

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in ARF and RHD: Priorities, Partnerships and Progress

World Congress on RHD, Abu Dhabi UAE

November 2023

Dr Dawn Casey, PSM FAHA  
Deputy CEO, NACCHO

*Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands*



**NACCHO**  
[www.naccho.org.au](http://www.naccho.org.au)

## What our sector looks like

We are here for the long haul

### 50 years+

The **ACCHO model** was developed more than 50 years ago (since the first Aboriginal medical service was established at Redfern in 1971)

### ~7,000 staff

of whom **54 per cent are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people** (in excess of 3700), work in more than 550 clinics

### Top 3

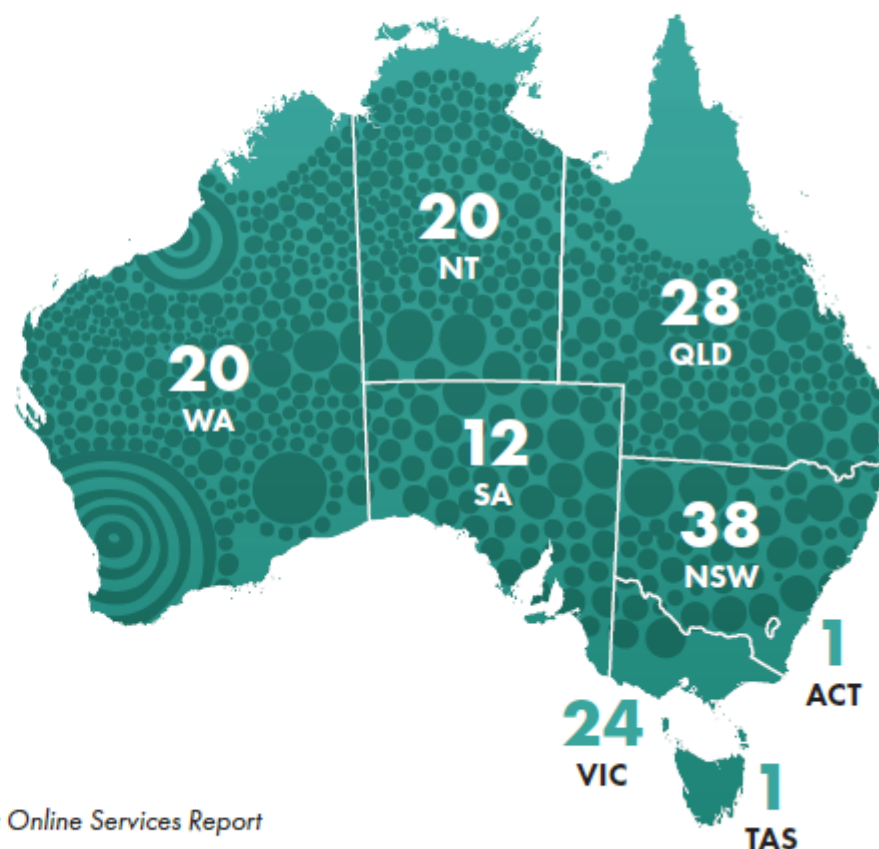
The ACCHO sector is among the top three **employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people** in Australia.

#### Sources

NACCHO data; AIHW, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Organisations: Online Services Report*

## 144 members

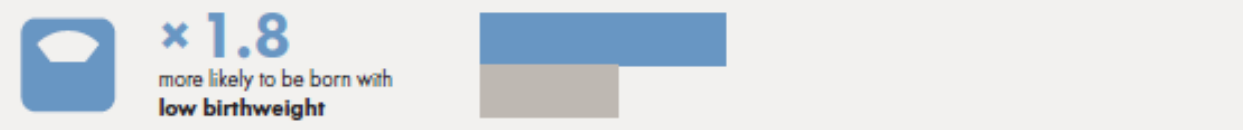
in a **national footprint**



# The Health Gap

Between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are:



● Indigenous | ● Non-Indigenous



## Setting the Scene

Community-Controlled activities toward ending  
Rheumatic Heart Disease in Australia

“We know what needs to be done,  
and we know that it can be done”.

*-Pat Turner, CEO, NACCHO*





## **Funding** Investing in Community Controlled Service Delivery

### Community of Practice

Pictured at left:  
Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander health  
care workers at  
NACCHO's first national  
community of practice  
meeting and Echo  
familiarisation workshop.



## Primordial Prevention and ARF Prevention

69.2% of new cases of first ARF would be prevented by combining housing, health promotion and primary health care.

*(RHD Endgame Strategy, page 290)*



## Secondary Prophylaxis and Whole-of-Person Care

Challenges that require structural reform



ADMINISTRATION  
OF INJECTIONS



WORKFORCE  
SHORTAGES



INCREASING WAIT  
TIMES



COMORBIDITIES



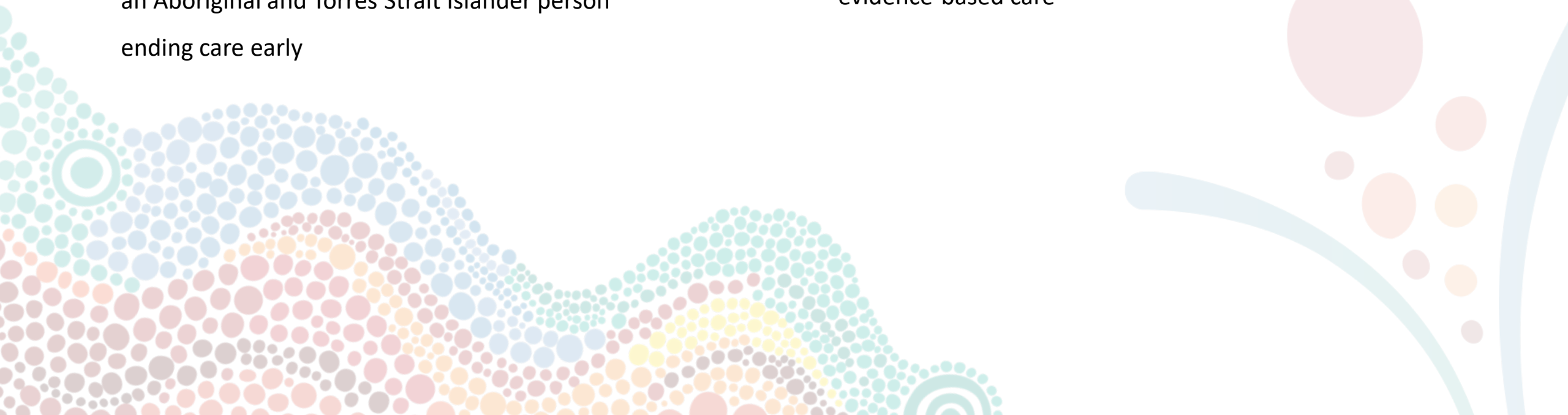
# RHD Care and Treatment in Hospitals

## Cultural Safety in Hospital Settings

- In an average year, there are **125** admissions for RHD-related cardiothoracic surgery across QLD, WA, SA and NT combined
- **One in every 25** hospital admissions ends with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person ending care early

## Care for Pregnant Women

- Estimate about **100** pregnancies with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women with RHD each year
- A properly resourced multidisciplinary team in primary health care will provide holistic and evidence-based care





# Tackling ARF and RHD in the Kimberley

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Dr Lorraine Anderson  
Medical Director, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services

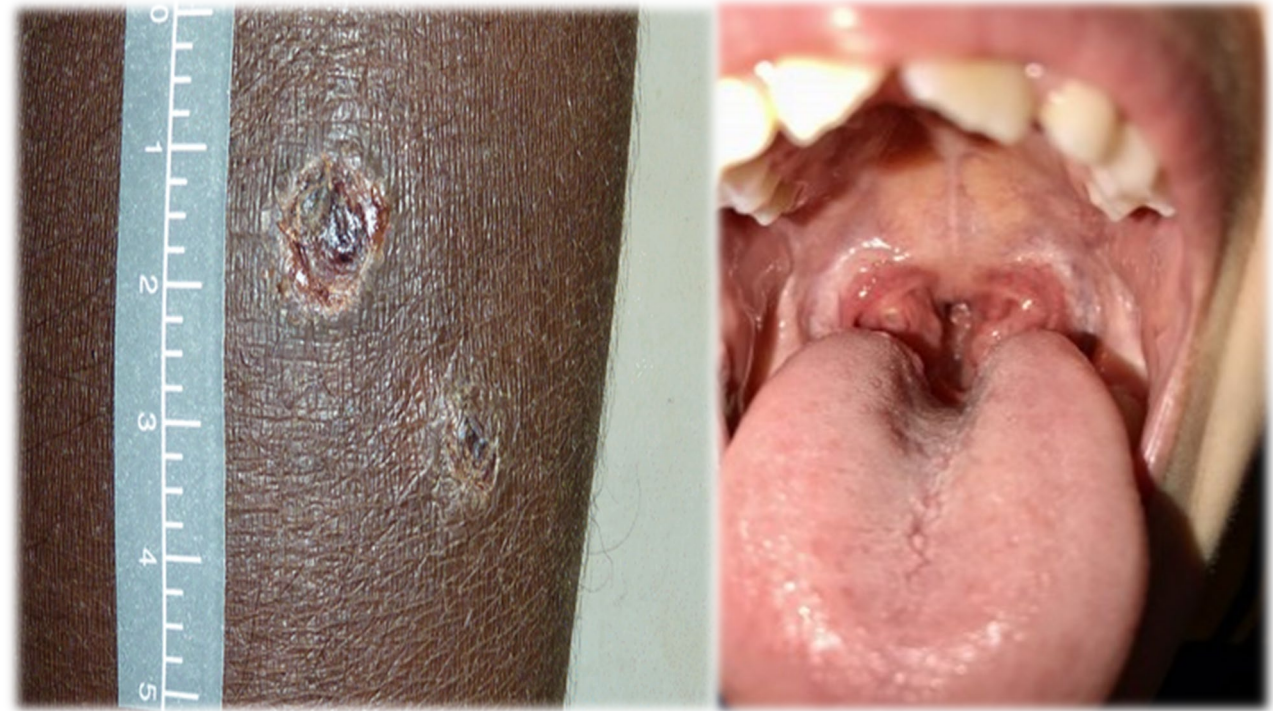
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# ARF and RHD

Dr Lorraine Anderson  
Medical Director  
Kimberley Aboriginal Medical  
Services



# ACCHS Model of Care

The Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) Model of Care is underpinned by eight determinants that are required for the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and their Communities.

## Definition of Health



### Community Engagement

Involving local community members in service delivery enables the Practice to engage clients in appropriate healthcare. Aboriginal people must be included in leadership positions and decision making processes.

### Multi-disciplinary Team Approach

Utilising the skills and knowledge of a variety of healthcare professionals allows for the complex care needs of clients to be met.

### Aboriginal Workforce

An Aboriginal workforce delivering primary healthcare ensures a culturally safe environment.

**Roles include:** Aboriginal Health Worker/ Practitioners and other Health Professionals, Transport Drivers, Health Promotion Officers, Liaison Officers, Practice Managers, SEWS Workers, Receptionists, and Environmental Health Workers

### Cultural Safety

It's important for clients to feel safe, welcome, and empowered.

**This can include:** Aboriginal staff - familiar faces, Family environment, Layout of clinic, Longer appointments, Use of local artwork/ posters, Communication style, Service is holistic addressing the social determinants of health, Respect for cultural protocols



AHCWA  
Aboriginal Health Council  
of Western Australia

AHCWA aims to promote and strengthen the ACCHS model of care. A model that is built around the delivery of comprehensive, holistic and culturally secure primary health care services.

Community

Family

Culture

Spiritual

Language

Country

Emotional

Community

Physical



NACCHO  
National Aboriginal Community  
Controlled Health Organisation

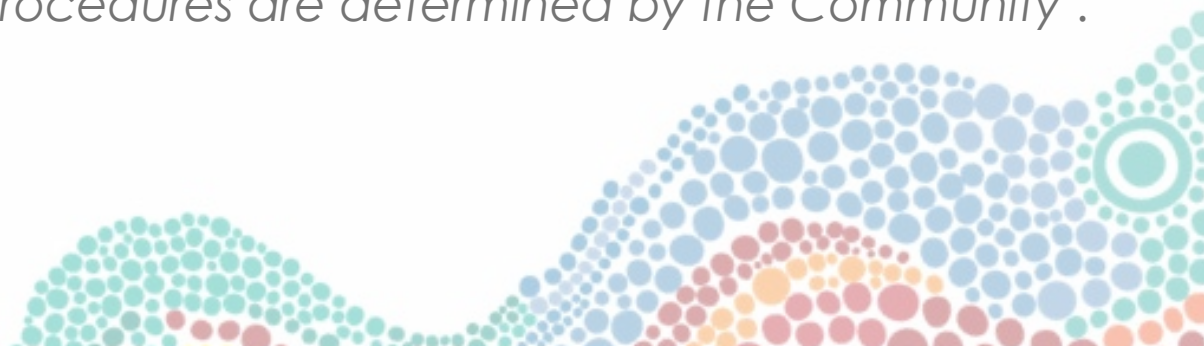




**Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs)** came into being because of the inability of mainstream health services to effectively engage Aboriginal communities with their services.

**The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)**, the national peak body for all ACCHOs, defines Aboriginal community control in health services as:

*'a process which allows the local Aboriginal community to be involved in its affairs in accordance with whatever protocols or procedures are determined by the Community'.*





Nirrumbuk  
Environmental  
Health and  
Services

# Links with Environmental Health



92% of ARF occurs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 15x more likely to contract ARF

For example –

- Reduce over-crowding in housing.
- Upgrade Community facilities.
- Laundry facilities to assist with clean clothing, bedding.
- Clean and functioning ablution blocks.



# The WHO lists the following as social determinants which can influence health equity in positive and negative ways

## Housing, basic amenities and the environment

- income and social protection
- education
- unemployment and job insecurity
- working life conditions
- food insecurity
- early childhood development
- social inclusion and non-discrimination
- structural conflict
- access to affordable health services of decent quality (WHO 2022).



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National Aboriginal Community  
Controlled Health Organisation





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