

**VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE (VAHS) MEDIA RELEASE:
VICTORIAN STATE BUDGET'S 'HISTORICAL INVESTMENT' IN HEALTH SYSTEM DOES NOT
EXTEND TO ABORIGINAL HEALTH**

This week the Victorian Government released its 2024-25 State Budget, which included a strong investment in Treaty and Truth of \$118.9 million but failed to deliver specifically on Aboriginal health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB).

The budget included an enormous \$11 billion investment in the health system, and an additional \$1.7 billion for hospital upgrades. However, under the new budget, only \$19.3 million of new direct funding will make its way to Aboriginal health. Significantly more is required to support the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians.

Aboriginal Victorian's health and wellbeing should remain a priority and significant investment is required to achieve the Government's goals under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement), including implementing the Priority Reforms. Investment is needed in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) to deliver culturally safe health services to Aboriginal Victorians, and to deliver against Priority Reform Two: Building the Community Controlled Sector.

This underinvestment is consistent with the Victorian Government's poor track record delivering on the National Agreement. The Productivity Commission's recent [Closing the Gap review](#) highlighted that governments have failed to commit sufficient resourcing to deliver on the Priority Reforms. This budget does not go far enough to have an impact.

While some funding commitments in the budget do support the Priority Reforms, in particular through *Aboriginal Health in Aboriginal Hands* and increased Aboriginal-led decision making in schools, this budget will not support the transformative reform that the Victorian Government has committed to under the National Agreement.

Despite the underinvestment in Aboriginal health overall, VAHS is pleased to see an investment of \$4.1 million over four years in [paediatric services for Aboriginal children](#). This multi-year investment provides certainty to community about the continuity of this important service and supports the retention of Aboriginal health workers and medical professionals.

We are also pleased to see a continuation of funding for [Yarning Safe 'N' Strong](#), our free and confidential counselling service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Other welcome investments include the implementation of marra ngarrgoo, marra goorri: The Victorian Aboriginal Health, Medical and Wellbeing Research Accord, and the Aboriginal Health in Aboriginal Hands: Strengthening cultural safety and supporting culture and kinship.

VAHS hopes to see ongoing funding commitments for ACCHOs in future budgets to support delivery of services to meet identified community needs.

Quotes attributable to Michael Graham, VAHS CEO

“The Victorian Government continues to underinvest in and undervalue Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and the dedicated Aboriginal health professionals who work hard every day to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians.”

“It’s concerning to see our goals under the National Agreement taking a back seat in this budget. The Productivity Commission called out governments’ failures to commit adequate resourcing to the Priority Reforms, but Victorian Government doesn’t seem to be listening.”

“We call on the Victorian Government to make good on its commitment to self-determination and to its shared ambitions under the National Agreement. This means significant investment in the Priority Reforms, including money for our ACCHOs to do what they do best, keep Aboriginal Victorians healthy and well with culturally safe holistic services.”

“We welcome the investment in our paediatric services and Yarning Safe N Strong phonenumber. When Aboriginal people get culturally safe health care and relevant information, this puts them on track for healthy outcomes where they are connected to community and culture.”