



VACCHO Media Release

Partnership agreement brings self-determination closer for Aboriginal people

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, through their peak body representatives, will share decision making with governments through a new Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is one of the more than 40 Aboriginal peak bodies that have signed the [Partnership Agreement](#) yesterday via a representative for the Coalition of Peaks.

“We believe that shared decision making between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled representatives in the design, implementation and monitoring of new Closing the Gap targets and framework is essential,” VACCHO Chairperson Karen Heap said.

“This is self-determination in action. Self-determination is a proven approach to Closing the Gap for Indigenous peoples; global research provides that evidence-base, including research done at Harvard University.

“The new Closing the Gap targets must use Aboriginal holistic definitions of social and emotional health and wellbeing, and address systemic inequity and racism.

“Closing the Gap encompasses much more than health indicators. We are resilient peoples who have survived for thousands of years and hundreds of detrimental government policies.

“We know what works to help our people thrive and this Partnership Agreement will make sure that we are heard.”

Ms Heap said she was pleased VACCHO’s Acting CEO, Trevor Pearce, had been appointed the Representative through this process for the Victorian Aboriginal Executive Council, made up of 11 Victorian Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

“Many Victorian people are shocked to discover that the Gap exists in urban and regional Victoria too,” Ms Heap said.

“Our mob in urban and regional areas are experiencing poor health and wellbeing outcomes across all the global indicators of health, especially in education attainment, security of employment, housing and prevalence of chronic disease.

“Trevor Pearce will make sure that Victorian Aboriginal peoples will not be forgotten through this Closing the Gap Partnership Agreement.

“We look forward to a day when we don’t need to talk about a ‘gap’ as our peoples will be thriving through self-determination, the strength of our cultures and Communities, and the dismantling of systemic racism and inequity. Through this will come healing for our Communities.”

Media: contact Rebecca Thorpe on 0418 350 844 or rebeccat@vaccho.org.au for interview requests or further information.

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc.

VACCHO is the peak body for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people living in Victoria.

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