

31 August 2023

# Position Statement



## Infrastructure

### Background

The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Sector is calling for the Victorian Government to commit to improve infrastructure for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs)/ Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), crippled by a legacy of under-investment in infrastructure.

### Introduction

Adequate and future-focused investment in ACCHO and ACCO infrastructure is key to realising true self-determination, so Aboriginal organisations can offer the best quality service to their clients. Infrastructure includes the offices, housing and other facilities, their accessibility and suitability for use, as well as digital infrastructure and IT systems. Infrastructure is the backbone enabling a skilled and safe workforce to serve and interact with a consistent client base, to build trust and achieve health outcomes.

VACCHO Members contributed to an extensive mapping process in 2012 to develop a needs analysis for ACCO infrastructure. This needs analysis was titled 'Assessment of the Current and Future Requirements of key Indigenous Organisations in Victoria'. The recommendations and funding outlined as critical needs have never been acted on or funded.

We note that when developing the needs analysis report, the Victorian Government investigated 32 sites and that 17 were not suitable for their current purpose, and that 21 buildings did not meet current standards and were non-compliant. There has not been a proper assessment since this time, however, ACCHOs and ACCOs have reported that infrastructure needs have grown.

Much time has passed since 2012 and population growth projections at the time underestimated the increase in demand. This process will need to incorporate the updated asset and needs assessment, and forward projections of major and minor capital and maintenance costs. Infrastructure plans will be designed to accommodate Community needs, updated population growth projections (drawing from the 2019 SVA report), and updated service and workforce demand projections.



Depending on the funding for the master plans, ACCHOs and ACCOs may choose to model plans for regional collaborations between services, to develop regional growth and shared service plans. ACCHO and ACCOs' master plans will include costing for investment in all forms of infrastructure, from major capital investment in new multipurpose service facilities, to investment in digital infrastructure and IT systems, fuel/hybrid vehicles, COVID safe workplaces etc.

With recent advancements through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, VACCHO wants to see a new model of investment which sees a proportion of all mainstream funding go to ACCHOs and ACCOs. The most efficient way to achieve this is through a coordinated fund to enable a whole-of-government approach. This is part of the Victorian Government's commitment to transfer power and resources.

### VACCHO Position

All ACCHOs and ACCOs should have self-determined, fit-for-purpose, sustainable and culturally safe facilities. These facilities require adequate clinical and multi-purpose service spaces to meet projected demand and industry standards (e.g. National Construction Code and Disability Discrimination Act).. These Community services should be enabled to grow and evolve into well-designed facilities, with potential for co-located services so that further investment is not immediately necessary once finalised. ACCHOs, ACCOs and their Community should be involved in the design of infrastructure improvements.

Ultimately, ACCHO and ACCO infrastructure will be effectively utilised to deliver high-calibre services to their Community, so the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Victoria can be closed.

### Recommendations

#### RECOMMENDATION 1:

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 for all Victorian ACCO's.

#### RECOMMENDATION 2:

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. Prepare and submit a business case for government consideration to establish the ACCO Perpetual Infrastructure Fund, including to meet all immediate needs.

#### RECOMMENDATION 3:

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.

## References

Victorian Government, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV). *Assessment of the Current and Future Infrastructure Requirements of Key Indigenous Organisations in Victoria*. Melbourne: Department of Planning and Community Development, 2013. Published April 2013.

SVA Consulting. *Demand for Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria*. Report prepared for the Aboriginal Executive Council. Melbourne: SVA Consulting, 2019. Accessed July 20, 2021. 36. VACCHO updated SVA Report on Victorian Population in 2022.

Commonwealth of Australia. *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2020. Accessed July 8, 2021, 10, <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/national-agreement-ctg.pdf>.

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