



Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Recommendation

66. Encourage more comprehensive research into alcohol use

That if Aboriginal people identify it as a priority, organisations which support research into Aboriginal issues, including the NCADA and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, encourage more comprehensive and diverse research into the extent, causes and consequences of alcohol use among Aboriginal people. In particular, that appropriate steps be taken to ensure that the NCADA national research and training centres at the University of New South Wales, Curtin University and the Flinders University of South Australia establish mechanisms to encourage new graduates, researchers from other fields and Aboriginal people to conduct research in this area and identify research priorities and methods to implement them.¹

Background²	<p>The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) emphasised the need for more organisations supporting research to fund studies that investigate the consequences of alcohol use in Aboriginal communities. RCIADIC reiterated that alcohol use among Aboriginal communities is the leading cause of deaths in custody, sickness and violence outcomes.</p> <p>The RCIADIC highlighted the need for implementing structures that promote the involvement of a range of experts, researchers and Aboriginal people, ensuring comprehensive research coverage across all areas.</p>
Intent	Promote comprehensive research into the causes and consequences of alcohol use among Aboriginal people and develop structures that encourage the involvement of diverse researchers and Aboriginal people.
Responsibility	The Commonwealth Government.
Key contacts	Department of Health.
Key action taken	
2005 Review³	<p>The Victorian Government considered Recommendation 66 to be the sole responsibility of the Commonwealth Government.</p> <p>Department of Human Services</p> <p>Drugs and Policy Services advised that Recommendation 66 was not relevant to Victoria, but the Victorian Government supported the recommendation.</p> <p>Review Team</p> <p>The Review Team agreed that Recommendation 66 was primarily aimed at national organisations and research institutions located outside Victoria. However, the team did not</p>

¹ Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Final Report, 1991) vol 2, 331 ('RCIADIC').

² Ibid vol 2, 331 [15.3.4].

³ 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, 246, 251, 270 ('2005 Review').

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	agree that the spirit of Recommendation 66 did not apply to Victoria with its considerable research effort in the area. Given the correlation between alcohol and drug abuse and contact with the criminal justice system in Victoria, the Review Team suggested that Recommendation 66 was relevant to Victoria.
2018 Review⁴	Deloitte considered Recommendation 66 the sole responsibility of the Commonwealth Government and concluded that it had been fully implemented by funding alcohol-related research regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and developing a national initiatives database.
Since then	Department of Health⁵ In their 2025 response, the Department of Health deemed this recommendation a Commonwealth responsibility and considered it fully implemented. They noted that the department has not commissioned any comprehensive alcohol related research in relation to Aboriginal cohorts in Victoria.

Evidence of impact

Authorising documents	None identified.
Outputs	None identified.
Outcomes	None identified.
Community views	None identified.

Related recommendations

2005 Review⁶	Recommendation 21 That the Department of Human Services recognise that alcohol is a major contributing factor to Aboriginal disadvantage and implement Recommendation 66, actively prioritising and funding Victorian specific research on Aboriginal alcohol and drug use.
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Assessment summary⁷

Recommendation 66 was a Commonwealth Government responsibility.

⁴ 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) 132-133 ('2018 Review').

⁵ Department of Health (Vic), 'Updates on Implementation of 43 RCIADIC Recommendations Related to Health, Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Policies and Services.'

⁶ *2005 Review*, vol 1, 39.

⁷ Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus Working Group (Project Team, Online, 4 July 2025) ('*Working Group Meeting (4 July 2025)*'). Meeting with Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Project Team, In Person, 23 September 2025) ('*AJC Meeting (23 September 2025)*').

Bibliography

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