



## Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Recommendation

### 248. Learn from Aboriginal community-controlled health services

*That health departments, academic institutions and other relevant training authorities monitor the proposed Victorian Aboriginal Health Service's Aboriginal Primary Health Care Unit, with a view to learning from its experiences and that those interested in this field study the philosophies and methods of operation of the Aboriginal community-controlled health services.<sup>1</sup>*

<b>Background<sup>2</sup></b>	<p>The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) emphasised that the training of health professionals should reflect a primary health care approach which allows for culturally safe practices towards Aboriginal people. The Commission noted that academic institutions and relevant training bodies, should observe Victoria's Aboriginal Primary Health Care Unit established in conjunction with Monash University.</p> <p>The Unit planned to act as a resource centre, support Aboriginal medical students and run postgraduate programs for health professionals. The RCIADIC commended the proposal and suggested that if successful, it should be used as an example for future primary healthcare training.</p>
<b>Intent</b>	Monitor and learn from the experiences and methods of operation that come from the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service's Primary Health Care Unit.
<b>Responsibility</b>	The Commonwealth and all state and territory governments.
<b>Key contacts</b>	Department of Health; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.
<b>Key action taken</b>	
<b>2005 Review<sup>3</sup></b>	The Department of Human Services assessed Recommendation 248 as <b>not relevant</b> to Victoria, as the unit referred to in Recommendation 248 no longer existed.
<b>2018 Review<sup>4</sup></b>	Deloitte concluded that Victoria had <b>not implemented</b> Recommendation 248 and deemed it out of scope for all states and territories.

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Final Report, 1991) vol 4, 258-259 ('RCIADIC').

<sup>2</sup> Ibid vol 4, 240-257 [31.3.49].

<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal Justice Forum (Vic), Department of Justice (Vic), *Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Review Report, October 2005) vol 1, 222 ('2005 Review').

<sup>4</sup> Deloitte Access Economics, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Review of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Report, August 2018) 502-503 ('2018 Review').

## 248. Learn from Aboriginal community-controlled health services

### Since then

#### Department of Health<sup>5</sup>

Treaty negotiations, preparedness and strategic responses to the Yoorrook Justice Commission (Yoorrook) present significant reform opportunities to improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing in Victoria. At the 2024 hearings, the Minister for Health heard directly from witnesses what is needed to achieve improved health and wellbeing outcomes, and how the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector must be supported in their delivery of Aboriginal models of care. Several system focused priorities and actions of the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement and Action Plan were expedited as a direct result of the Yoorrook hearings. These include development of the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Accountability Framework, greater support for funding reforms for the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector and a strengthened focus on prevention, early intervention, cultural safety and sharing evidence across the wider health sector. Furthermore, twenty-two Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and four mainstream services across the state receive health funding under the former Korin Korin Balit-Djak Strategy. This funding was shifted into a more sustainable arrangement with the introduction of four-year funding cycles in 2023.

### Evidence of impact

#### Authorising documents

#### Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement<sup>6</sup>

The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement 2023-2033 (the Agreement) aims to enhance health outcomes for Aboriginal people in Victoria through a collaborative approach that emphasises self-determination, cultural safety, and accountability.

The shared vision of the Agreement partners is ‘for Aboriginal people to have access to a health system that is holistic, culturally safe, accessible, and empowering.’ In their own words, partners to the Agreement describe their commitment and purpose:

*The Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement is a commitment from the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum members<sup>7</sup> to work together in reforming the healthcare system. To achieve our vision, we are committed to upholding self-determination as a key principle, to working in an open and transparent manner, sharing information, knowledge, and resources in a way that ensures we remain accountable to each other in achieving our shared priorities. This Agreement commits us to working together to implement the key actions for health reform within the Action Plan, which will be developed by members of the Forum. These actions are important steps along the journey towards a shared vision of better health and wellbeing for all Aboriginal Victorians, in a health system*

<sup>5</sup> Department of Health (Vic), 'Review of Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) ' (Response to AJC Request).

<sup>6</sup> Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and Department of Health (Vic), *The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement 2023-2033* (Partnership Agreement, 2023) ('The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement 2023-2033').

<sup>7</sup> Forum members consist of representatives from across the health system (Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisations and the mainstream system sector) as well as representatives from the Victorian Government Department of Health.

## 248. Learn from Aboriginal community-controlled health services

*where there is no wrong point of access for any Aboriginal person. Our commitment to work together is guided by self-determination, cultural safety, accountability and transparency.*

### Outputs

None identified.

### Outcomes

None identified.

### Community views

None identified.

## Related recommendations

### 2005 Review<sup>8</sup>

#### Recommendation 20

That the Department of Human Services, in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation reconsider the relevance of the learning process about the philosophy and methods of operation of Aboriginal community-controlled health services.

## Assessment summary<sup>9</sup>

Recommendation 248 is no longer relevant as the proposed Aboriginal primary health care unit that it referred to was not established. However, the broader principle that health departments, academic institutions and other relevant training authorities can learn from the philosophies and methods of operation of Aboriginal community-controlled health services, remains relevant. Examples of successful Aboriginal models of care are highlighted in response to other health-related recommendations.

## Bibliography

Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and Department of Health (Vic), *The Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement 2023-2033* (Partnership Agreement, 2023)

Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Project Team, Online, 21 October 2025)

Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, Online, 15 August 2025)

Aboriginal Justice Forum (Vic), Department of Justice (Vic), *Victorian Implementation Review of the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Review Report, October 2005)

Deloitte Access Economics, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Review of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Report, August 2018)

Department of Health (Vic), 'Review of Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) ' (Response to AJC Request, July 2025)

*Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Final Report, 1991)

<sup>8</sup> 2005 Review, 37.

<sup>9</sup> Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, Online, 15 August 2025) ('Working Group Meeting (15 August 2025)'); Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Project Team, Online, 21 October 2025) ('AJC Meeting (21 October 2025)').