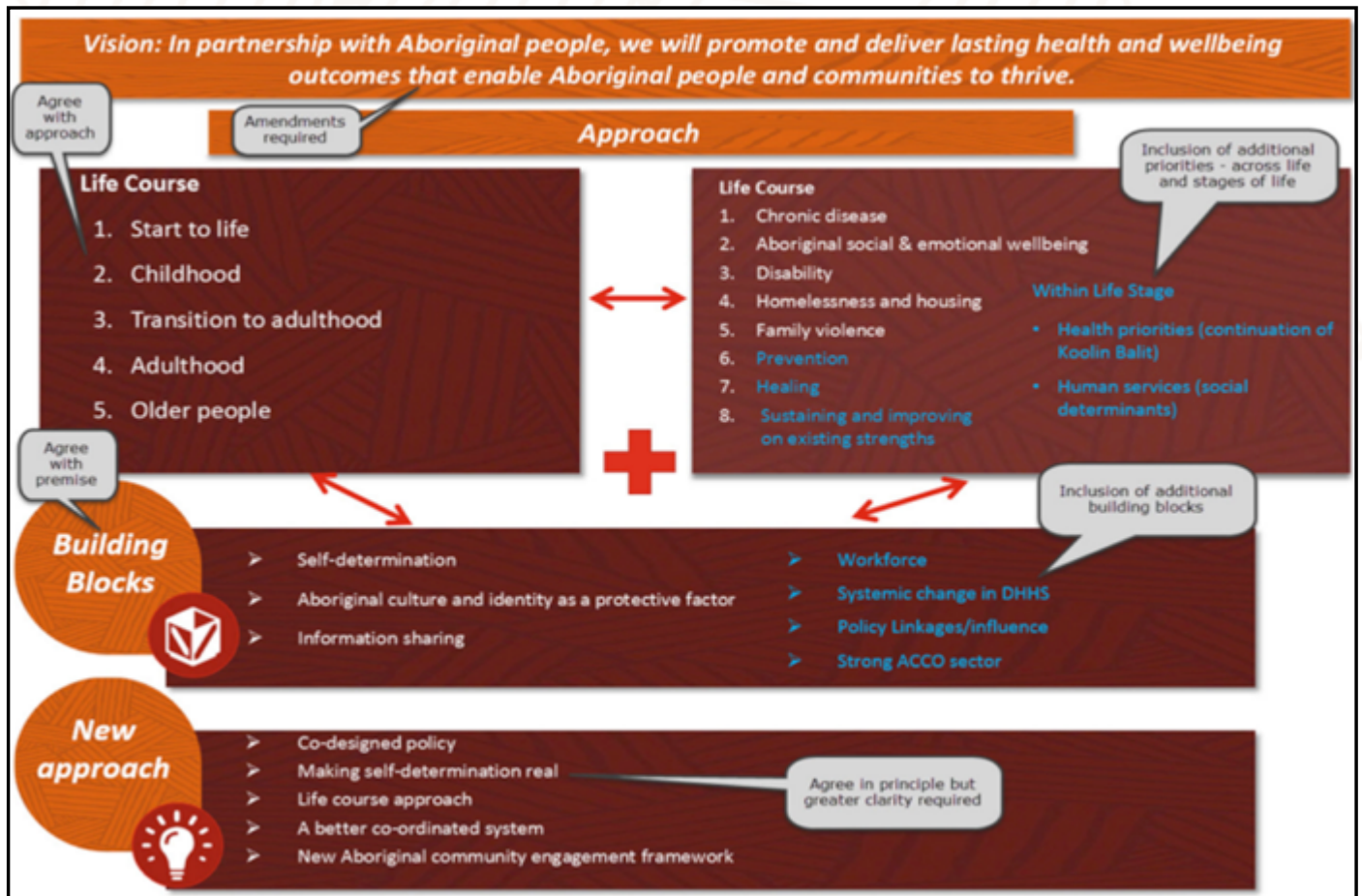
**The Strategic Plan must provide a consistent state-wide framework that allows for regional and local leadership and variance.**

**The Strategic Plan must acknowledge that 'health and wellbeing' extends beyond the scope of the DHHS portfolio.** The Strategic Plan must therefore both:

- Oversight and direct matters within the DHHS portfolio (both Aboriginal specific and mainstream)
- Link, complement and influence other relevant sectors (including both Aboriginal-specific and mainstream, at a Victorian and National level).

## Guide Content

The figure below provides a succinct overview of the content of the DHHS Discussion Guide (in white text) and of VACCHO's key positions on these matters (in blue text and grey boxes).





At a headline level VACCHO agrees with the intent and structure of the Strategic Plan as proposed in the Discussion Guide. VACCHO has comments on the more detailed content of the Discussion Guide and seeks the inclusion of additional Building Blocks and Life Course Priorities. Each of these matters is detailed below.

## Vision

**The vision must include the aspirational outcomes** sought from a Strategic Plan including that:

- Being healthy and well will be the norm for Aboriginal people
- Aboriginal people will be in control of their health and wellbeing
- Aboriginal people will have equitable health and wellbeing outcomes with non-Aboriginal Victorians.

## Stages of Life

**VACCHO agrees with the proposed Stages of Life approach** and welcomes the inclusion of 'adulthood' (a key omission from Koolin Balit).

VACCHO has no issue with the proposed Across Life Priorities, and advocates for the inclusion of:

- Prevention
- Healing
- Sustaining and improving on existing strengths.

VACCHO advocates that the 'Across Life Priorities' are not necessarily higher priorities than the priorities at each 'Stage of Life'. In terms of priorities within individual 'Stage of Life', VACCHO advocates for:

- Health – continuation of Koolin Balit commitments; and
- Human Services – focus on social and cultural determinants of health.

Measurable targets and indicators are required that align with agreed priorities.

## Building Blocks

**VACCHO agrees with the premise of the headings of each of the proposed Building Blocks, however we advocate that further content detail is required for each Building Block.**

- **Self Determination:** VACCHO fully supports the principle of Aboriginal people having the lead role in matters that affect Aboriginal people. We do not support DHHS (or any non-Aboriginal entity) developing a definition of self-determination

- **Information Sharing:** VACCHO advocates that key decisions must be informed by robust data and evidence - improved data is required, and the wisdom and experience of ACCOs must be valued
- **Aboriginal culture as a protective factor** – VACCHO is fully supportive of this concept, however the content description (which describes developing 'cultural protocols' between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous people) does not match this heading. VACCHO does not support the Department (or any non-Aboriginal entity) developing cultural protocols.

**VACCHO also advocates for the inclusion of four additional Building Blocks:**

- Workforce
- Systemic change in DHHS
- Policy linkages/ influence
- A strong ACCO sector

## New Approach

VACCHO agrees in principle with the proposed content of the 'New Approach' section of the Discussion Guide, but **greater clarity is required on what these approaches mean in practice and in how we "do business"**. In particular VACCHO has sought clarification on:

- Co-designed policy
- Making self-determination real
- A better coordinated system
- New Aboriginal Community Engagement Framework

## What Next?

The Department of Health and Human Services will complete their consultations in early June 2016 and are aiming to have the new Strategic Plan completed by September.

Implementation will occur from July 1 2017.

VACCHO's **full response** can be found at [www.vaccho.org.au/policy-advocacy/ppr/](http://www.vaccho.org.au/policy-advocacy/ppr/)