



**VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL
HEALTH SERVICE**
Caring for the Community

Strategic Plan 2025 – 2031

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VAHS acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands where we are located and deliver services. We acknowledge the contribution of the VAHS Board of Directors, VAHS staff and Community members in the development of this Strategic Plan

TERMINOLOGY

In this plan, the term *Aboriginal* is used to embrace all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Australia.

TIMEFRAME

This Strategic Plan is purposefully aligned to the timeframes of the National Close the Gap Agreement, under which Commonwealth and State governments have committed to strengthen the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector and to Close the Gap by 2031.



INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) was established in 1973 by a group of Aboriginal leaders in Fitzroy to address the poverty, injustices, high mortality rates, burden of disease and ill health of Aboriginal people which was a direct result of government policies that restricted access for Aboriginal people to essential health services.

VAHS became the first Victorian incorporated Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) and over the last 50 years has evolved with a strong foundation of cultural knowledge and cultural competence in the delivery of comprehensive primary health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) care for Aboriginal peoples and communities. Over this time VAHS has expanded its service scope and operations and currently provides a comprehensive suite of medical, dental, mental health, preventative health and community wellbeing and support programs. VAHS is a respected provider of comprehensive community care seeking to further extend its service offerings and reach.





OUR VISION

Caring for Our Community – empowering our Aboriginal community to live long healthy lives with Self-Determination, connectedness and opportunity.

OUR PURPOSE

We care for our community through the provision of high quality, accessible, responsive and holistic comprehensive health and wellbeing services which support the Self-Determination of our people.

OUR VALUES

Community Control

Aboriginal people have control of issues that affect their community through organisations that are operated by and for the community. The community controls decision-making at all levels. whereby *'each independent and autonomous health service is controlled by the Community it serves, in order to provide that Community with health care delivery to meet its health needs, as defined by that Community. The solution to each Community's health needs is in the hands of that Community'* (Bruce McGuinness)

Self-Determination

We are committed to supporting the self-determination of Aboriginal people to determine their own political, economic, social, and cultural wellbeing, and achieve their full potential. We do this by ensuring that our clients have the information and tools available to them to make informed choices and decisions about their treatment and recovery journeys.

Cultural Integrity

We stay true to the principles of Community Control and to our founding values, ensuring that we provide a culturally safe environment for clients and staff. Underpinning all that we do is our commitment to care for our community mindful that we exist to serve them and have a cultural obligation to discharge our duties with excellence and integrity.

Respectful and Caring

We care for our community. We treat our clients, our partners and each other with care, respect, and dignity. We listen to our community and are responsive to their needs. We listen to each other, recognising the value of diverse perspectives and contributions. We are inclusive in our practices, and we do not discriminate.

Accountable and Professional

We maintain the highest standards of professionalism, honesty, integrity, and transparency in all our business practices. We are accountable to our community and our funders to strive for excellence in all that we do and to deliver culturally safe, quality care. We are committed to learning, growing, and teaching others to continually improve the capability of our organisation.

Collaborative

We collaborate to ensure that our people access integrated services across the healthcare continuum that respond to their needs. We collaborate in a spirit of trust, honesty and mutual respect that builds relationships that are strategic and beneficial to our community. We are committed to meaningful community engagement that informs our business and builds community capacity.



OUR SERVICES

Our service and program design and delivery are underpinned by the principles of Community Control, cultural integrity, and Self-Determination. We deliver culturally capable, family-centred, and holistic healthcare that considers the person in the context of their family, their environment, and their physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and relational wellbeing.

From the outset, VAHS was established to Care for Our Community.

Caring for Our Community is at our core.

Our Community is us.

We are Our Community.



STRATEGIC PLANNING CYCLE

This Strategic Plan is underpinned by:

Operational Plan

- Developed annually at the organisational level and which articulate the actions we will take each year to realise our Vision and Strategic Goals, and for which the Executive Management Team is accountable.
- Performance against the Operational Plan is monitored by the Executive Management Team and reported to the Board every six months.

Unit Workplans

- Developed annually for individual Units and workstreams and which articulate the actions that each team will take to progress the actions contained in the Operational Plan, and for which each Unit Manager and team is accountable.
- Performance against Unit Workplans is monitored by the responsible Executive Management Team lead and reported to the CEO every six months.

VAHS
STRATEGIC
PLAN

OPERATIONAL
PLAN

UNIT
WORKPLANS



VAHS Strategic Goals 2025–2031



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STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Fostering Partnerships and Collaboration

Empower our Community
to navigate the health
system by collaborating
to establish connected
care pathways and
models of care.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Increasing Access

Support the self-
determination of the
Aboriginal community
through expansion of
Community Controlled
comprehensive primary
healthcare and Social and
Emotional Wellbeing services
within the Metropolitan
Melbourne Region.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Building the Evidence

Research and data
that strengthens the
evidence for Community
Control and informs
and supports service
planning, accountability,
and advocacy.

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: Developing Our People & Our Workplace

A well-supported and
professional workforce
that is culturally and
clinically skilled to care
for our community,
and which collectively
maintains a positive and
respectful workplace
culture.

STRATEGIC GOAL 5: Enhancing Our Systems & Governance

Strong corporate and
community governance
and systems that
support effective and
efficient business
practices.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Increasing Access

Support the self-determination of the Aboriginal community through expansion of Community Controlled comprehensive primary healthcare and Social and Emotional Wellbeing services within the Metropolitan Melbourne Region.



- 1.1 Develop and implement an ACCHO led Metropolitan Strategy** which enhances opportunities to strengthen health promotion and early intervention and increases access to comprehensive primary health care, SEWB, specialist and allied health services.
- 1.2 Undertake comprehensive service planning and capacity building to support the establishment of flexible and innovative service models** that includes our older people and Elders, women, children and families, people in social and supported housing, community members in the justice system and people with disabilities.
- 1.3 Develop a suite of mental health services that increase access, address service gaps and respond to need** including the establishment of culturally safe healing spaces and community based sub-acute care.
- 1.4 Develop innovative business models that leverage alternative funding sources.**
- 1.5 Increase access by identifying and implementing strategies to maximise efficiencies** within existing and new VAHS Family Health and Wellbeing Centres and hubs (e.g. after-hours services, virtual care modalities).

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Fostering Partnerships and Collaboration

Empower our Community to navigate the health system by collaborating to establish connected care pathways and models of care.

- 2.1 Develop strategic service delivery partnerships** to strengthen continuity of care across health and wellbeing systems and support the client journey, particularly across the primary and acute care interface.
- 2.2 Identify policy and systems reform priorities and develop an advocacy plan** that reflects the voices of our community to guide strategic conversations with key stakeholders.
- 2.3 Participate in research partnerships** that strengthen the evidence for Aboriginal Community Controlled healthcare models.
- 2.4 Develop partnerships with tertiary and teaching institutions** to establish student placement programs and career pathways within VAHS that contributes to the development of a workforce for urban Aboriginal health.
- 2.5 Continue to contribute to multi-agency partnership forums and stakeholder collaborations.**



STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Building the Evidence

Research and data that strengthens the evidence for Community Control and informs and supports service planning, accountability, and advocacy.

- 3.1 Undertake comprehensive health needs analysis** for Victorian Aboriginal communities across metropolitan Melbourne.
- 3.2 Document the existing evidence-base** for VAHS and its service models.
- 3.3 Strengthen data quality and its systematic use** to inform service planning, advocacy, and performance monitoring.
- 3.4 Develop and implement an evaluation plan** for VAHS services and programs that documents successes and learnings, measures impact, informs advocacy efforts and provides recommendations for service reform.
- 3.5 Develop a data governance framework** that is built on Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles.



STRATEGIC GOAL 4: Developing Our People & Our Workplace

A well-supported and professional workforce that is culturally and clinically skilled to care for our community, and which collectively maintains a positive and respectful workplace culture.

- 4.1 Refine and strengthen the VAHS workforce strategy** to identify actions to upskill and to 'grow our own' clinically and culturally capable workforce including pathways for young people into leadership, management and clinical roles across a range of disciplines.
- 4.2 Advance the development and implementation of a VAHS Staff Wellbeing Strategy.**
- 4.3 Implement strategies which enhance the cohesion and motivation of our workforce.**



STRATEGIC GOAL 5: Enhancing Our Systems

Strong corporate and community governance and systems that support effective and efficient business practices.



- 5.1 Strengthen corporate and community governance systems and contemporise the organisational structure** to support our business moving forward.
- 5.2 Implement regular community engagement** to maintain our community mandate and inform priority setting and service planning. **Harness community voices** to enhance advocacy efforts.
- 5.3 Systematically document and strengthen the operating frameworks and systems that underpin our organisation.**
- 5.4 Review and rationalise the digital enablers** that support our business practices, including consolidating and integrating existing systems.
- 5.5 Continue to improve and systematise CQI, clinical governance, internal audit and accreditation systems and processes.**
- 5.6 Enhance human resource management and financial management practices** to support VAHS' growth.
- 5.7 Undertake a review of infrastructure and develop a strategy** to future-proof assets and maximise efficiencies.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Complemented by more detailed performance measures at the operational level, our overarching performance indicators at the strategic level are:

Access

- VAHS clients comprise 40% of the Metropolitan Melbourne Aboriginal population.
- VAHS delivers increased episodes of care annually.
- Increased access to Community Controlled primary and specialised mental health services.
- Metropolitan Strategy implemented, including delivery of new service models and delivery in external settings.

Health Improvements

- Continuous increase towards 70% of VAHS clients that have completed an annual health check.
- VAHS meets all internal goals and targets.
- Measuring improvements in community health and wellbeing.

Sustainability

- Revenue base increased to \$70 million.
- Income streams are diversified to strengthen financial status.
- Increases in VAHS owned assets has been achieved.
- Workforce is culturally and clinically capable of responding to the needs of our community.



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