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Cover image: Photo from the VACCHO Statewide Aboriginal Health Worker and Practitioner Gathering in Lorne in June 2023, with overlaid elements from On Solid Ground – Madison Connors | Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Gamilaroi

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.

VACCHO respectfully acknowledge that our office is based on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

We pay our respects to Wurundjeri ancestors and caretakers of this land, and to Elders both past and present.

We extend our respect to all Traditional Owners and Elders across the lands on which we and our Members work, and acknowledge their everlasting connection to Country, Culture and Community. They have paved the way, with strength and fortitude, for our future generations.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.

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Foreword from VACCHO CEO, Jill Gallagher AO

Ngatta (which means hello in my traditional Gunditjmara language)

Welcome to VACCHO's Impact Report for the 2023 Financial year.

The annual Impact Report is VACCHO's tool to measure and showcase the impact VACCHO – in support of Members – has for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities across Victoria.

Reporting in this way strengthens our accountability back to Members, Community and our funding partners, by demonstrating how we are delivering on the goals we set out to achieve.

This year's report highlights the many positive impacts VACCHO and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) have on the health and wellbeing of Communities across Victoria.

The last twelve months have thrown several challenges in our direction – but as always ACCOs have been innovative and dynamic in their responses drawing on Aboriginal culture to apply Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing to support Community. One of the biggest challenges of the last twelve months came when severe flooding events had major impacts on Aboriginal Communities across the state. I was incredibly proud of the rapid response from Community who stood united to support one another during these difficult times.

It was extremely moving to see Members and their dedicated staff provide much needed assistance to families who were experiencing extremely difficult circumstances. It was also heartening to see the influx of generosity and support shown by the community as part of VACCHO's Flood Appeal Donation Drive – which saw hundreds of people come forward to donate important items. VACCHO Members did some inspiring work – assisting with Community Barbeques for Emergency Service workers, whilst working with VACCHO to distribute donated supplies to families across the state.

This past year VACCHO has continued to be a leading voice for change in several key policy areas – including justice health, social



and emotional wellbeing, self-determination, and ensuring services are accessible to Community and safe from the damaging blights of racism and discrimination. VACCHO's 2022 Victorian Election Platform demanded that Aboriginal health and wellbeing be a priority for all parties, all politicians, and all Victorians. VACCHO has worked closely with Members and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) to call for urgent action to end Aboriginal deaths in custody and address the completely avoidable loss of lives that continue to shatter the Community in Victoria.

I have been proud to see VACCHO take a strong stance in backing a Yes' Vote for having an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. As the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing in Victoria, VACCHO believe that having an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice enshrined in Australia's Constitution is critical to addressing the health and wellbeing inequalities that continue to devastate Community.

It's also critical that we look ahead and cast our eyes to future generations. I was filled with pride when 65 students received their diplomas at VACCHO's Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Graduation Ceremony at the Melbourne Museum in October 2022. To see the joy and elation of family and friends in attendance reinforced the strength and power of Aboriginal culture.

VACCHO's Education and Training Unit (ETU) continues to play a key role in achieving the short and long-term goals of VACCHO's

Membership, as well as the development of a highly skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce and Aboriginal communitycontrolled health sector in Victoria.

I'd like to end by mentioning one of my most memorable moments of the last twelve months, which is pictured to the right. It was a spectacular performance courtesy of the Deadly Koondoom Yarkeen Karweeyn Dance Group during the VACCHO Members Meeting at Lake Condah. The performance was incredible but the one thing that left me awestruck was the sight of one of the dancers who would have been about four years of age. Seeing this young man painted up, smiling, and so wrapped up and proud of his culture was incredibly inspiring. It tells me that Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations are delivering vital impacts for Community. It tells me that our Boorai - our future generations are strong in Aboriginal culture and that as a workforce we are making great gains to supporting thriving, healthy Aboriginal Communities.



About us

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 27 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.



VACCHO Members and Associate Members



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 pre-birth to the Dreaming. We want to secure sustainable, long-term growth and independence according to the needs and aspirations of Community.



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 VACCHO and Members 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.



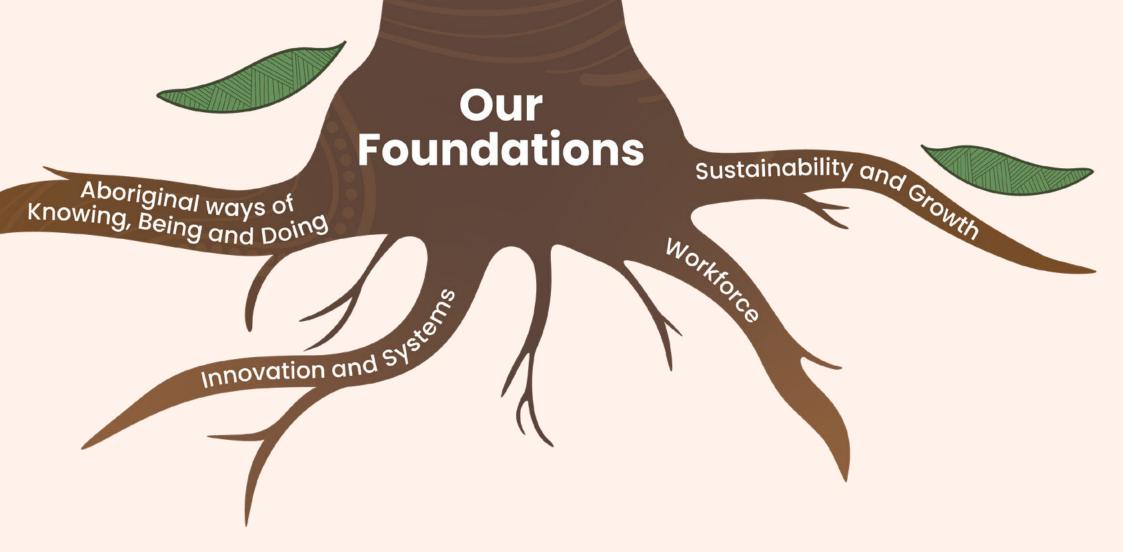
On these foundations we grow our Strong Voice, reaching high and wide like branches of a tree.

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 decisionmakers on the issues that matter most to our Communities.

From these branches, new leaves grow.

Our Communities will flourish and we will see Health and Healing. By prioritising the early years, our children will thrive and get the best start in life, supported by thriving families. Social and emotional wellbeing services ground healing in Culture and will support our Communities to heal from intergenerational trauma. We will work to improve care pathways so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Elders experiencing poor health and/or disability receive appropriate care and support and have better quality of life. We will focus on prevention, to promote healthy communities: communities in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are healthy in mind, body, and spirit.

VACCHO updated our Strategic Plan: On Solid Ground in FY23 to reflect the findings from a Health and Healing review. Access our refreshed strategic plan on our website.



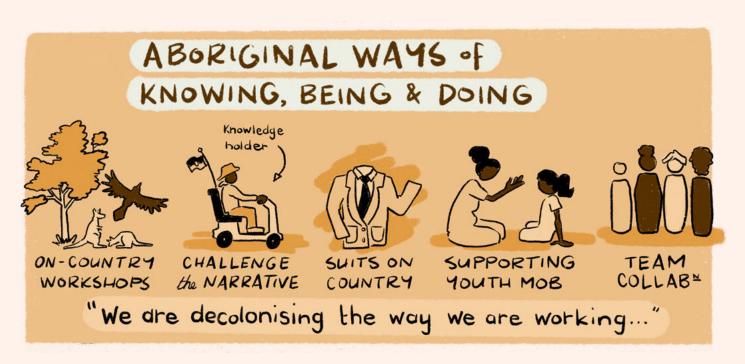
1. Our Foundations

1.1 Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing

Goal: Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing are central to the way we work

Decolonising ways of working

The Balit Durn Durn Centre was established in May 2022 with a mission to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) is understood and embedded in service delivery. At the heart of the Balit Durn Durn Centre's impact lies the commitment to teamwork and placing Culture at the core of all endeavours.



The Centre is pioneering innovative approaches and modelling Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing. The Centre is challenging the narrative for how to do business, such as:

- taking the 'work' outside on-Country and inviting our stakeholders to join us to build their awareness and understanding
- convening 'knowledge holders' (rather than expert panels) to amplify and prioritise lived and living experience
- supporting youth Mob to grow into leadership roles and take the reins, including for an Aboriginal youth-led retreat to develop a youth response to healing
- focusing on team collaboration, emphasising caucus, and operating in a non-hierarchical structure.

The collaborative efforts of the Balit Durn Durn Centre's diverse and dedicated team have been instrumental in honouring and respecting Culture, Country, the traditions, values, and knowledge systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Communities.

Naanggabun Yarning

Naanggabun Yarning is a strengths-based peer group reflective practice framework that was developed with Aboriginal Health Workers in Victoria. It provides a cultural model for staff to explore their ways of working and reflect on their impact. Eighteen VACCHO staff completed a twoday workshop to learn the Naanggabun Yarning practice. Staff found the training useful and increased their skills, knowledge and confidence to facilitate and participate in peer-reflective practice. Elements of Naanggabun Yarning have been woven into VACCHO teams' end-of-year impact reflection workshops, bringing Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing into our annual organisational monitoring, evaluation and learning cycles.

"This training was valuable and has been transformative, I will take these skills into my life."

- staff feedback

Cultural Safety Services



VACCHO's Cultural Safety Training is strengthening people's awareness and understanding of Aboriginal Cultures and history and working towards creating more culturally safe practices and spaces.

Over 25% of participants work in the health and wellbeing sector

1.2 Innovation and systems

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



Launch of a Client and Case Management System a gamechanger for Members' non-clinical services

Together with Members and InfoXchange, VACCHO have developed a Client and Case Management System (CMS) for ACCOs' non-clinical services. The sector has long been expressing the need for a system like this, and now it is here!

Previously client records were paper-based or fractured across multiple IT platforms for each service area – creating inefficiencies and obscuring the full view of a client. The new CMS simplifies case management by bringing non-clinical services into one standardized and user-friendly system that can be used by Members.

"You've got me for another ten years now we have the system."

- Ramahyuck staff member



Through a Member-led design process, the CMS has been expanded to include 14 service areas. In FY23, six Members successfully trialled the CMS and both Ramahyuck and Bendigo & District Aboriginal Corporation (BDAC) 'went live,' with more scheduled to follow.

The CMS delivers huge benefits to Member ACCOs and the Communities they serve by:

- providing a single view of a client across all service areas, enabling holistic, person-centred, and continuity of care.
- reducing the reporting burden, with the capability to generate reports to meet different funders' needs, saving the workforce time and effort so that they can focus on their Community.
- being mobile and accessible workers can access the system on the go wherever they are via the mobile and tablet application, keeping on top of their case management notes in real time.
- implementing in the future SMS messaging functionality so that reminders can be sent to clients about appointments or bulk messages about upcoming events.
- improving workforce safety through accurate records and safety alerts when needed.
- capturing the wrap-around support and services that ACCOs provide to Communities. Often this work goes unacknowledged and is underfunded the CMS makes it visible.

1.3 Sustainability and Growth

Goal: We are a vibrant, healthy, and financially strong sector

Wins in funding reform

VACCHO and our Members have continued our strong advocacy for funding reform to the sector. In FY23 we had some wins!

VACCHO's funding from the Victorian Department of Health will transition to a self-determined outcomes-based model from 1 July 2023, pooling multiple short-term grants into one larger allocation. This is breakthrough for the sector.

ACCOs have traditionally been funded by government through shortterm, piece-meal grants for projects that align with the government priorities of the day. Outcomes-based funding allows VACCHO to focus on the change we want to see for Members and Community, and selfdetermine how we will achieve that change, with access to pooled, flexible, and longer-term funding. It will support:

- · Increased self-determination for how funds are used;
- More integrated and holistic programs and services; Reduced administrative and reporting burden;
- Better job security for staff and therefore improved workforce retention and development;
- Better health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

For our Members, the Victorian Department of Health has commitment to move all funding for service delivery to four-year funding contracts starting from 1 July 2023. This is a significant achievement that will have a tangible impact on Members' operations, help attract and retain the workforce and support long-term planning. They have also agreed to a longer-term project to plan the transition to self-determined outcomesbased funding. We call on other funders to follow suit. Through the Victorian ACCOs Funding Profiles Project, VACCHO is collecting data from Members on their income streams, the nature of the income (ongoing or fixed term) and the burden of reporting associated with the income. It highlights the operating challenges created by funding models to the sector. By tracking funding trends to our Members, VACCHO is strengthening our evidence and advocacy for funding reform and supporting Members to benchmark their income profile.

On average Members are providing:

- 113 reports to funding agencies over the year.
- This means they complete a report on average every 2.3 days.
- This means that, on average, they need to produce a report for every \$25,600 received.



Nurturing strong, healthy, and self-determining partnerships

Essential to the sustainability and growth of the ACCO sector is the full realisation of self-determination. Shared decision-making and the transfer of power and resources from government to the sector is achieved through genuine partnerships. To nurture strong, healthy, and self-determining partnerships, VACCHO engaged Karabeena Consulting to support the development of a new partnership review tool and process. The tool was developed and trialled in collaboration with the Department of Health and the Department of Families, Fairness, and Housing. It focuses on partnership principles and practices that are essential for strengthening ACCO-mainstream partnerships and enabling self-determination.

The Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap finds that 'Governments are not yet sufficiently investing in partnerships or enacting the sharing of power that needs to occur if decisions are to be made jointly.' Considering this, VACCHO will continue to trial the tool to strengthen our partnerships and advance selfdetermination.

Getting investment in ACCO infrastructure on the agenda

Over the past year VACCHO have strengthened its relationship with the Department of Health (DHV) and Victorian Health Building Authority (VHBA), to address the historical lack of investment in ACCO buildings and facilities.

VACCHO, DHV, VHBA and two Members— Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-Operative (DDACL) and Njernda Aboriginal Corporation (Njernda)—developed and submitted a major Business Case to the 2023/24 Budget process. It sought funds for land acquisition, with a view to a Stage 2 submission for the design and build of new holistic health hubs in Cranbourne and Echuca.

In a tight budget year, the Business Case was not successful, but it is only the start. The partnership has generated a government commitment to develop a minimum of 12 new infrastructure business cases with VACCHO and ACCOs over the following two budget cycles, including a resubmission of the DDACL and Njernda projects. It was a historic moment - the first time a Minister for Health had put forward a major capital business case in partnership with VACCHO and ACCOs.

"This achievement is the result of the commitment and dedication of so many people. I'd like to acknowledge the VACCHO staff for their guidance, support, knowledge, and skillsets during this process. Each and every one has been amazing."

amazin

- DDACL

The Business Case shone a light on the critical under-funding of ACCO's infrastructure and made a powerful case for investment, demonstrating:

- the failing assets and significant need for investment in ACCO infrastructure by government
- the Aboriginal population projections and growing demand for services
- how the investment would reduce demand and net cost to the health system
- how the investment would significantly improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Victorian Aboriginal people
- opportunities to deliver on policy commitments as well as priorities in other portfolios including in early years education, justice, and family (services provided by ACCO's wrap-around support models).

VACCHO has also worked with VHBA to ensure Members have access to their competitive funding rounds for infrastructure maintenance. Also, to review and revise guidelines so they are appropriate for ACCOs, whose regular funding arrangements do not provide funds for ongoing maintenance personnel or activities. Previously only about half of members were eligible for this funding, but from the 2023/24 round, all Members will be eligible and able to access a more streamlined process with higher chance of success.

These engagements have built awareness that investment in ACCO infrastructure will strengthen the overall health system, while ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have access to quality community-controlled health services.

Financially strong and sustainable

VACCHO is working towards a more secure and diversified income base, for self-determination. Our total income, adjusted for one-off variables, grew by 13% in FY 22-23 compared to the previous year. We have slightly less funding from the Victorian Government, slightly more from the Commonwealth and stable income from other sources.

While still low, there was a positive trend in the security of our funding. 17% of our funding contracts provided recurrent/secure funding—the same as in FY 21-22—but by dollar value this is 26% of our income, compared to only 12% in the previous year. Across the sector, funding security is key to improving health and wellbeing outcomes. It allows us to attract and retain workforce, and plan with confidence.

In FY 22-23 we also achieved a long-standing aim to transition our funding from the Victorian Department of Health to multi-year, pooled, outcomes-based funding, commencing 1 July 2023. One funding agreement will replace dozens, with our Strategic Plan providing the framework for successful outcomes. The positive impact of this will be seen over the coming year.

Category	Details	Proportion c	of income
Victorian Government Funding Grants	Department of Health	43%	
	Department of Jobs, Precincts & Regions	5%	
	Department of Premier & Cabinet	0%	
	Department of Education	4%	54.26%
	Department of Families, Fairness & Housing	1%	
	Sustainability Victoria	<1%	
	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	<1%	
	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation	10%	
Commonwealth Government Funding Grants	Department of Health and Aged Care	9%	
	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet incl National Indigenous Australians Agency	6%	
	Australian Digital Health Agency	1%	27.54%
	National Disability Insurance Scheme (Ramahyuck auspice)	2%	
	Primary Health Network	0%	
	Rural Workforce Agency Victoria	<1%	
	The Lowitja Institute	<1%	
Philanthropic and	University of Melbourne	<1%	0.58%
other grants	Palliative Care Victoria	<1%	0.58%
	Other	<1%	
Social Enterprises	Cultural Safety Services	1%	1.42%
Social Enterprises	Registered Training Organisation	0%	1.4276
Fee for service	To Members	<1%	0.21%
ree for service	External	0%	0.21%
Donations	Personal and philanthropic	<1%	0.11%
Other income/ revenue	Interest	2%	2 50%
	Rent	1%	3.50%
Funds carried forward	Approved c/f	12%	12.38%



Left to right: Peter Waples-Crowe of Thorne Harbour Health, Natalie Bassett-Bokic and Imogen Whittaker of VACCHO, and Elle Void of Transgender Victoria at IDAHOBIT celebration morning tea in VACCHO office.

Rainbow Mob

VACCHO embraces the diversity of our Rainbow Mob and is working to ensure our workplace is welcoming and inclusive for all LGBTQIASB+ people. In 2023, 100% of VACCHO staff completed online training in LGBTQIASB+ inclusive practice in addition to face-to-face tailored Rainbow Mob workshops, building staff knowledge and understanding. Our Human Resources system, policies, and procedures have been updated to reflect Rainbow Tick Accreditation standards to create a safe work environment for all. We have a Rainbow Mob working group that are raising awareness and celebrating our diverse community and their contributions. We are also producing accessible and informative resources – check out Episode 3 of VACCHO's Our Strong Voices podcast 'Rainbow Mob and Intersectionality'.

VACCHO are here to support our Members with LGBTQIASB+ inclusion and Rainbow Tick Accreditation, to ensure services are safe and inclusive. For Members that want more information, resources, and support in this space, visit the Rainbow Tick Accreditation page on the VACCHO website and join the Rainbow Mob Community of Practice.

Listen

Our Strong Voices: Cultural Safety and Rainbow Mob & Intersectionality.

Hear from members of the Rainbow Mob community share their reflections and lived experience on cultural safety.



Rainbow Mob and Intersectionality



1.4 Workforce

As of June 2023:

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

The first priority of VACCHO's Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy is to Grow our Own – increasing the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people employed in the sector across all levels, roles, and functions. VACCHO seeks to do this internally and to support the sector and health system to ensure this more broadly. We are working towards a target to have at least 50% of all staff at VACCHO identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

60%

of the Executives

(Directors, COO

and CEO) are

Aboriginal

The VACCHO approach

Students that study and train with VACCHO experience wrap-around support, including mentorship from an Aboriginal mentor throughout their journey, empowering them to achieve their goals and career aspirations.

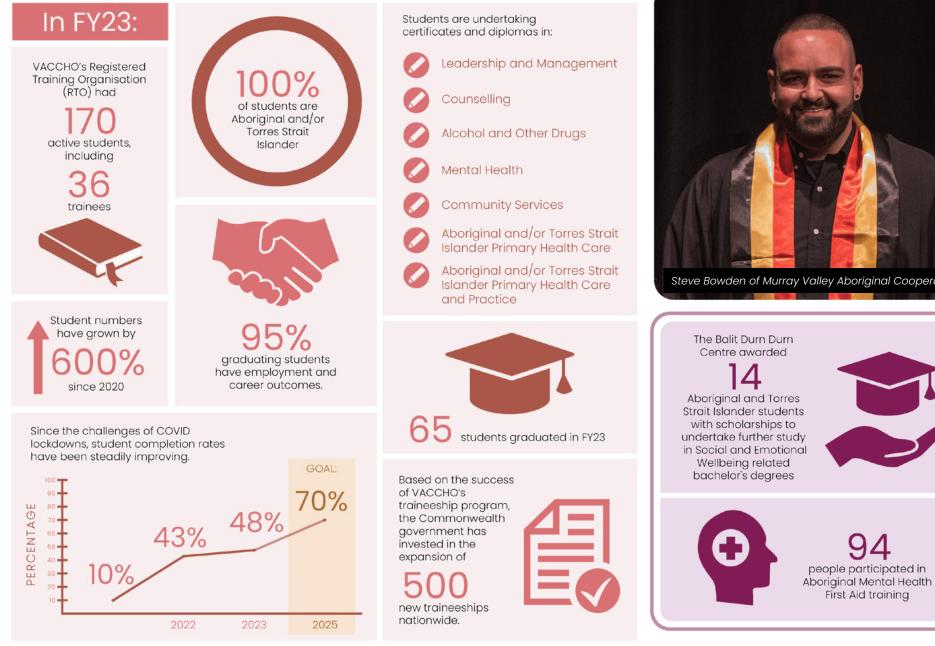
Learning approaches are tailored to meet the needs of our students, incorporating Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing and the 'Eight Ways of Aboriginal Learning, Aboriginal Pedagogy' framework. This supports better learning outcomes for students and sets them up to provide holistic and healing models-of-care to Community.

Flexible training and education options are also offered, including regional training. Small class sizes foster strong relationships and ensure students get the attention they need from their instructors. Collectively, these approaches are driving higher student numbers and improving completion rates.

VACCHO's RTO works closely with our Members to understand their service demands and workforce needs, to ensure our education and training offerings are building a fit-for-purpose ACCO workforce now and into the future.

Pictured: VACCHO staff as at December 2022

Building the current and future ACCO workforce



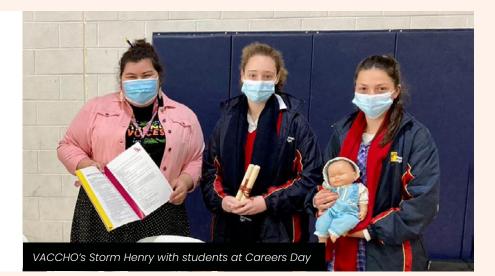
Steve Bowden of Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative

First Aid training

Impact Report FY23

Promoting career pathways

VACCHO held two 'Careers Days' in Reservoir and Frankston to promote career pathways in ACCOs and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing more broadly. With the help of Koori Education Support Officers, ten schools were involved and over 120 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their parents, and families participated. Information and resources were shared on training, study, and job options through stalls hosted by ACCOs, Indigenous Units from universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions, hospitals, the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, and VACCHO's Education and Training Unit. Students heard from role models including Aboriginal Medical Students, leaders in Aboriginal health, and Elders, inspiring them to consider their future career options.



Grow our own - supporting the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors

VACCHO's Medical Cadetship Program placed five Aboriginal Medical Students in five Member ACCOs for paid cadetships. The Program aimed to support the professional development of emerging Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander doctors and foster long-term connections with Member ACCOs. The program worked to support a pipeline for career development and encourage the next generation of doctors to work in ACCOs with Community.

VACCHO conducted an evaluation of the pilot and found that, while the Program had its challenges, it delivered benefits to both students and hosting ACCOs. Cadets were able to learn from Aboriginal Health Workers/Practitioners, Midwives, Nurses, Doctors, and other hosting ACCO staff to deepen their understanding of ACCOs, and the wrap-around, holistic health, wellbeing, and social services that they provide to Community. Cadets reported valuing the opportunity to connect with Community, build their professional network, and solidify their knowledge in Community health. Encouragingly, there are early indications that the Program positively influenced most Cadets' aspirations to follow a General Practice, rural, and/or ACCO career pathway. The full evaluation report is forthcoming and will be available on VACCHO's website.

Feedback from Cadets:

"Having this experience helped me start off my whole career."

"Overall I had a wonderful and valuable work experience."

"[I] thoroughly loved the time."

"It's been a wonderful experience. I am so grateful to have been a part of it." "We need to strategically think about buildings, space, fleet, locations and how many staff we are likely to accommodate, and this modelling will definitely help with our long-term planning for this"

- BDAC

Proactive workforce planning to meet Community need

VACCHO and Social Ventures Australia conducted Workforce Projections Modelling with four Members - Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC), Dhawurd Wurrung Elderly & Community Health (DWECH), Ramahyuck, and Rumbalara. The model forecasts ACCOs' workforce needs 15 years into the future based on expected population growth and service demand. It provides critical evidence to support ACCOs with their long-term workforce, services, and infrastructure planning, and to apply for funding to meet these needs. Already the workforce model has supported two additional ACCOs (Njernda and DDACL) with business case development for major infrastructure investments. The workforce model demonstrates the broad scope and size of our sector, highlighting the essential role ACCOs play in Victoria's health, wellbeing, and social services systems and beyond.

"We have been able to use this modelling to apply for growth funding [and] help develop our strategic plan"

- DWECH

"It allows us to better strategize and plan for our more immediate and longer term needs for our workforce and their development."

- Rumbalara

"... will benefit our strategic planning as we continue to move forward in a period of considerable reform, growth and progress towards self-determination for our Community"

- Rumbalara

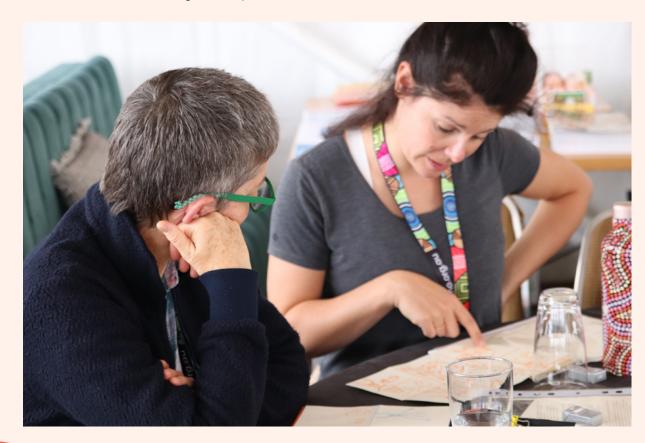
What did it find?

The workforce model predicts that the four participating ACCOs will require their workforce to increase an average 120% by 2037, to meet the forecast increase in service demand of 102% and the forecast population growth of 74% in the same timeframe. The model predicted the top critical roles for the future include Aboriginal Health Workers and Practitioners, Caseworkers and Managers across Family Services, Aged Care, and Disability. It also predicted top growth service areas include in the clinics, home care, family services, disability services, and early education.

Analysis of publicly available and project data showed that there was an estimated average workforce increase of 5.1% across 23 Member ACCOs from 2021 -2022 (with significant variability between ACCOs). With respect to the workforce modelling forecasts, at this rate workforce growth will not meet future demand. We call for continued and increased investment to support the growth and development of our ACCO workforce. We also call for increased investment in and focus on prevention to reduce the projected demand on services.

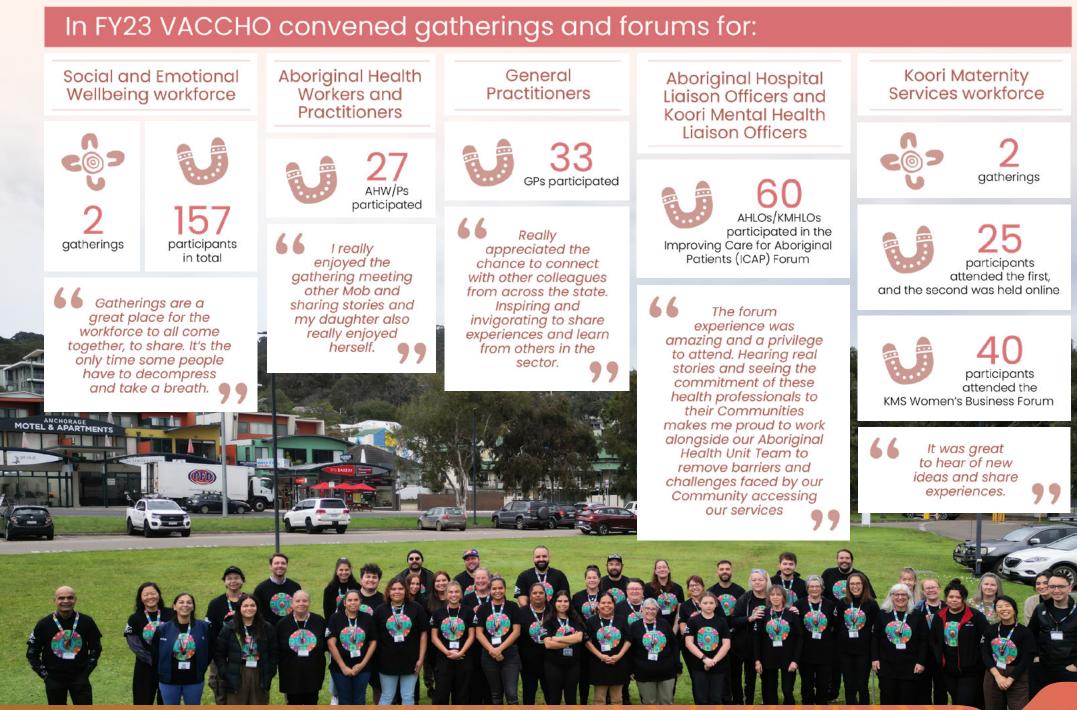
Workforce Gatherings

Working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing is a challenging but rewarding career. Gatherings and forums are an essential space for workforce cohorts to come together for peer-to-peer support, to reflect, learn, and heal. VACCHO workforce gatherings focus on Cultural immersion, building connections, and providing professional development opportunities. Through these gatherings, the workforce can share their challenges and priorities and celebrate their work and achievements.





Left and above: Statewide GP Gathering, May 2023 Opposite: Statewide Aboriginal Health Worker and Practitioner Gathering, June 2023



Strong Voice

lich and Evidence

Enpowering community voice

de los de

Trusted Voice

2. Strong Voice 2.1 Empowering Community Voice

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

Transformative Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Action Plan Signed

Another two successful Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum events were held in August and May in FY23. The forum provides the platform for Members to contribute to the health and wellbeing decisions that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, with access to Ministers, Department leadership and leadership from mainstream health services.

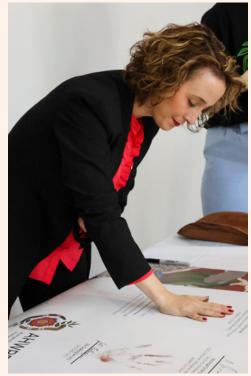
At the May Forum, the first Action Plan (2023 – 2025) was signed by the Victorian Minister for Health and the Minister for Mental Health, Ambulance Services and for Treaty and First Peoples, with approval from Cabinet. The Action Plan presents the tangible priority actions that will be taken in the first two years under the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum Agreement (2023 – 2033).





Above L to R: The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP, Michael Graham CEO VAHS, The Hon. Gabrielle Williams MP, Jill Gallagher AO CEO VACCHO, Prof. Euan Wallace Secretary, Department of Health

Right: The Hon. Gabrielle Williams MP placing handprint on the Action Plan.



The Action Plan was developed through 16 consultation sessions with VACCHO Members, including 26 different organisations and 168 people – ensuring Members were empowered to have their say. VACCHO are working with the Department of Health to build transparent ways to track and report on the action plan and its desired results, so that the sector can hold decision-makers to account.

The 38 actions fall under five key domains:

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

2.2 Research and Evidence

Goal: We are the trusted custodians of knowledge about Aboriginal health and wellbeing in Victoria



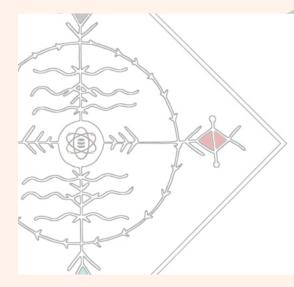
Paving the way for ethical and self-determined research in Victoria

The Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical and Wellbeing Research Accord (the 'Accord') was finalised in August 2022 and endorsed by the Victorian Cabinet in May 2023. The Accord is a landmark agreement that aims to improve the ethical standards of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, medical and wellbeing research in Victoria, ensure research agendas are self-determined and deliver benefit to Communities. VACCHO developed the Accord through a Community-Controlled Action Research process and under the stewardship of an Aboriginal Governance Group. Throughout the year VACCHO have built momentum for the Accord and its principles through several presentations and engagements with the research sector. Collectively, these have prompted non-Indigenous researchers and institutions to critically reflect on their current practices and their journey towards more ethical Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. With endorsement of the Accord, it will now come to life.

The Accord will become a statewide instrument to promote:

- Aboriginal leadership in research
- trusting and equitable partnerships between research institutions and Communities
- research that aligns with Community priorities and delivers tangible benefits
- culturally safe research
- research that privileges Aboriginal knowledges
- Aboriginal data governance and sovereignty.

VACCHO became an Eligible Organisation with the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) in February 2023. THE MRFF is a \$20 billion fund supporting Australian health and medical research. With this, we now have the opportunity to apply for research funding to invest in Aboriginal innovation. We can pursue truly self-determined and Aboriginal-led research projects that deliver tangible benefits to Communities.



Deadly Data[™]

Deadly Data[™] is a data lake that aims to improve the access to and use of data by ACCOs for the benefit of Communities and strengthen Aboriginal Community Control over data about Aboriginal peoples. At its core is a commitment to Aboriginal data sovereignty. The portal went live for VACCHO staff in November 2022 and the design for a Member portal is underway. Through it VACCHO's data and analytics team are supporting data-informed, evidence-based planning, decision-making and advocacy. In FY23 the data and analytics team successfully completed 40% of data requests.

Strengthening evaluation to build evidence for what works

VACCHO developed and began implementation of our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Strategy to improve the quality of evidence about what is being achieved and what works in delivering our Strategic Plan, and to contribute more broadly to knowledge and evidence in Aboriginal health and wellbeing. We are building our organisational capacity in MEL and transitioning towards an outcomes-focused approach.

Together with participating Members, Think Impact, and Kowa Collaborations, we delivered a developmental evaluation and Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of the Culture + Kinship pilot program. The report provides robust evidence for the cultural determinants of health and the cost-effectiveness of flexible funding models that allow for self-determined and localised approaches. Already we have leveraged the report to successfully advocate for ACCO's cultural models of care and for funding reform to the sector.

The evaluation approach itself is significant. To our knowledge, it is the first time an Aboriginal evaluation methodology like Impact Yarns© (developed by Kowa Collaborations) has been combined with an accredited SROI analysis. It demonstrates how evaluation practice can combine Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing with Western methodologies, to create culturally appropriate evaluations that meet the needs of multiple audiences. For this work, we received a runner up Social Impact Measurement Network Australia (SIMNA) award for 'Innovation in Social Impact Measurement' and hosted a panel discussion at the Australian Evaluation Society conference.

2.3 Policy and Advocacy

Goal: We influence decision makers to maximise our impact



Jill Gallagher giving evidence at the Yoorook Justice Commission in December 2022.



VACCHO contributed 18 submissions to influence

In FY23.

policy and systems reform at the State and National level.

Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands – a strong ACCO voice throughout the State Election

VACCHO spearheaded a powerful advocacy campaign to influence the policy platforms of the major political parties throughout the 2022 Victorian State Election. Our key ask: to put 'Aboriginal Health in Aboriginal Hands.'

Our recommendations spanned infrastructure, focusing on securing justice and health services, self-determination, services safe from racism and discrimination, and social and emotional wellbeing in our Community. Read our election platform in full on the VACCHO website.

We focused on **targeted political engagement**, holding three online briefings about our election asks for parliamentarians and their staff. These were made up of one each for Labour, the Coalition, and for crossbenchers – attended by 19 decision-makers in total. VAHS (Victorian Aboriginal Health Service) hosted a visit from the Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas MP to build her knowledge of and exposure to an ACCO and our ways of working.

Through **Community and media engagement**, we raised public awareness. Seven short videos were produced featuring staff and Members speaking about the key issues raised in our election campaign. VACCHO did interviews with the National Indigenous Radio Service and National Indigenous Television (NITV), and an editorial piece written by Jill Gallagher was published by SBS and NITV. Across our channels we achieved strong reach and engagement, building momentum for the campaign.

Victorian Election Platform 2022

'Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands'





Michael Graham CEO VAHS supporting VACCHO's state election platform

Controlled Organisations to oversee and address the specific health and wellbeing needs of Aboriginal people incarcerated.



Election platform landing page on the VACCHO website:

430

3:04 minutes spent viewing website, on average



Instagram:

7 published videos

13 published stories

1,633



Facebook:

16 published posts

12K impressions

2,086



LinkedIn:



published posts

4.4K

3,926

0

Twitter:

12 published posts

9.1K

828 video views

Community Question Time

chance for Mob to ask questions that matter to us in the lead up to the Victorian election.



Being broadcast

live by



Aboriginal Community Question Time

VACCHO brought together a panel of politicians and Aboriginal leaders for a live, broadcasted Q&A, providing space for Mob and allies to ask the tough questions they wanted answered in the lead up to the State election. It made political parties focus on and commit to policies to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health and wellbeing.

On the Panel was Labor's Health Minister (Mary-Anne Thomas), the Coalition's shadow Aboriginal Affairs Minister (Peter Walsh) and the Greens' Leader (Samantha Ratnam). They were joined by Jill Gallagher (VACCHO CEO) and Grant Hansen (Marngrook Footy Show host), and it was hosted by Daniel James (RRR). There were 120 registered attendees, of whom about half identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Approximately 90 people attended on the night.

What did the Parties commit to if they were in power?



- The process of Truth, Justice, and Treaty.
- The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement and action plan.
- To improve healthcare in corrections and decriminalise public drunkenness.

- To create a single department/office that would be responsible for all Aboriginal policies and programs, sitting independent of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
- To provide housing for people fleeing family violence.
- To increase the mental health workforce.
- Support for Treaty.
- To raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 and not detain children and young people in prisons.
- To establish a commission to ensure that the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody are implemented.
- To establish a Suicide Prevention Taskforce.
 - To Treaty.

A post event survey showed:



thought it gave Aboriginal people an opportunity to engage with political parties



56% learnt about what political parties would do for Aboriginal people

2.4 Trusted Voice In the past year we have had Goal: We are a trusted voice for Aboriginal people minutes of video content views on Facebook alone Social media impressions/reach In FY23: Facebook: Twitter: 312,902 up 89.1% significantly down, reflecting widespread slump experienced by Media users of the platform engagements Instagram: Õ 4,8 LinkedIn: Speaking Total engagements in impressions/ 4.738 reach up 1.4K (17 of which were 13 regarding the Aboriginal and Publications Social media followers Torres Strait Islander printed Voice to Parliament) in 20,26 Facebook: LinkedIn: Twitter: Instagram: Total followers across all channels of which 5,8 8.3 which is a which is up which is up which is up which is up 184,661 were new visitors to the website 274 Website views increase from last FY from last FY from last FY from last FY from last FY

We use our strong reach and engagement to be a trusted voice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. To share information, resources, and opportunities with Community and to ensure our messages have an impact.

'Don't Miss a Moment' - encouraging Mob to get health checks and screen for cancer

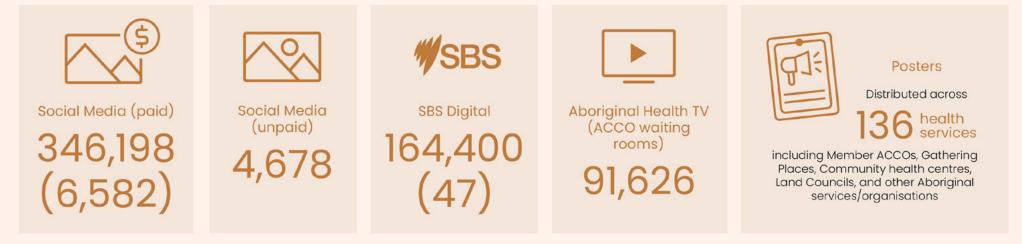
VACCHO ran a multimedia health promotion campaign – including videos, posters, radio, and social media – focused on encouraging Mob to get a health checkup and participate in cancer screening. The campaign's key message was: 'Don't Miss a Moment' with loved ones and Community, be proactive and go get your health check from your local ACCO or GP, they save lives. The campaign was in response to the low health check and screening rates seen in Victoria in 2020 – 2021, influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and statewide lockdowns.

VACCHO engaged ThinkHQ, an Aboriginal owned marketing agency, to support the campaign. The key messages were developed and tested through 13 in-depth yarns with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community members, both individually and in groups. This ensured that the campaign would resonate with Mob and be a trusted source of health information.

The campaign achieved significant reach and engagement, getting the message out to Community.

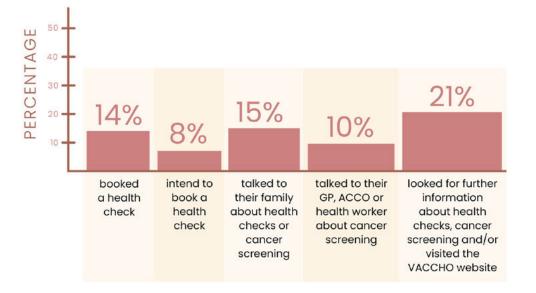


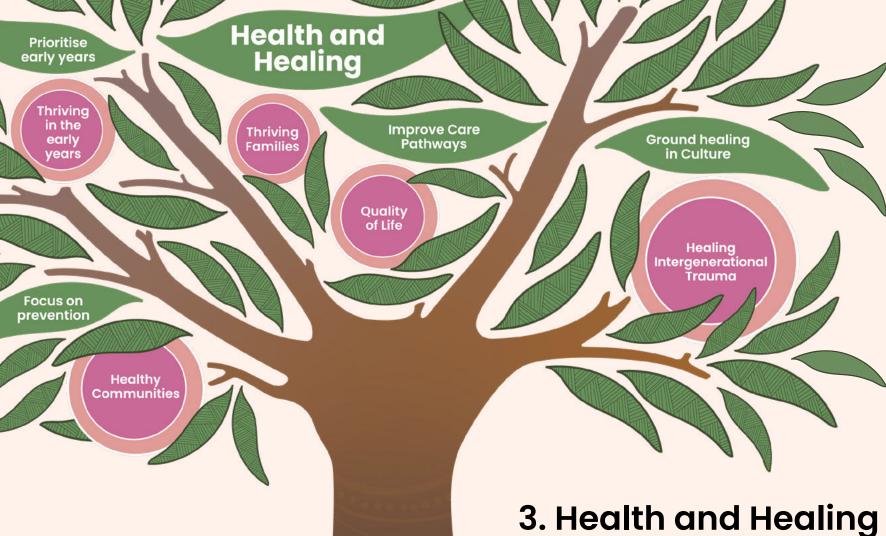
Reach (engagement/clicks)





Importantly, there are signs that the campaign has positively influenced behaviour change. VACCHO put out a survey through our social media, receiving 96 responses of whom 84% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The results showed:





3.1 Focus on Prevention

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

Culture + Kinship program delivers significant value for money

The Culture + Kinship program centres connection to Community, Culture and Country as key drivers to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In our last Impact Report we showcased the stories of impact from the pilot program with four Member ACCOs.

Since then, the results are in from our Social Return on Investment analysis, demonstrating just how valuable the program is.

For every dollar invested in Culture + Kinship, \$8.29 in social value was created.



Community Members experience value through reconnecting with Community, Culture and Country, and in doing so, experience a range of positive health and wellbeing outcomes. The Culture + Kinship program created opportunities for participants to explore and celebrate their Aboriginal identity in a positive and affirming context as opposed to the racism and discrimination they may have experienced elsewhere. By participating in this program, they gain more pride in their Culture, a stronger sense of identity and the opportunity to gain cultural knowledge and skills. By caring for Country and working together to collectively solve problems, Community members experience self-determination that leads to increased educational prospects and economic prosperity. By connecting with their Community in a cultural context, participants experience improved mental health and increased self-confidence.

ACCOs experience value through gaining an opportunity to work with the Community to create learning and sharing opportunities. Program participants are excited to share their positive experience with their friends and family, which leads to more people in the Community knowing about and connecting with their ACCO.

Government experiences value as a result of Community members making proactive health choices and enabling Aboriginal Communities to self-determine health, wellbeing, and safety in line with their guiding policies.

Based on these outstanding results, VACCHO has successfully secured additional funding to grow the Culture + Kinship program so more Communities can benefit. Supporting self-determined, locally led solutions that focus on the cultural determinants of health is key to our prevention approach. It's value for money and it's delivering impact to Communities. Read the full evaluation report on VACCHO's website.

FoodPATH - a Community-driven pathway to strengthen food security and nutrition

VACCHO in partnership with Deakin University's Institute for Health Transformation produced the Food Policies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (FoodPATH) Community report. The report is a Community-led Food Policy Statement - the first of its kind developed in collaboration with 53 participants across six ACCOs in Victoria.

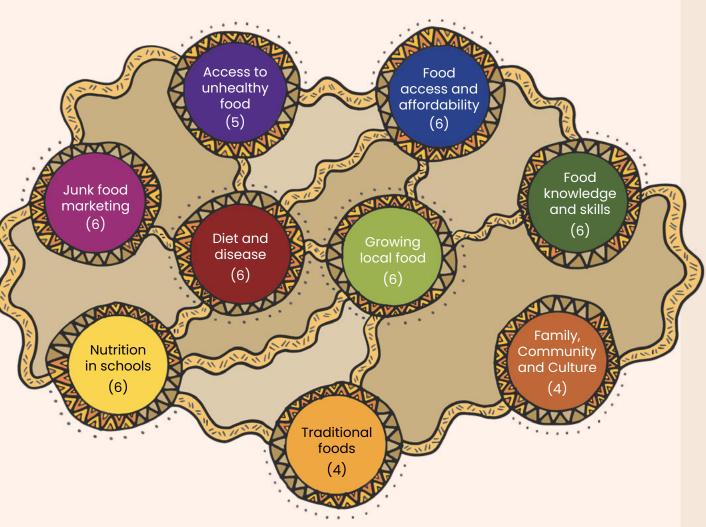
It outlines ten priority recommendations for a systems approach to food and nutrition policy action, to prevent increasing rates of diet-related chronic disease and support Aboriginal communities in Victoria to be healthy in mind, body, and spirit.

Community-based workshops were held with VACCHO and five Member ACCOs (Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, Njernda Aboriginal Co-operative, Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative, Moogji Aboriginal Council, and Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative). Group model building was used to identify the drivers and interconnected factors influencing food choices and to co-design policy solutions.

The results informed a Community-driven call to action for improving nutrition for Aboriginal communities in Victoria. The full report will be launched soon and made available on VACCHO's website. Work is already underway to progress the recommendations. VACCHO's nutrition team have launched the ACCO Healthy Eating for Kids program in partnership with Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation and Healthy Kids Advisors.

Recommendations

Here we outline 10 policy recommendations to improve food and nutrition outcomes for Aboriginal communities in Victoria. Improving the system of factors affecting food choice requires action at both Community and Government levels. The FoodPATH recommendations are divided into five Community actions and five Government actions to reflect this.



Community actions

These should be Community-led, but need sustainable funding:

- 1. ACCO-led self-determined Community nutrition programs (these could include anything from nutrition education, meal preparation, cooking, youth programs whatever the ACCO identifies is needed).
- 2. Community gardens to grow and share food among Community members; these could be linked to food packages or cooking programs.
- 3. Workshops/yarning circles with Elders to educate Community about traditional foods.
- 4. Community based parenting programs, incorporating nutrition and cooking healthy meals.
- 5. ACCO early years programs around healthy eating in pregnancy and early childhood nutrition.

Government actions

These should be implemented by Governments, in consultation with the Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community:

- 1. Ban junk food marketing (in all its forms), including unhealthy sport sponsorship.
- 2. Mandate nutrition and cooking education in schools.
- 3. Make the Health Star Rating food labelling system mandatory across all packaged food.
- 4. Set limits on the amount of sugar, salt and saturated fat allowed in packaged food.
- 5. Keep the GST off fresh food.

Supporting clinics to strengthen primary prevention, early detection, and intervention

VACCHO work to support better patient outcomes by providing targeted support to primary health clinics and workforces across our membership. This work is many and varied, responsive to Members' needs, the emerging evidence and/or public health reforms. In the past financial year, VACCHO has:

- facilitated Communities of Practice for clinical workforce cohorts including Aboriginal Health Worker/ Practitioners, General Practitioners and ACCO's Quality and Practice Managers
- provided public health medical advice and clinical support to respond to outbreaks (such as COVID-19) and public health reform to notifiable diseases
- provided targeted training in areas such as smoking cessation, sexual and reproductive healthcare, and immunisations.
- provided Medicare Benefit Scheme claiming support and advice
- developed a clinical governance framework that embeds continuous quality improvement to support safe and quality services.

Collectively, this work focuses on supporting our Members, who deliver best practice prevention, early detection and intervention, and primary healthcare services to Community.

Increased uptake of 715s

The Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) '715' item is an Indigenous specific health-check that is key to early detection and intervention. In FY20-21 Victoria had the lowest rate of Indigenous health-checks compared to all other States and Territories in Australia (AIHW data) – impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and strict lockdowns in Victoria. Since then, we have seen strong improvements in the uptake of health-checks, a testament to the work and efforts of ACCO services across Victoria. MBS billing data shows that the total number of 715s completed statewide in Victoria increased by 25% in FY 22-23 compared to the previous financial year.

3.2 Prioritise Early Years

Goal: Thriving in the early years - Aboriginal children get the best start in life



Increasing access to culturally safe, preventative oral healthcare for Aboriginal children

Dental caries (tooth decay) is the most prevalent oral disease in Australian children and higher rates are seen among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Tooth decay has a significant impact on children's health, development, and quality of life. The use of Fluoride Varnish application is an effective, evidence-based approach to reduce tooth decay among children by about 40%.

Following successful advocacy by Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group (LMARG), Aboriginal Health Practitioners in Victoria are now able to possess and administer fluoride varnish after completing training through the Fluoride Varnish Program. In partnership with Dental Health Services Victoria, VACCHO piloted 'Fluoride Varnish Day' at Yappera Children's Service - bringing culturally safe, preventative oral healthcare to Aboriginal children and removing barriers to access. On the day, three Aboriginal Health Practitioners were supported to gain their accreditation in fluoride varnish applications and 22 Aboriginal children received fluoride varnish. To continue this successful pilot, a pathway has been established for VAHS to take on the service model and provide 6-monthly visits to Yappera once there is capacity to do so.

In total eight Aboriginal Health Practitioners have been accredited through training launched in 2022 under the Fluoride Varnish Program. It's the first time in Victorian history that Aboriginal Health Practitioners can administer Fluoride Varnish without supervision, increasing access to culturally safe, preventative dental services. VACCHO will continue to support the expansion of preventative oral health care throughout Victoria.



Co-design of an Infant, Children and Families SEWB service

The Balit Durn Durn Centre has advanced critical recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health system, including commencing work to co-design an Infant Children and Families SEWB service. Kicking off the work in August 2022, an Expert Advisory Group was set up and the team engaged with Community.

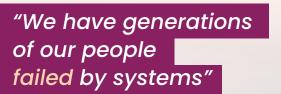
The Advisory Group provided valuable insights and posed important challenges to consider for the work, including how to move away from business-as-usual mainstream mental health system approaches.





Community engagement included visits to cultural therapeutic practices and discussions with families and SEWB workers. A three-day, on-Country design retreat was held with 36 participants representing 21 different organisations. The retreat focused on concepts such as decolonisation, care, language, prevention, and partnering with a broken system. The reflections and stories shared emphasized the importance of wellness, redefining language, and hearing the voices of children.

The Balit Durn Durn Centre has emerged as a beacon of hope for transformative change in the mainstream mental health system, including positioning Aboriginal SEWB as central, legitimate, and vital. Through this essential work we hope for thriving Aboriginal babies, children and families surrounded by Culture and Community.



- design retreat reflection





EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP

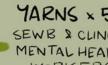
A 9 MEMBER ORGS across CHILD & FAMILY SECTOR -

★ 4 EAG MEETINGS (online & FZF)

* 8 × 1:1 CONVERSATIONS with EAG MEMBERS

COMMUNITY & SECTOR ENGAGEMENT







REC

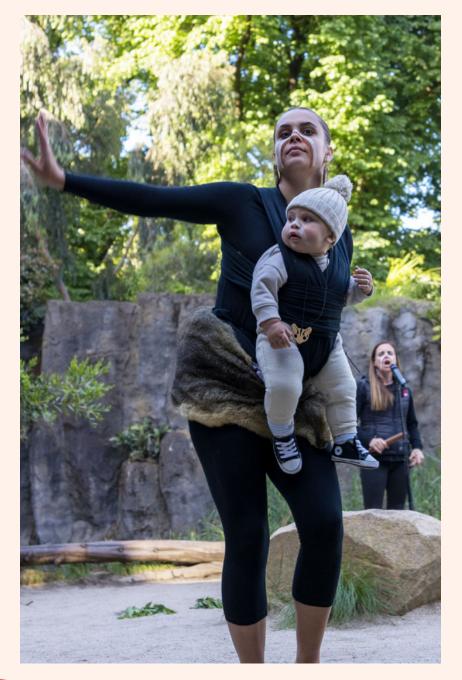
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"Our babies are gifts from the ancestors"

Balit Durn Durn Centre Rec. 33.4 Design Retreat with Community leaders and knowledge holders

Balit Durn Durn Centre

Impact Report FY23



Celebrating 21 years of Koori Maternity Services and looking to the future

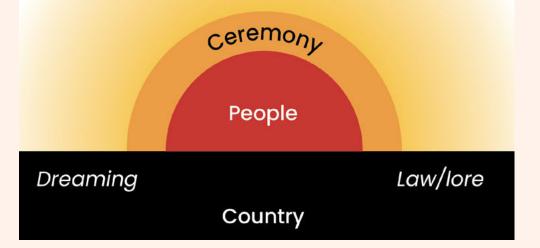
Koori Maternity Services (KMS) is an integral part of Victoria's maternity service system, offering flexible, holistic, and culturally responsive care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers, boorai (babies), and families. It was designed by Aboriginal women for Aboriginal families. Last year we celebrated KMS' 21st birthday!

Since its establishment in 2000, the KMS program has expanded from eight to 14 service sites across the State. The Program embeds Culture and health promotion into holistic pregnancy care to support better health and wellbeing outcomes for mothers and their babies. Healthy pregnancies and positive early parenting experiences help to ensure that Aboriginal children get the best start in life. The celebration honoured the incredible work of the KMS workforce past and present.



At this 'coming-of-age' milestone we look to the future of KMS to continue to strengthen the program. VACCHO has adopted the RISE Framework to drive important reform in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternity services. VACCHO are advocating for further investment into KMS, a review of KMS funding in mainstream services and a VACCHO-led evaluation of KMS to support this. Across the maternity service system, we want to see Community-control, stronger partnerships and collaboration, and statewide access to KMS services for all Aboriginal families. We have successfully advocated for VACCHO leadership of the Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health program, securing funding to deliver this, to ensure Aboriginal health is in Aboriginal hands.

Redesign the health system Invest in the workforce Strengthen families Embed community





"This process is about giving the power back to Community to self-determine our own future"

- design retreat reflection

3.3 Ground Healing in Culture

Goal: Healing Intergenerational Trauma - Aboriginal people experience good social and emotional wellbeing, and have the opportunity to heal from trauma



- design retreat reflection

Healing Journey

The co-design of a healing centre is another recommendation of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System that is being led by the Balit Durn Durn Centre. A knowledge holder group has been established to steer the work, comprising of Aboriginal researchers, healers, practitioners, and Community members with expertise in healing. The group met regularly, both online and on-Country, to discuss healing, share insights, and shape the work.

Throughout the healing journey, knowledge holders shared their personal healing stories, highlighting the importance of self-determination, Culture, Community support, and feeling safe and listened to within the system. The healing centres are envisioned as spaces where individuals can fill their cups culturally and where safety and a sense of belonging are paramount.

Keep up to date on the progress of this essential work by visiting the Balit Durn Durn Centre website at balitdurndurncentre.org.au.



"We need to decolonise how we do things in this space. Aboriginal ways of Knowing, Being and Doing should be central to this. This includes how we engage with government and partners"

- design retreat reflection

Balit Durn Durn Centre Aboriginal-led Suicide Prevention and Response Advisory Group Session

Aboriginal-led suicide response

New work has begun to co-design an Aboriginal-led suicide response that centres Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing. This work is in response to the very high rates of suicide seen among the Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population between 2018 and 2021. Behind the statistics are people, families, and Communities and this is central to the response. An Aboriginal knowledge holder group has been established to guide and direct the project.



3.4 Improve Care Pathways

Goal: Quality of life - Aboriginal people and Elders who are experiencing poor health and/or disability receive appropriate care and support and can live in a way that is meaningful to them

A cultural model-of-care to close the gap in cancer outcomes

In May 2023, VACCHO launched the Victorian Aboriginal Cancer Journey Strategy – a roadmap for improving cancer outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria.

Currently, Aboriginal Victorians are twice as likely to be diagnosed with cancer and three times more likely to die from cancer than other Victorians, impacted by the ongoing effects of colonisation. The Cancer Journey Strategy seeks to change the narrative and numbers, guided by the knowledge of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community. The Cancer Journey Strategy and the initiatives that fall out of it have been developed through extensive use of Yarning. 969 people from Community, workforce and ACCOs in Victoria shared a Yarn, to give their lived and living experience perspectives, their priorities, and their solutions for driving improved cancer outcomes. The resulting Strategy is for Community and by Community.

The Strategy calls for greater investment in Aboriginal selfdetermination and Community Control, a bigger and stronger Aboriginal workforce across the whole health system, the embedding of Aboriginal cultural connection throughout all stages of the cancer journey and cultural safety in all care settings.

VACCHO is also calling for the establishment of a new Cancer Coordination workforce to improve care pathways. Aboriginal Cancer Coordinators will walk alongside each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person, and their family, on their cancer journeys. Their role will be to coordinate equitable access to services, treatment options, and entitlements, and to ensure every person is supported to fully understand each step of their journey and be empowered to exercise self-determination.

The Department of Health has committed to work with VACCHO to deliver the Cancer Journey Strategy including committing upfront funding. Cancer agencies and health services are also coming to the table to contribute to implementation of the Strategy. At the launch, four Memorandum of Understanding documents were signed with key cancer partners.

Work is underway and delivering encouraging results. Culturally appropriate cancer screening initiatives are being implemented or are under development for breast, cervical and bowel screening, building off the success of the Beautiful Shawl project. The work is raising awareness and encouraging Mob to get screened for cancer.

VACCHO would like to pay tribute to the Community for sharing their Cancer Journey experiences and personal stories, which have been instrumental to the development of the Strategy. We also acknowledge the work and contribution of Karabeena Consulting who supported our Community consultations. "One of our biggest challenges has been Closing the Gap in cancer outcomes. This strategy presents the pathway for us to change that for good ... Past attempts to address this have not enabled Aboriginal selfdetermination. For improved access, cultural safety, and adequate support, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be in the driver's seat."

> - Jill Gallagher, VACCHO CEO and cancer survivor

Strengthening Aboriginal access to the NDIS

The NDIS Aboriginal Access and Community Linkages project supports Community members living with disability and/or chronic mental health conditions to access and make use of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). VACCHO supports four Members to employ Aboriginal NDIS Access and Community Linkages workers, that operate across four regions in Victoria supporting Community. In FY23 through the NDIS Aboriginal Access Program:



Community members have been supported to:
apply for access to the NDIS.

- access referrals to the services they need.
- understand the NDIS and NDIS pathways.
- understand the NDIs and NDIs pathways
- develop skills in self-management and independent living.



263

family members, guardians or carers were supported to:

- understand the NDIS and NDIS pathways
- find suitable supports for the people they care for.

Conclusion

The work and achievements captured in this report are a testament to the dedication and passion of VACCHO's staff across all levels and teams.

Of course, we have not done it alone. VACCHO wants to acknowledge the amazing work of our 33 Member ACCOs across Victoria who deliver wrap-around services and support to their Communities.

Come fires, floods, and pandemics, ACCOs continue to rise to the challenge to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to culturally safe services and programs. ACCOs are the beating hearts of our Communities.

We also acknowledge the contributions of our funding partners and supporters who make our work possible – the Victorian Department of Health, the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, the National Indigenous Australians Agency, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Gandel Foundation, HESTA Super Fund, Terri Janke & Co and others.

Lastly, we acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities across Victoria. We acknowledge their strength and resilience in the face of colonisation and their ongoing connections to Community, Culture, Country, and Kinship.

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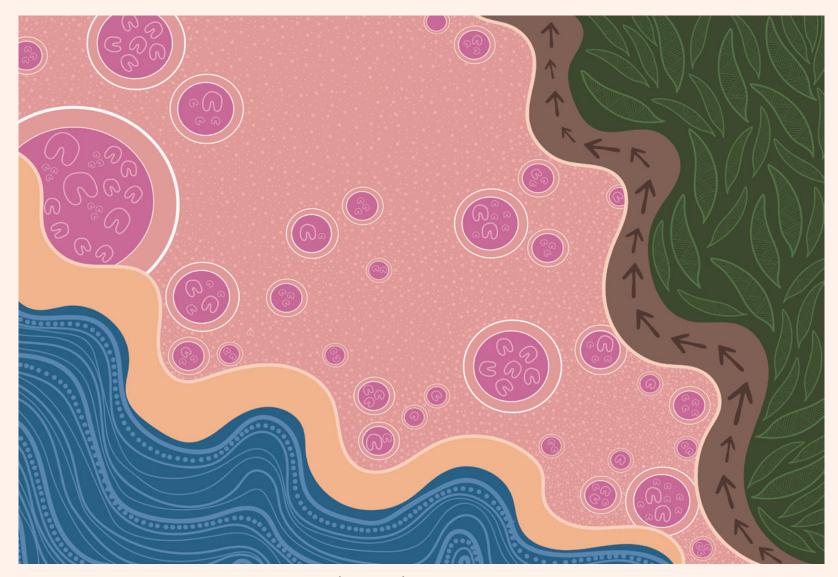
Looking ahead, in the coming year we will be focused on ensuring implementation of the 38 priority actions committed to in the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum Action Plan (2023 – 2025) to drive reform in the health and wellbeing system. We are excited to explore establishing a new Partnership Forum with the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to drive improvements in the social determinants of health.

We will continue to implement the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy to support the attraction, recruitment, retention, and development of the ACCO workforce. This includes expanding the courses offered by our Registered Training Organisation and continuing to grow and nurture the student cohort.

Securing funding sustainability remains firmly on the agenda, including putting forward a proactive FY25 budget bid, business case development for ACCO infrastructure, and diversifying our income sources, including growing philanthropic support.

Our Cultural Safety Accreditation Program will be piloted in at least three emergency departments in metro and regional hospitals in Victoria. We hope it will grow to become a key mechanism to ensure that mainstream health services across the State are more accountable to cultural safety standards.

We look to the Referendum on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament with hope and optimism.



On Solid Ground, Madison Connors | Yorta Yorta (Wolithica), Dja Dja Wurrung and Gamilaroi



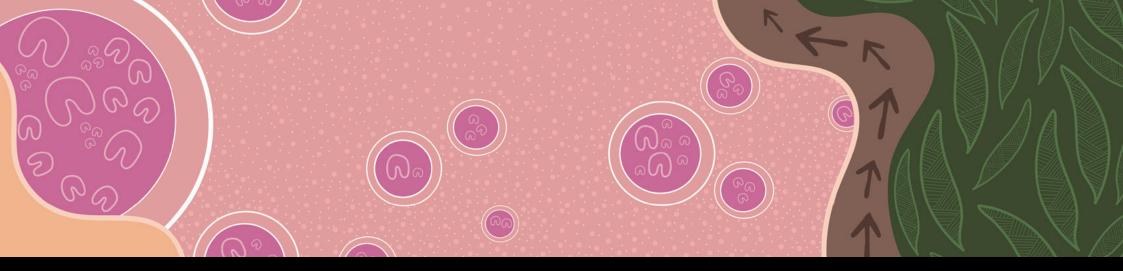
About the Artist

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.





Vibrant, healthy, self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

VACCHO is the peak representative for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

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