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Cover image: On Solid Ground - Madison Connors | Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Gamilaroi

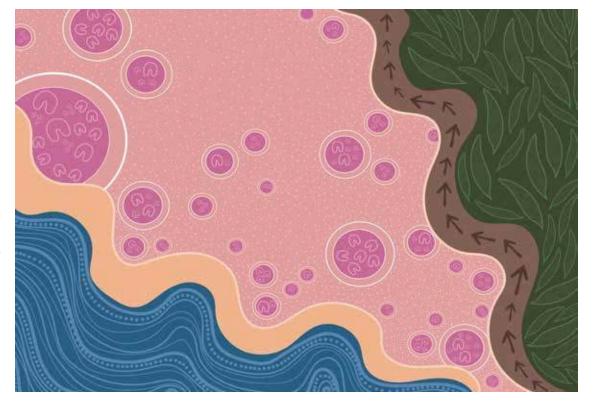
#### **About the Artist**

Madison Connors is a proud Yorta Yorta (Wolithica), Dja Dja Wurrung and Gamilaroi woman. She was born and grew up in Kanny-goopna (Shepparton in Yorta Yorta language). Madison is an artist, a human rights advocate, and a mother. Her business, Yarli Creative, is a coming together of her yarka (children), her yakapna (family) and her mulana (spirit).

"My identity is what drives me. It's something that is within me and comes from the heart. My connection to my environmental surroundings is my blood line and vein to this country and the community which runs deep within. I come from a strong line of women and am following in their footsteps; I aim to embody their full form on this earth and strive to make my mob proud of the work that I create and achieve."

#### **Story of the Artwork**

This piece is a visual depiction of Victoria, bordered on either side by the land and the sea. It speaks to the title On Solid Ground, and the land and waterways that are home to Victorian Aboriginal peoples. VACCHO's Members, Associate Members,



and the Communities they represent are illustrated across the State – centred in the artwork as they are at the core of VACCHO's vision and purpose. The central shape begins small in the bottom right corner, and expands outwards – representing VACCHO's growth and development over the past 25 years since it was established in 1996. From little things, big things grow. Emu and kangaroo tracks map the journey and pathway forward as VACCHO embarks on this next phase. The circles spread throughout the centre are a direct link to where VACCHO Members and Associate Members are placed in Victoria. Each circle has the symbol for people (upside down 'u' shape) inside of them representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. The colours bring together the old and the new – acknowledging the history and traditions of some of the world's longest continuing cultures, together with the vibrant, contemporary Aboriginal cultures in Victoria today.



The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) acknowledges the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the lands on which we live and work, and the power and resilience that is shared as members of the world's oldest living culture.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples who have never ceded their sovereignty. We acknowledge this report was developed on Wurundjeri Country and acknowledge the richness and diversity of all Traditional Owners across Victoria.

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

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#### Foreword from VACCHO CEO, Jill Gallagher AO

Ngatta (which means hello in my traditional Gunditimara language).

Welcome to the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation's inaugural Impact Report.

Our annual Impact Report is a new tool to measure and showcase the impact VACCHO - in support of our Members - has for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities across Victoria. We hope that reporting in this way strengthens our accountability back to Members, Community, and our funding partners, by demonstrating how we are delivering on our Strategic Plan and the outcomes we set out to achieve. It is part of our transition to an outcomes-based funding model. As we continue this journey and strengthen our evaluation and data capability, we will progressively have stronger outcome and impact evidence to share. We anticipate that this report will be a step in the right direction.

It has been an extraordinary twelve months, with the COVID-19 pandemic presenting unique and unprecedented challenges for the Victorian ACCO sector and the Communities we serve. COVID-19 interrupted plans and we all pivoted to respond to the crisis at hand. For this reason, our Impact Report starts with our COVID response. Despite the many difficulties, VACCHO and the 32 Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations across the state adapted and innovated according to the evolving needs of our Communities and stakeholders to provide culturally safe services across Victoria. VACCHO and the Members delivered worldclass support for Community during the pandemic – with the success of the ACCO vaccine vans a testament to the importance of Aboriginal innovation and meaningful partnerships.

VACCHO's Education and Training Unit (ETU) continues to grow and develop as a dynamic and responsive provider of vocational education and training to the Aboriginal community health sector. Our registered training organisation has become one of the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander RTOs in Australia with many graduates set to provide vital engagement and support for the betterment of the health and wellbeing of the community.

I was also immensely proud to see VACCHO establish a Medical Cadetship Program in 2021 to support Aboriginal medical students obtaining casual employment in Victorian ACCOs. The program attracted considerable interest with VACCHO successfully placing five Aboriginal medical students in cadetship roles in participating ACCOs across regional and rural areas.

Another landmark moment came with VACCHO's launch of the Balit Durn Durn Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing at Federation Square in May 2022. Aboriginal knowledge, empowerment, advocacy, and innovation are the key to healing our people. It is these incredible attributes that I see shining through the inspiring work VACCHO and the 32 Members across Victoria do every day.

Words cannot describe how proud I am of the Aboriginal health sector as we continue to deliver vital health and wellbeing impacts for the Community. We must continue to be bold. We must continue to be brave.

Stay deadly and look after one another.

Jill Gallagher AO



The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is the peak representative for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Victoria. We lead and support Aboriginal Community Control and the broader health and social services sector to deliver transformative health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Victoria.

VACCHO was established in 1996 after Victoria's Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCOs) identified the need for a united voice from the Community-controlled health sector to ensure we had a say in the decisions being made about our Community: putting Aboriginal health back in Aboriginal hands.

Over the last twenty-six years, VACCHO's Members have grown from humble beginnings as Community organisations with a handful of staff into large, vibrant, high-performing organisations that provide a complex variety of services.

Capacity is built among Members through strengthening support networks, increasing workforce development opportunities and through leadership on particular health areas. Advocacy is carried out with a range of private, community and government agencies, at state and national levels, on all issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Our Members share our vision to provide the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community in Victoria with access to high-quality, culturally safe primary health care, as well as childcare, family services, employment services, housing, and justice.

#### **Our Members**



Timeline				
Established	VACCHO Member			
1973	1997	Victorian Aboriginal Health Service		
1974	1997	Murray Valley Aboriginal Co-Operative		
1974	1997	Njernda Aboriginal Corporation		
1974	1997	Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-Operative		
1975	1997	Dandenong & District Aborigines Co-Operative		
1975	1997	Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative		
1977	1997	Kirrae Health Service Inc.		
1977	1997	Ngwala Willumbong		
1978	1997	Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative		
1979	1997	Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-Operative		
1982	1997	Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-Operative		
1982	1998	Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-Operative		
1983	2013	Cummeragunja Housing & Development Aboriginal Corporation		
1984	1997	Mallee District Aboriginal Services		
1991	2002	Aboriginal Community Elders Services		
1991	1997	Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation		
1992	1997	Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation		
1993	1997	Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland		
1994	1997	Dhauwurd Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service		
1994	1999	Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation		
1997	2003	Lake Tyers Health & Children's Service		
1999	2003	Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-Operative		
2001	2002	Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-Operative		
2001	2011	Melbourne Aboriginal Youth, Sport & Recreation Co-Operative		
2005	2011	Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service		
2005	2020	Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place		
2006	2017	Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service		
2007	2019	Kirrip Aboriginal Corporation		
2007	2011	Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association		
2009	2012	Oonah Health & Community Services Aboriginal Corporation		
2011	2016	Weethunga Health Network		
2012	2016	Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre		
Lake Tyers Health and Moogji				
Children's	IVIO	991		



# VACCHO's vision is for vibrant, healthy, self-determining Communities.

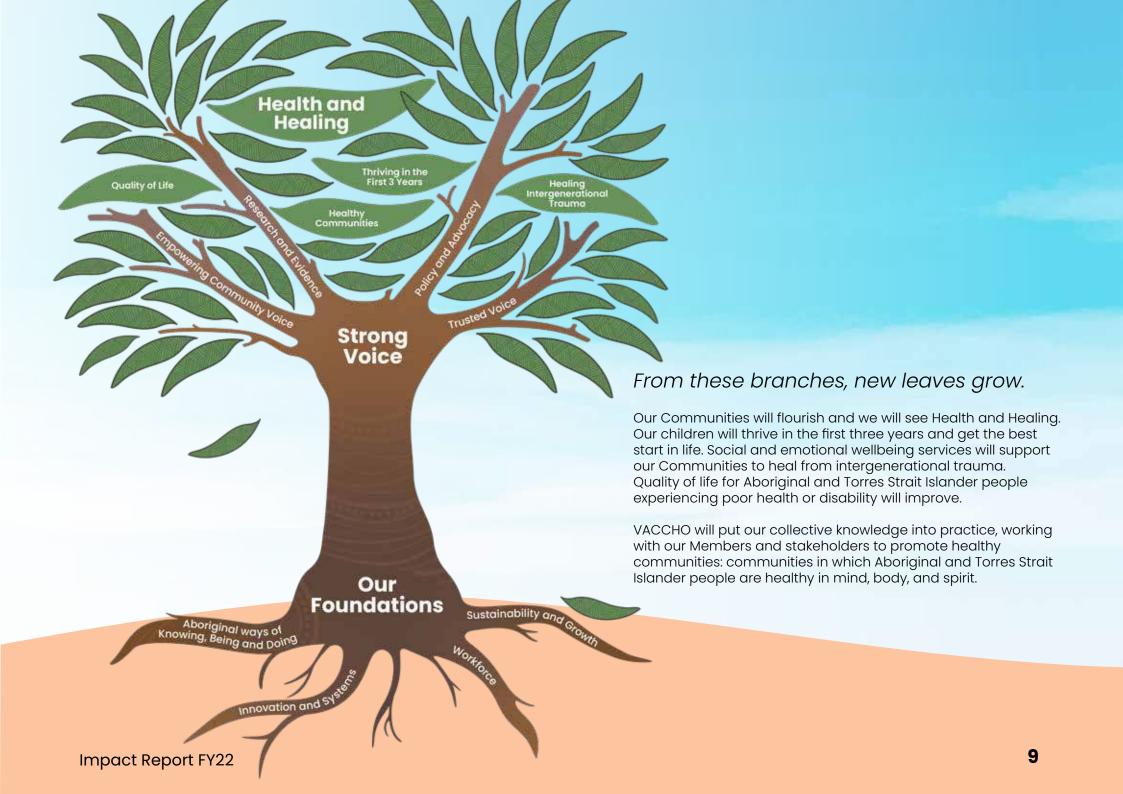
We work with our stakeholders to Close the Gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing outcomes within a generation. We want our Members to be thriving, locally based cultural hubs with wrap-around services from Birth to the Dreaming. We want to secure sustainable, long-term growth and independence according to the needs and aspirations of Community.

#### To do this, we start at the roots.

Culture is at the heart of Our Foundations: Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing are central to the way we work and are embedded into everything we do. We invest in innovation and systems to support and grow the capacity of our Members. We focus on sustainability and growth to ensure ACCOs have the self-determination and control over resources to meet Community aspirations. We strengthen, grow and empower the workforce to deliver culturally safe, holistic health and wellbeing services to Communities. Strong roots ensure VACCHO is a vibrant, healthy and financially stable organisation that uses its strength and stability to support our Members and workforce.

### On these foundations we grow our Strong Voice, reaching high and wide like branches of a tree.

Our Strong Voice fosters and promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations, experience and innovation, and strengthens VACCHO's position as an authoritative voice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, wellbeing and self-determination. We empower Community voice, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have a say in the health and wellbeing decisions that impact them. We strive to be a trusted voice for Community, and trusted custodians of research and evidence about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. We use this knowledge to inform our policy and advocacy, influencing decision-makers on the issues that matter most to our Communities.



#### **Our COVID response**

The COVID-19 pandemic represented an unprecedented challenge for the ACCO sector in Victoria and the Communities that they serve.

In June 2021, VACCHO and the Community learnt that there had been COVID-19 vaccine data inaccuracies which led to an over-reporting of vaccination rates among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community in Victoria. Concurrently, the Victorian Government announced their roadmap for reopening the state post-lockdowns.

There was an urgent need to increase vaccination rates among the eligible population. VACCHO's Members were doing an exceptional job in servicing their Communities and trying to meet vaccination demand. However, ACCO's across the state were experiencing workforce shortages and burnout.

VACCHO worked in close partnership with members. cohealth, Star Health and the Victorian Department of Health to deliver the Victorian Aboriginal Mobile Vaccination Program in FY22.

I felt relieved knowing someone else **had your back** and was working for Community.

- ACCO staff member



#### **Vaccine Vans** The Vaccine Vans delivered over 2000 vaccines through 45 localised 'pop-up' clinics across Victoria. The vans set up in local parks, community centres and visited people in their homes. This localised approach removed barriers for Community to access vaccinations in a culturally safe setting. Mildura Community Robinvale appreciated having VACCHO and MDAS go closer to their space, homes or communities. It helped those that were anxious about it, Albury / Wodonga so they didn't have to come and be waiting with a large group at MDAS usual vax site. - Member ACCO

Warmambool



#### **Protect Mob**

Aboriginal leadership was on display at Vaccine Van sites where local ACCOs encouraged the wider community to receive vaccinations. The Vaccine Vans were open to all local residents, providing greater protection for Mob. Other groups with barriers to accessing vaccinations such as seasonal migrant workers, also utilised the service.

#### **Overcoming** vaccine hesitancy through yarning

The best approach to busting COVID-19 vaccine myths was to build trust with Community through open and honest conversations. Community members were able to yarn with GPs and nurses, about the benefits and risks of vaccination to make informed decisions for their own health.

I took a sigh of **relief** – you are here! - ACCO staff member

## Vaccine Vans provided much-needed assistance to the ACCO workforce

VACCHO's Members did an exceptional job of servicing their Communities and meeting the demand for vaccinations. However, much like elsewhere in the health system, ACCOs across the state were experiencing workforce shortages and burnout. Providing the vaccine service alleviated workforce gaps and freed ACCO staff up to attend the day-to-day running of clinics and services.





What an awesome job
- I know everyone is
tired but the work that
is happening across the
State is invigorating. We
are getting Community
vaccinated and we need
to celebrate that.

- Member ACCO

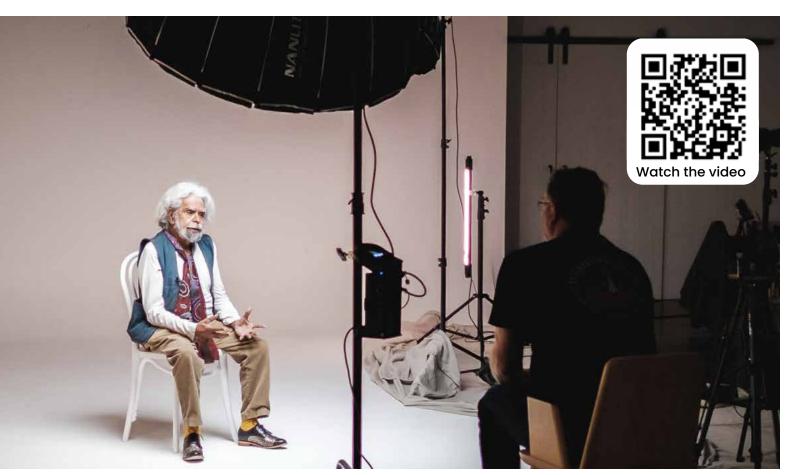
# Supporting social and emotional wellbeing throughout the pandemic

As the pandemic swept across the world, it induced worry, fear and concern among the population. Protracted lockdowns led to social isolation and prevented Community from coming together. To respond to the mental health impacts of the pandemic, VACCHO regularly promoted services such as 'Yarning Safe N Strong' – the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service's free and confidential counselling line. VACCHO supported its Members to pivot to telehealth, ensuring they could continue to provide their critical social and emotional wellbeing services to Community throughout lockdowns.



The VACCHO ICT grant supported and strengthened our capability to deliver services remotely and better equipped staff with access to resources that enabled them to deliver new ways of service provision and made our services more accessible to clients and community.

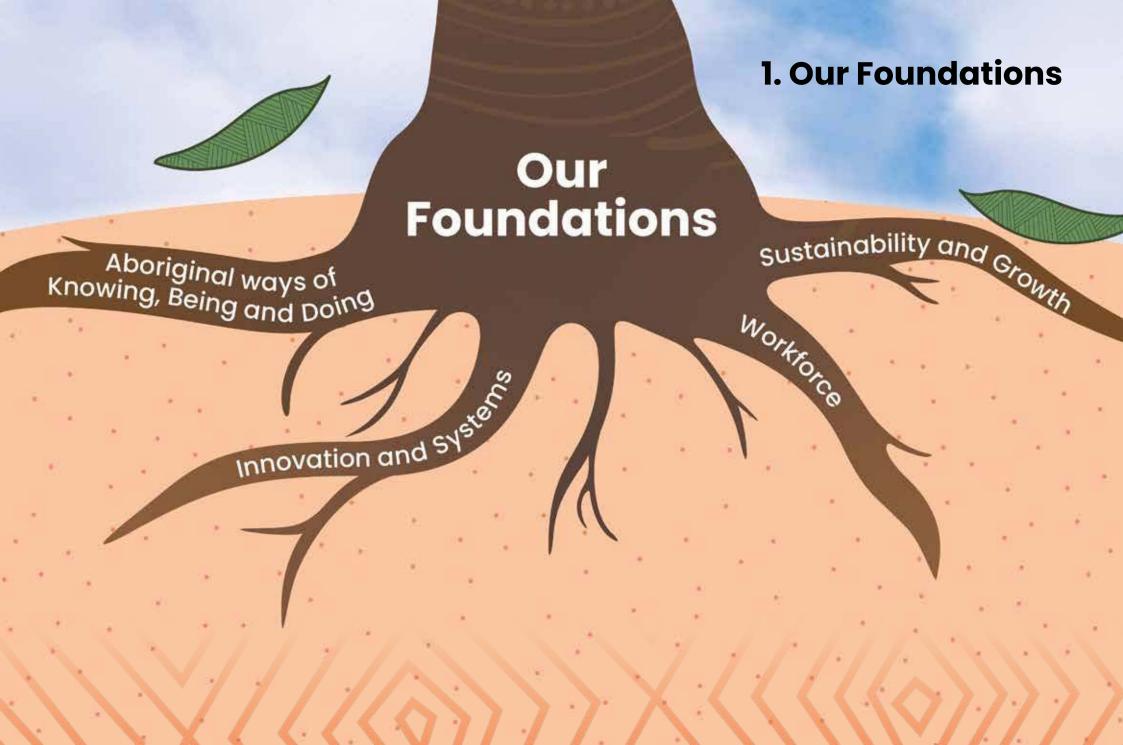
- Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service (BWAHS)



# A trusted voice for information on COVID

VACCHO used its digital channels to share information and increase awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the Victorian Department of Health, VACCHO ran targeted campaigns with the key message: "Community, Unity, Immunity".

The campaign, featuring Uncle Jack Charles, promoted physical distancing, mask-wearing and - importantly - vaccination, to protect each other. VACCHO promoted the Vaccine Van residencies across the state on its social media channels. Our specially designed 'Protect Mob' t-shirts were handed out at pop-up clinics as an incentive and to help spread the word.



#### 1.1 Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing

#### Goal: Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing are central to the way we work.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultural safety manifests itself in practice that reflects an understanding, acceptance and respect for the importance of Aboriginal identity, culture, communities and endurance. Cultural safety is critical to the social, emotional, physical and mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Embedding and celebrating Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing can create more culturally safe environments and lead to greater impact for Communities, drawing on the rich knowledge systems of the world's oldest living cultures.

VACCHO's Cultural Safety Services offers training and organisational audits designed to increase cultural safety in practice and spaces.

VACCHO's Cultural Safety Services' ongoing advocacy, consultation, and education work led the Centre for Palliative Care at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne to work with the local Fire Brigade to enable Smoking Ceremonies to take place within two designated rooms at Caristas Christi Hospice in Kew for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receiving palliative care.

Creating space for Smoking
Ceremonies to occur at end-oflife care, and within a hospice
setting, is a significant step to
improving cultural safety for
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander people at a pivotal life
phase. It ensures people can
access both medical and cultural
care, when and where they need it.

201 sessions delivered

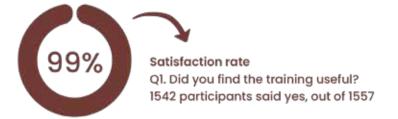


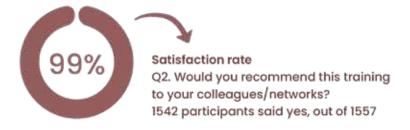
\$\frac{1}{\chi}2348\$
total participants



evaluations received of 2348 participants









The Cultural Safety Services team launched a new podcast bringing together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, thinkers and trailblazers. The podcast explores key issues that impact cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples via powerful and robust yarning. The podcast is part of a suite of resources on cultural safety being developed by VACCHO as part of the forthcoming Cultural Safety Accreditation, a program to strengthen and prioritise culturally safe and inclusive healthcare in Victoria.



Above: Rebecca Hunt and Jill Gallagher record Episode 1 of Our Strong Voices Below. Charelle Jackson and Sheree Lowe record Episode 2 of Our Strong Voices

Below: Charelle Jackson and Sheree Lowe record Episode 2 of Our Strong Voices

Impact Report FY22

#### 1.2 Innovation and systems

**Goal:** Our Members and partners can rely on us for timely responses and high-quality action

VACCHO is undertaking several initiatives to strengthen value for Members. The Member services team is reviewing current practices and developing a Members Connection and Engagement Strategy to guide coordinated, flexible, and responsive ways of working with Members.

VACCHO conducted a survey of our Membership in June 2022. Of our 32 Member organisations, 15 (46%) responded to the survey. Our Member services team are conducting face-to-face consultations to gain further insights in the views and priorities of Members. The feedback collected will inform our strategy to continue to improve our support and services to Members.

80-99% 40-60% satisfaction rate satisfaction rate Where could What are we doing well? we improve? - providing networking - delivering support to opportunities specific workforce cohorts - advocating on behalf of - supporting Members to and representing Members build their organisational capacity - providing information and advice to Members - support quality improvement - providing education and training opportunities - providing organisational (including through governance support our registered training

organisation)

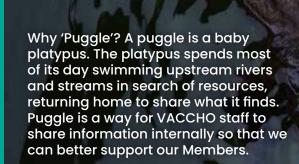
Pictured: Gunditjmara Country

#### **Launch of Puggle**

VACCHO launched our internal Relationship Management System, Puggle, in June this year. Puggle captures and records Member information into a single, streamlined, centralised system to enable greater collaboration. As we learn to optimise Puggle, it will support VACCHO's ability to plan, coordinate and monitor our work with Members more effectively. Staff usage and volumes are growing, adding to our data capability around Member interactions and support activities.

#### Development of a Client Management System for ACCOs

Together with our Members and InfoXchange, VACCHO is developing a Client Management System (CMS) to support Members to manage their non-clinical client data. A User Acceptance Testing environment has been built for two programs, 'Bringing Them Home' and 'Housing and Homelessness', which will be piloted with some ACCO sites.



#### **Transition to Medicare Web Service**

VACCHO worked with all Members across the state to support the transition to Medicare Web Services. 98% of Members transitioned to the web service as of July this year.



#### 1.3 Sustainability and growth

**Goal:** We are a vibrant, healthy, and financially strong organisation (and use that strength to support our Members)

Aboriginal self-determination is recognised as both a fundamental human right and a vehicle for achieving improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. VACCHO support members to be financially sustainable in a variety of ways, including through advocating for access to quality funding, supporting development of business models, providing information and support for funding proposals, and advocating for the transfer of power and resources from government to the sector.

#### **Advocacy for funding reform**

The Victorian ACCOs Funding Profiles Project is building a picture of the ACCOs' income models and how they are resourced to provide their range of services. Only early data is available at this point, but it already clearly shows the operational difficulties caused by the funding models in the sector.

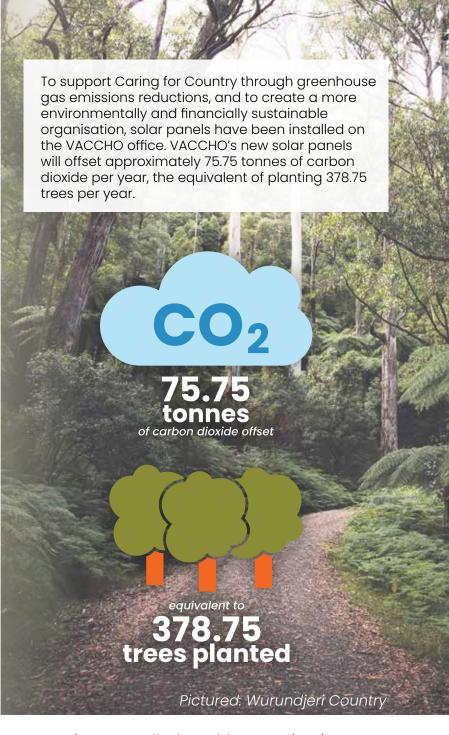
One ACCO reports that their grant funding for service delivery is 39 separate grants, with only 18% of those grants being recurrent. 50% of those grants were of only 12 months duration. The workload in running services based on these funding arrangements is an enormous challenge for ACCOs.

VACCHO will continue to use the insights from this work to map funding trends and advocate for funding reform across the sector.



## ISO 9001:2015 accredited

Demonstrating VACCHO's commitment to providing quality services to our Members, partners and stakeholders.



#### **VACCHO's funding**

Our total income grew by 67% from the previous year, when adjusted for variables such as COVID specific funding and flow through funding that is distributed to Members and approved carry forward. Despite this significant growth only 17% of grant contracts (or 12% of grant funding) were ongoing, secure funding.

VACCHO successfully secured new funding in FY 21-22 to:

- establish the Balit Durn Durn Centre
- progress Strong Voice initiatives
- develop the Victorian Aboriginal Cancer Journey Strategy
- build Health Information and Technology programs
- roll out traineeships across the state

Income from VACCHO's Cultural Safety Services grew 74% from the previous year. The Cultural Safety Services follows a social enterprise model that contributes to strengthening cultural safety across the sector, while also supporting VACCHO's financial sustainability and independence.

Category	Details	Propo of inco	Proportion of income	
	DH	41%		
	DJPR	14%		
Victorian	DPC	1%		
Government	DEECD	2%		
Funding Grants	DFFH	1%		
	PHN	1%	61%	
	NACCHO	11%		
Commonwealth Government	DoH	7%		
Funding Grants	DPMC incl NIAA	4%		
	ADHA	1%		
	NDIS (Ramahyuck auspice)	2%	24%	
Philanthropic and other grants	Other	1%	1%	
	Cultural safety services	3%		
Social Enterprises	Registered training organisation	<1%	3%	
	To Members	<1%		
Fee for service	External	<1%	<1%	
Donations	Personal and philanthropic	<1%	<1%	
Other income/revenue	Interest	<1%		
Saisi illoomoj tovondo	Other	1%	1%	
Funds carried forward	Approved c/f	10%	10%	

#### Journey to outcomes-based funding

The ACCO sectors funding model with government has been characterised by short-term, piecemeal grants for 'body parts' and 'disease'. This approach to funding has not adequately resourced the culturally responsive, wrap-around model of care that VACCHO and the ACCO sector champions and delivers to Community.

The ACCO sector has been calling for muchneeded funding reform. Part of this call has been to trial a model of outcomes-based funding between VACCHO and the Victorian Department of Health, with a view to this informing sectorwide reform. In this model, ACCO's must have the authority to identify the outcomes, develop the solutions and track their performance in self-determined ways – with access to pooled, flexible and sustainable funding to do so.

We have a policy directive for self-determination [in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework] – I'm hoping that by transitioning to outcomesbased funding we will achieve this, and by doing so, this will translate into health outcomes.

- Nicole McCartney, Chief Aboriginal Health Adviser at Department of Health & Human Services, January 2022

Over the last year, VACCHO and the Department have taken the first significant steps to making outcomes-based funding a reality.



Developed 'On Solid Ground', VACCHO's Strategic Plan and roadmap for change (launched July 2021) Department of
Health and VACCHO
staff working group
established to
identify practical
steps needed to
make the transition

VACCHO
developed an
Outcomes
Framework, with
outcomes and
indicators aligned
to the goals of our
Strategic Plan

Produced a
Baseline Report to
track progress
against. We will
report on our
outcomes in an
annual Impact
Report

VACCHO and the Department of Health hope to formalise the transition through contractual changes in FY 22-23

Pictured: Bunurong Country

Outcomes-based funding is something we have always advocated for, but we have never been this far before on the journey. I am excited that we have got this far and I'm excited by what we might achieve'

- Jill Gallagher, November 2021

#### Advocacy for infrastructure reform

VACCHO established and manages an Asset Managers Community of Practice (CoP) to provide coordinated support to Members for infrastructure needs, and to be a platform for advocacy for infrastructure reform for the sector. The CoP allows the local experience of our Members to guide our approach and shared solutions, and welcomes guest speakers from government and other sectors to improve shared knowledge and consider new opportunities.

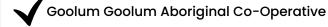
VACCHO supported seven Members who owned properties held by the Victorian Government to take the required steps to have their First Mortgage removed. This is in line with the government's commitment to hand back control of resources to Aboriginal organisations. The mortgage removals will support strong economic foundations for ACCOs into the future.



#### Mortgages removed:









NOTE: Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Co-operative (MAYSAR) and Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) have feasibility studies providing them with options, which they are considering. Mortgage removal applications to be considered in August 2023:







- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-Operative
- Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative
- Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation

#### 1.4 Workforce

**Goal:** There is a strong and able workforce, across the sector, delivering holistic health and wellbeing services to Aboriginal people.

# Launching the Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy

In collaboration with the workforce, Members and IAHA consulting, VACCHO developed and launched the Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2022-2026, which provides the sector and its funders with a practical roadmap for growing the Aboriginal Health Workforce in Victoria and addressing barriers to attraction, recruitment, retention, and development of workers. The Strategy acknowledges the strong history of the ACCO sector and their role in providing culturally safe,

responsive and holistic health and wellbeing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Victoria. It has been developed in a way that supports ACCOs to exercise their self-determination, recognising the diversity in culture and knowledge in Communities, and that the greatest success comes from place-based, community-led and governed solutions. VACCHO have commenced a program of work to deliver on the Strategy with funding from the Aboriginal Health Workforce Fund.

The first priority of the Workforce Strategy is to **Grow our Own**– increasing the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in the sector across all levels, roles and functions. VACCHO seeks to do this internally, and to influence the sector and health system to ensure this more broadly.

VACCHO's staff numbers up **14%** (March - June 2022)

**34%** of all VACCHO's staff are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (as of June 2022)



#### **Workforce gatherings**

VACCHO supports workforce skills and capability development across the sector in various ways, including convening workforce gatherings. This year, after two years of lockdowns, VACCHO was able to bring people back together to share knowledge, learn from each other and support sector development.

#### Inaugural Statewide GP Workforce Gathering

Date: May 2022 Attendance: 40 GPs attended, 7 presenters

It has been great getting people from around the state who work in the same areas of General Practice just to exchange ideas and have a great time.

- Wathaurong GP Supervisor Dr Ed Poliness

#### Social and Emotional Wellbeing Workforce Gatherings

Date: December 2021 (pictured) and May 2022 Attendance: 157 people

I have 39 years of knowledge in this sector but coming together at gatherings gives me a chance to listen and learn from others.

- participant

#### Improving Care for Aboriginal Patients (ICAP) Forum

Date: May 2022

Attendance: 53 delegates

It was so wonderful being able to meet face-to-face, have a real yarn and network with others after such a long time.

#### Koori Maternity Services Gathering and Clinical Update

Date: March 2022 Attendance:

- 20 KMS workforce members
- 14 presenters across the sector delivering professional development

- participant

#### Supporting workforce skills development



13 scholarships

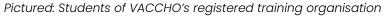
In February 2022 the Balit Durn Durn Centre awarded 13 higher education scholarships to Aboriginal students undertaking tertiary studies in a discipline related to Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB).



VACCHO successfully placed five Aboriginal medical students in cadetship roles in participating ACCOs in regional and rural areas. There has been early success in establishing and developing long-term relationships between emerging Aboriginal doctors and ACCOs.



In FY 21-22 VACCHO's registered training organisation had 143 students and supported 36 trainees. Students studied certificates and diplomas in: Leadership and Management, Counselling, Alcohol and Other Drugs, Mental Health, Community Services, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care and Practice.











#### 2.1 Empowering Community voice

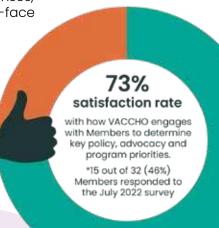
**Goal:** Aboriginal people, including those with diverse characteristics and life experiences, are supported to contribute to the health and wellbeing decisions that impact them.

#### **Health and Healing Review**

VACCHO undertook a comprehensive review of relevant evidence to inform its Health and Healing strategic actions and bring about transformative change for the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria. Two key questions guided the Health and Healing Review: 'What matters most?' and 'What works?'.

The review examined the literature, data and policy context relevant to the four Health and Healing focus areas. VACCHO conducted consultations with Members and their workforce on program priorities as part of the review. This included a survey for Community with 50 responses, a survey with ACCO workforce with 26 responses,

and online and face-to-face consultations with 100+ people who work in or with the ACCO sector.



# The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum

The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum, co-convened by VACCHO and the Minister for Health, brings together government, mainstream organisations and ACCOs to discuss a shared action plan for improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal communities in Victoria. An interim, online forum was convened in August 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, with a full in-person Forum held in April 2022 with approximately 70 attendees.

The Forum provides a critical platform for VACCHO and Members to directly engage with decision-makers on issues that matter to Community. It supports leadership on shared priorities of funding reform, self-determination, legislative reform, infrastructure, data sovereignty and prevention.

Pictured right: Karen Heap of BADAC speaks at the August Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum



The Health Partnership
Forums are also very
beneficial as you have
the Dep Sec' sitting
at the table, listening
directly to our needs etc
and you get firsthand
info on new initiatives or
funding coming out in
the future.

- ACCO CEO



#### 2.2 Research and evidence

# Goal: We are the trusted custodians of knowledge about Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing in Victoria

#### The Victorian Aboriginal Health Research Accord

To address issues with the way research in Victoria that impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is conducted, VACCHO have embarked on designing the Victorian Aboriginal Health Research Accord (the Accord) in partnership with Communities.

Currently, research in Victoria that impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may not be conducted with collective Community consent. It can lack formalised engagement processes or agreements, is not informed by Aboriginal methodology, does not address intellectual property issues, and does not result in tangible benefits to Community. Research priorities are currently established through the research agendas of mainstream institutions, and the primary benefit from research remains with the researcher and their institution.

The Victorian Aboriginal Health Research Accord, once adopted, would be an agreement between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Victoria, Victorian Government, Universities, medical research institutes and health services. The Accord will act as a quality assurance mechanism to strengthen ethical health and wellbeing research impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Victoria. When institutions become signatories to the Accord, they would commit to and be accountable for adopting the principles, protocols, and processes of the Accord within their research policies, practices, actions plans and their organisational culture.



#### Deadly Data: data sovereignty in action The Health Information and Technology (HIT) team at VACCHO has built and is managing Deadly Data™ – a **Public Health** data lake that brings together internal management data, Information primary health, and population health data important to the Development Unit ACCO sector and Communities. **Data from Torrens** University (Public Deadly Data™ is premised on Aboriginal Data Sovereignty. health and social Communities (via their local ACCOs) own their data, and determinants data) VACCHO (through our role in managing the data lake) is the custodian of the data. Deadly Data™ aims to strengthen Aboriginal Community Control over data about Aboriginal peoples. Australian Institute PATCAT of Health and (clinical To date, The objective of Deadly Data™ is to improve the Welfare (principal medical diagnosis and child 5 data sets access to and use of data by ACCOs for the benefit of data) immunisations) Aboriginal communities, by creating a standardised set have been of visualisations as well as enabling users of the portal to successfully create their own visualisations. It will be the source of truth integrated into for advocacy on behalf of Community in Victoria. **Deadly Data** The Health Information and COVID Medicare Technology team have vaccination Benefit successfully fulfilled data at a Scheme 55% of data requests point in time Claims data from VACCHO staff and Members. (Jan – July 2022) Pictured: Bunurong Country

#### 2.3 Policy and advocacy

Goal: We influence decision-makers to maximise our impact

#### Progressing key policy priorities from the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum (AHWPF)

The AHWPF has adopted the following key priorities:

- advancing self-determination
- funding reform
- Indigenous data sovereignty
- cultural safety in the mainstream health system
- infrastructure reform
- increased funding for prevention
- legislative reform.

Together with the Member's Policy Network, VACCHO developed seven policy position papers to progress these priorities. The policy positions informed development of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Agreement between ACCOs, government and mainstream stakeholders. The Agreement was ratified in August 2022 and will be a key mechanism to hold decision-makers to account.

#### Influencing aged care reform

In October 2021 VACCHO led the establishment of a new national peak body, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC), to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care providers and drive improvements in the care of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. VACCHO chairs this new Council and its directors are all proud Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people leading aged care services.

The Council has become the government's main advisory group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care. It influenced the National Aged Care Alliance (an alliance of mainstream not-for-profit aged care providers) to make improving aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a key strategic priority. NATSIAACC has become the leading voice working with the Department of Health and Aged Care on their programs to improve cultural safety and respond to the findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. NATSIAACC also successfully influenced drafting of the new Australian Aged Care Bill, resulting in amendments to the Bill exempting ACCOs from requiring a majority of independent board members, which would have weakened Community control and/or precluded ACCOs from being aged care providers.

#### 2.4 Trusted voice

Goal: We are a trusted voice for Aboriginal people.

#### **Communications and Digital Services**

Prior to May 2021, VACCHO lacked a dedicated team or function to support the organisation's broad range of communications needs.

Communications and Digital Services (CDS) was established this year, increasing our function across core streams: social media and digital, design and branding, editorial and publications, media and speaking engagements, internal and Member

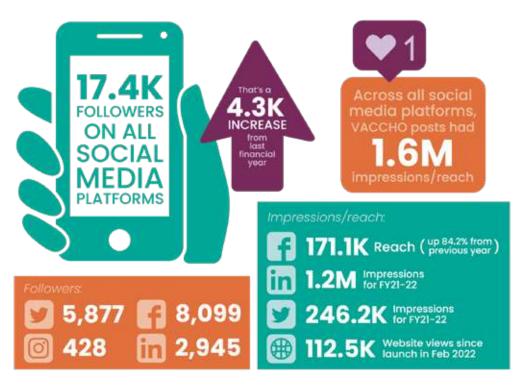
communications, planning and strategy, multimedia, and campaigns.

The newly formed team has played a critical role in strengthening VACCHO's communications and digital outputs. Over the last year, CDS worked to increase the reach, engagement and trust of stakeholders, Communities and audiences.

Increasing the team's capacity across core streams has enabled the organisation to move away from reactive, ad-hoc, outsourced, decentralised communications and digital projects and plans, allowing for more strategic, consistent and streamlined approaches to strengthen VACCHO's profile, brand and voice.

## New VACCHO website

Working with teams across the organisation, the CDS team managed the creation of VACCHO's new website, launched in February 2022. The new website is compatible with Google Analytics, allowing for greater monitoring and evaluation. The new website was designed to improve hosting of best practice resources for the sector, increase functionality, useability and accessibility for our audience, and strengthen VACCHO's voice in the sector. VACCHO utilised the news function on the website to publish sector-relevant news and op-eds, strengthening our advocacy and political voice.



#### Community Unity Immunity

The CDS team worked on the Community, Unity, Immunity campaign, a communityled initiative to encourage COVID-19 vaccinations and provide information on keeping community safe. The campaign featured culturally sensitive social media assets, posters, flyers and fact sheets with information about vaccinations and staying COVIDSafe, as well as videos featuring broadcaster Tony Armstrong and a TV commercial featuring the late Uncle Jack Charles.

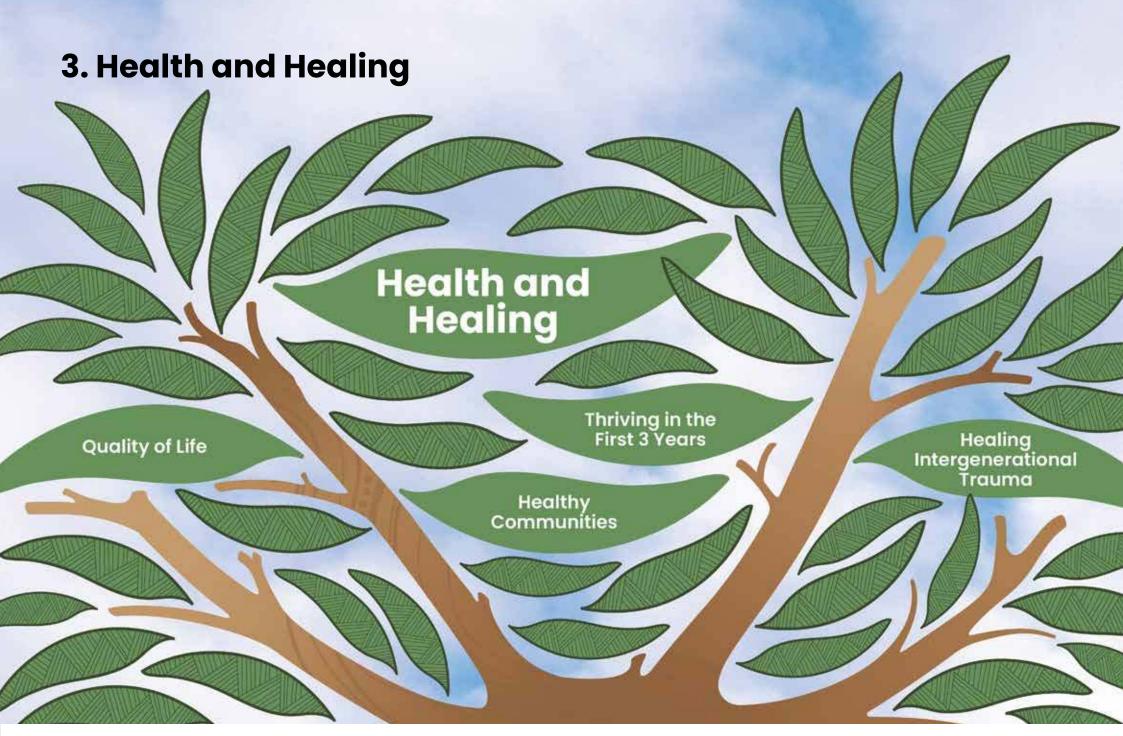
Watch the video





Reach (Facebook) = The number of people who saw any content from your page or about your page, including posts, stories, ads, social information from people who interact with your page.

Impression (LinkedIn/Twitter) = Number of views or clicks on an update/post.



#### 3.1 Healthy Communities

Goal: Aboriginal people are healthy in mind, body, and spirit

#### **Culture + Kinship pilot**

The innovative program supports Communities' connection to Culture, which in turn supports health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people in Victoria. The pilot program was delivered by three ACCOs and was designed to allow ACCOs self-determination and flexibility in designing programs based on local priorities. Fundamental to all programs was the opportunity to teach, learn and yarn about cultural knowledge between and within generations and the wider community.

VACCHO engaged Kowa, an Indigenous consultancy group, and ThinkImpact to conduct a developmental evaluation and social return on investment analysis of the Healthy Communities Culture + Kinship pilot program (full evaluation report, including SROI analysis, will be available in late 2022).

#### Participants reported:

√ Improvements to their mental wellbeing

✓ Increased knowledge of healthy lifestyle choices

✓ Increased confidence and self-esteem

Increased connection and trust with other community members

✓ Enhanced pride in Aboriginal culture

#### Member ACCOs reported:

√ Increased visibility of organisation in the Community

√ Increased reciprocity and accountability to Community

This property gives us belonging; it's like a light at the end of the tunnel saying that we're nearly there. If this wasn't here, there would be souls displaced. Our home is not just our roof, it's the land and water, that's our home.

- Healing property Elder







# Culture + Kinship Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (pictured left) was created by ACCOs and represents their vision for the Healthy Communities project. The concentric circles represent people coming together to connect about Community, Culture and Country. The yellow, orange and red represent fire - the circles symbolise a campfire as a meeting point for Community. Brown represents the connection between Country and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.

The thing I'm taking away from this camp is reconnection with culture.

- Youth camp participant

#### **Impact Yarns**

The Culture + Kinship project utilised Kowa's innovative Impact Yarns methodology to collect data on the project's impact. The approach upholds First Nations data sovereignty and centres Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing. The Impact Yarn process found that what mattered most to people was the opportunity to reconnect with Community in a way that was culturally relevant.

Through the Culture + Kinship project, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been able to reconnect with Community, Culture and Country, with flow-on benefits for their health and wellbeing.

#### Aboriginal leadership and place-based approaches

The Culture + Kinship project demonstrated the necessity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in delivering health programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Culture + Kinship projects are led by local Aboriginal leaders to respond to their communities' specific needs. Place-based approaches ensure the needs of the Community are met through their direct and active engagement. Place-based approaches support Community-identified priorities, value local knowledge, and build on social and cultural connections. Culture + Kinship demonstrated that each ACCO was able to facilitate an approach that responded to the specific local circumstances, to support connection with Culture, Country and Community and deliver health and wellbeing outcomes.

#### Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative

Ran a possum skin cloak making workshop for local women and Elders.

#### Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative

Ran a healthy lifestyle workshop for local young people.

#### Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland

Made improvements to a property which has become a community gathering place and place to care for Country.

\*Moogji was funded through a different grant (Bushfire-SEWB) but, due to similarities in the approach and outcomes, participated in the evaluation.

#### Budja Budja Aboriginal Co-operative

Ran a series of camps for primary and secondary school-aged children focused on education and activities about Aboriginal Culture.

Watch a video about the program





To see everyone connecting together through something so culturally important ... we don't see enough of this kind of thing.

- Workshop participant



#### The Beautiful Shawl Project continues to promote cancer screening

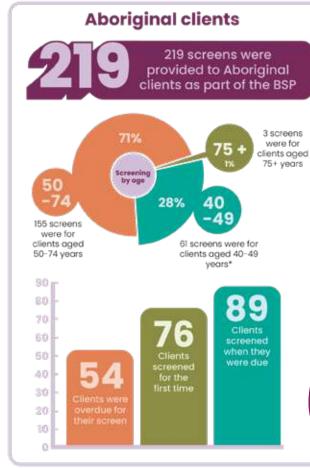
VACCHO and BreastScreen Victoria's Beautiful Shawl Project continued in FY22 with great results. The collaboration increased screening participation by providing screening services at ACCOs, where Community members are comfortable to attend, in a self-determined, culturally safe way. It also builds knowledge in the ACCO workforce to improve cancer care pathways. The successful approach of this project is informing the development of new, culturally safe initiatives for cervical and bowel screening.

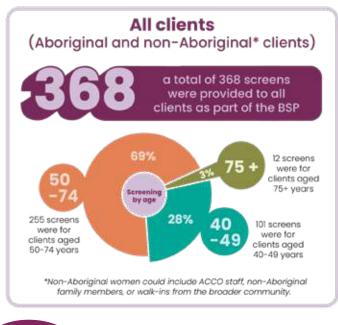


It was deadly. I am 56 and never had my breast tested before. It was awesome from the time I walked in the bus seeing our young women greet us and make sure we were all ok. It was a very safe space for Community to come.

- BSP Client







12
ACCOS

DWECHS
Winda-Mara
Gunditjmara
Kirrae
Wathaurong
Rumbalara

Ramahyuck (Morwell) Ramahyuck (Sale) GEGAC LEAHA MDAS (Kerang)

MDAS (Swan Hill)

Pictured L-R: Amanda Morgan and Aunty Carmel Hood wrap themselves in Amanda's stunning shawl design for Gippsland & East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative (GECAC)

#### **Introducing FoodPATH**

A 'food environment' shapes the way that we select, buy, and eat food. It is the physical, social, cultural, economic and policy conditions that influence the way we make food decisions. For example, food advertising, promotion, price, and accessibility (among other things) make up a food environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, post-colonisation living means adopting western values but having to fight to bring back cultural customs and ways of living to foster wellbeing.

VACCHO and Deakin University have been funded by VicHealth to implement the Food Policies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (FoodPATH) research project and answer the question:

What are considered acceptable and effective policy actions to improve food environments and nutrition for Aboriginal communities in Victoria?

In collaboration with Madison Connors and Jacob Komesaroff, VACCHO's Nutrition team developed a cultural animation that tells the story of a young Aboriginal boy and his Uncle as they navigate their food environment, and how this has changed since colonisation.



#### 3.2 Thriving in the first three years

Goal: Aboriginal children get the best start in life.

# Koori Melbourne Initial Screening Test (MIST) project

VACCHO's Eye Health Program worked in collaboration with Mungabareena Aboriginal Cooperative to develop a culturally appropriate eye screening tool for children. Koorie MIST (pictured below) is a self-directed training kit designed to help parents/guardians and early-childhood educators check the vision of Koorie children, especially those between 3–5 years old. 48 Koori MIST kits are being rolled out, prioritising early childhood services of VACCHO's Members and Aboriginal Best Start programs.



#### **SISTAQUIT**

Improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and babies through tobacco cessation initiatives is a key priority for the Koori Maternity Services (KMS) team.

KMS have been working in partnership with the University of Newcastle and the ACCO sector on the delivery of evidence-based smoking cessation training underpinned by culture. SISTAQUIT (now known as iSISTAQUIT) is a tobacco cessation training program designed for Aboriginal Health workers, midwives and doctors to support best practice and culturally competent smoking cessation care.

To date, over half of our KMS services have registered to undertake SISTAQUIT training or are currently participating in other culturally safe tobacco cessation training initiatives. Research has found that 90% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have tried to quit smoking, and that quitting suddenly was associated with staying smoke-free. SISTAQUIT builds on this positive step, supporting health workers to embed culturally safe care, including cessation supports, into everyday practice. Successful smoking cessation programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women during pregnancy will significantly contribute to closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and babies.

The KMS team have also collaborated with the Victorian Department of Health on Early Years initiatives, including an Aboriginal-led co-design process to ensure early years health service delivery best meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers, children and families.

#### 3.3 Healing intergenerational trauma

**Goal:** Aboriginal people experience good social and emotional wellbeing, and have the opportunity to heal from trauma.

#### Launch of the Balit Durn Durn Centre

VACCHO launched the Balit Durn Durn Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing in May 2022. Balit Durn Durn means strong brain, mind, intellect and sense of self in Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung language.

The Balit Durn Durn Centre is an initiative designed to foster innovation and improvement in social and emotional wellbeing practice, policy and research. It coordinates a collaborative approach to the expansion of SEWB services in ACCOs and mainstream mental health services.

The Centre draws on clinical, research and Community expertise to coordinate best practice across services through:

- clinical, organisational and cultural governance planning and development
- workforce development: training, professional development activities and supporting the proposed scholarship program
- guidance and practical supports to build clinical effectiveness in assessment, diagnosis, and treatment
- developing and disseminating research and evidence for social and emotional wellbeing models and for convening associated regional and local communities of practice.

The Balit Durn Durn Centre is a key outcome from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. The Commission marked the first time in history that Aboriginal leaders, organisations, people, families, carers, and Communities were given the opportunity to have their voices and experiences included in a redesign of the mental health system.

The launch built on the strength and advocacy of Aboriginal communities and leaders; the vision set out in Balit Durn Durn, VACCHO's submission to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System; and Balit Murrup, the Victorian Government's ten-year Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework 2017–2027.

Early priorities of the Balit Durn Durn Centre is to support SEWB workforce expansion across the State, supporting ACCOs to provide wraparound services to Community. The Centre has already awarded 13 higher education scholarships in SEWB areas.

The Balit Durn Durn Centre will support codesign of two Healing Centres. The Centre aims to bring together the SEWB system, to ensure there is no wrong door for Mob accessing services and working with mainstream to value the Aboriginal SEWB model.



#### 3.4 Quality of life

**Goal:** Aboriginal people who are experiencing poor health or disability can live in a way that is meaningful to them

# Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

VACCHO set up and promoted nine consultation sessions between the Commissioner and VACCHO Members to support Aboriginal people with lived experience engage with the Royal Commission. VACCHO also provided strong advocacy on the systemic issues experienced by Aboriginal communities as a result of the failings of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

In a detailed submission to the Royal Commission, VACCHO outlined issues in the sector, including barriers to ACCOs becoming NDIS providers and the lack of culturally safe disability support services available for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples with disabilities.

VACCHO advocated for Aboriginal community members who experience disability to be supported by ACCOs and Aboriginal staff, acknowledging that they are best placed to provide culturally safe, trauma-informed and person-centred approaches. The submission centred Culture as a key protective factor for Aboriginal people with disability.



Aboriginal people experiencing disability have a right to Culture, cultural safety, and are entitled to be able to choose an ACCO provider of disability supports.

 Excerpt from VACCHO's submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

# Gunaikurnai Country

#### **Conclusion**

Transitioning towards an outcomes-focused approach requires a whole of organisation transformation. Our Strategic Plan On Solid Ground provides a clear roadmap for change - selfdetermined by VACCHO - enabling sustained, multi-year effort towards our goals. It is as an opportunity to think and act in a more integrated and holistic way, to achieve health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Moving away from activity-based reporting, to measure and report on outcomes and impacts, takes resources and focused effort. An enabling funding environment is also critical. VACCHO is on a journey to strengthen our monitoring, evaluation, and data capability, and transform our ways of working. We anticipate the results of this work will increasingly be reflected in our annual Impact Reports. In this way we will be more accountable to Members, Community, and funding partners, for the change we want to see.

VACCHO would like to especially acknowledge the Victorian Department of Health for taking the journey with us towards outcomes-based funding.

As always, VACCHO would like to acknowledge the tireless work of our 32 Member organisations and their staff, who provide vital services across Victoria to our Communities.



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