

WESTERN AUSTRALIA ABORIGINAL YOUTH HEALTH STRATEGY 2018 - 2023



TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE
TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Artwork: Bobbi Lockyer

About the Artist: Bobbi Lockyer is a *Ngarluma, Karriyarra* (from the Pilbara) *Yawuru, Nyulnyul* (from the Kimberley) Aboriginal artist. Her art forms include design, photography and painting. Visit her website for more information about her work at www.bobbilockyer.com.au

Title: Our Future

My artwork represents the Aboriginal youth reaching above, becoming leaders for their younger peers and growing into leadership roles. To borrow from Norman Vincent Peal, there is a quote I love that goes 'Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars'. I think this quote is very relevant for our youth today, sending the message to never give up, to always try and always push themselves. I have also used artistic and cultural elements in my design to connect the Aboriginal youth to their land, sea, sky and culture.

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Acknowledgement

The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. AHCWA acknowledges the wisdom of Aboriginal elders and leaders, both past and present, and pays respect to Aboriginal communities of today. AHCWA acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the future, our young Aboriginal people, the carriers of culture, of memories, of traditions, and of hopes and aspirations.

We acknowledge the young Aboriginal people who have shared their stories and experiences with AHCWA over many years. To the families, communities and service providers who support them, and who have shared their insights, we pay respect.

In this document, unless quoting directly, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. For the purpose of this document, the term Aboriginal is also inclusive of Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I do think young Indigenous people have the future in their hands.

A message from the AHCWA Chairperson

Welcome to the Western Australia Aboriginal Youth Health Strategy 2018-2023 (The Strategy).

The Strategy represents a culmination of almost a decade of AHCWA's dedicated leadership and advocacy in the area of Aboriginal youth health.

The Strategy is specifically tailored for improving the health of young Aboriginal people, and in particular young Aboriginal people living in Western Australia. Although intended for health service providers who work with young Aboriginal people, any service provider can use the Strategy to improve ways of working with young Aboriginal people.

The Strategy title – **Today's Young People, Tomorrow's Leaders** – encapsulates the central features of the Strategy and underpins the Health Domain Areas, Key Priorities and the Strategic Actions. The Strategy accentuates the rights of all young Aboriginal people to look to the future with cultural pride and strength, and to embrace life's experiences, including the challenges, with optimism and resilience.

If we are to make gains in the health of young Aboriginal people, we must allow their voices to be heard, their ideas listened to and their experiences acknowledged. The cultural pride of young Aboriginal people must be embraced to enable a platform for them to be self-determining, the authors of their own destiny. Young Aboriginal people must be supported and encouraged to draw on their inner strengths, and to move forward with the benefit of choice and an attitude of optimism.

We all have a responsibility to support and assist young Aboriginal people in these objectives. To build them up, and to help create the opportunities which will empower them to reach their full potential, to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

Health, and in particular access to culturally secure health services, is critical to providing the foundations for young Aboriginal people to achieve these aims. Effective, culturally secure health services are the key to unlocking the innate value of young Aboriginal people, as individuals and as strong young people, to become our future leaders. We must deliver to them culturally secure health services and programs. This requires not only an understanding of culture, but the social detriments that cause harm to the health of young Aboriginal people. We must tailor responsive holistic health services to address these needs.

This Strategy recognises that transformative change in health service delivery can be harnessed through collective and collaborative efforts. These efforts include all of us working together to support Aboriginal self-determination through community driven, locally tailored approaches and solutions. As a community, we must proactively engage with and support the self-determination of young Aboriginal people as they journey from today's young people, to the Aboriginal leaders of our future.

Vicki O'Donnell
Chairperson

Celebrating Western Australia's young Aboriginal people

A message from the AHCWA Chief Executive Officer

Today's young people have every right to be aspirational, to look to the future with optimism, hope and positive anticipation.

I am extremely proud to present the Western Australia Aboriginal Youth Health Strategy 2018-2023, developed with and on behalf of young Aboriginal people of Western Australia, and the families, communities and services that support and care for them.

Many people contributed to the development of the Strategy. However, it is the voices, ideas, views and experiences of young Aboriginal people that are reflected in and underpin the Health Domain Areas, Key Priorities and Strategic Actions. Their stories are the Strategy, and without which, it could not have been developed.

The families, friends, communities and services that support and work with young Aboriginal people also deserve recognition for the contribution they have made, not only to this important Strategy, but to the development of the courageous, strong young Aboriginal people we have heard from.

Formulated on a strong evidence base, the Strategy represents many years of focused leadership and advocacy by AHCWA to advance the Aboriginal youth health agenda.

The Strategy reminds us that young Aboriginal people must be at the centre of the health services and programs we design and deliver. The Strategy recognises that culture is intrinsic to the health and wellbeing of

young Aboriginal people. Recognition of and understanding about culture must therefore be at the centre of and the unchanging element in the planning, development and implementation of health services and programs intended for young Aboriginal people.

The evidence underpinning the Strategy highlights that young Aboriginal people require holistic, responsive, culturally secure and accessible health services and programs. We must therefore remain open to understanding the health relevance of Aboriginal culture, and the social issues which contribute to the unique health needs of young Aboriginal people, as voiced by them. Young Aboriginal people have told us that social determinants, including physical, cultural and social influences, influence their health and wellbeing.

Today's young people represent the Aboriginal leaders of tomorrow. With this in mind, the Strategy encourages health service providers to locate young Aboriginal people at the centre of service and program planning and design, to listen to their voices, hear what they have to say and remain open to learning from them.

The Strategy asks health services to look beyond the obvious, to recognise and to accept the whole Aboriginal young person, their intrinsic value, their culture and their strengths.

Des Martin
Chief Executive Officer

Executive Summary

To travel the development journey to becoming strong Aboriginal leaders, young Aboriginal people require a clear pathway. This pathway must be one of support to overcome obstacles, to gain access to services and to secure the opportunities that lead to healthy and fulfilled lives. We must lift young Aboriginal people up, embrace their culture, and support and mentor them in their journey to attain their rightful place as strong leaders.

The Strategy reflects the concept of health as viewed by young Aboriginal people.

The voices of many young Aboriginal people are represented in the Strategy. When talking about their health, they consistently tell us that we must adopt a holistic approach. They see health issues as interrelated, with many contributory factors having an impact.

They adopt a multi-dimensional view of health, identifying a range of cultural, emotional (mental), social and physical health issues as important to overall health. Young Aboriginal people identify structural issues, including the social determinants of health, cross-cultural barriers, workforce limitations, and limited access to services, as interrelated factors impacting on their health.

The opinions of young Aboriginal people about their health and their perspectives about the interwoven nature of health issues, affirms the need to ensure health services adopt culturally secure, holistic approaches. The Strategy provides direction

in this regard, identifying five important Health Domain Areas which encompass Key Priorities, underpinned by practical and achievable Strategic Actions. AHCWA will lead the implementation of the Strategic Actions, which are targeted for work at the local level, fostering joined-up service delivery, and implementing local, community driven solutions. The Strategy locates young Aboriginal people at the centre of implementation, and its implementation will foster their leadership skills and ambitions.

The Strategy provides a practical resource for achieving measurable health outcomes in Aboriginal youth health. Implementation of the Strategy's Strategic Actions will deliver empowering, positive and person-centred approaches for improving young Aboriginal people's health outcomes. The Strategy represents a further tangible demonstration of the commitment and vision AHCWA has for Aboriginal youth health service and program delivery in Western Australia.

The Strategy aligns with and supports the delivery of certain priorities under the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023.

The Strategy is the beginning of the journey. It is a tool to bring us together in strategic action to enable young Aboriginal people to look to the future in contemplation of the types of leaders they would like to become.

Introduction

AHCWA is the peak body for the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) in Western Australia.* The ACCHS are located across geographically diverse metropolitan, rural, remote and regional locations.

ACCHS represent the most effective model of comprehensive primary health care for Aboriginal people.¹

ACCHS are in a unique position to identify and respond to the local cultural, health and other needs of the Aboriginal communities of Western Australia. ACCHS respond to a complexity of health, early intervention and prevention, and social and emotional wellbeing issues across the lifespan.

AHCWA exists to support and act on behalf of ACCHS, actively responding to the individual and collective needs of AHCWA member services. AHCWA is established under a constitution and is supported by a strong governance framework, including a Board which comprises representatives from across our member services. At the National level, AHCWA is represented on the Chief Executive Officer Network of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

The principal vision of AHCWA is for Aboriginal people in Western Australia to enjoy the same level of health and wellbeing as all Western Australians. Arguably achieving this vision for young Aboriginal people has particular relevance and importance. AHCWA asserts that Aboriginal leadership, self-determination and cultural diversity are integral to achieving this objective.

* For the purpose of this document ACCHS is inclusive of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

Health Concepts

The World Health Organization (WHO) holds that:

To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, an individual or group must be able to realise aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources as well as physical capacities.²

That there are many factors which can influence health and wellbeing is readily accepted. These influencing factors include political, economic, environmental, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological, and physical conditions.³ A holistic approach to health, including responsiveness to the social determinants which influence health, is therefore integral to attaining good health outcomes.

Aboriginal people have always understood this, recognising that physical health and

culture, country, family, community and environment are all factors influencing health and social and emotional wellbeing.

This whole-of-life, whole person holistic view of health includes the cyclic concept of life-death-life.⁴

This holistic health concept is one that incorporates an understanding of and interplay with the whole body, whole community, whole culture, and whole of country. It is founded in traditional and long-established reinforcing factors of harmonised inter-relations across many elements (for example spiritual, cultural, political, social, economic, environmental).⁵

This holistic concept of health recognises the dimension of the historical context, and its legacy on Aboriginal people's health as well as the dimension of future uncertainty for young Aboriginal people. This uncertainty extends to self-determination, sovereignty, culture, control of resources and unresolved issues about land and country.⁶

Aboriginal History and Health

Health, including mental health and social and emotional wellbeing, is fundamental to the human condition and integral to the individual and collective ability to think, express, and engage productively in work and in life.⁷ Young Aboriginal people have reported that history and the consequent transgenerational trauma and loss of culture, are relevant factors for the health of today's young Aboriginal people. The Strategy takes account of this and includes strategic action aimed at healing trauma and fostering cultural strength and pride.



Who can use the Strategy?

AHCWA will lead the implementation of the Strategy and work alongside our member services, and importantly with young Aboriginal people, communities and other stakeholders to implement the Strategy.

The Strategy provides us all with the opportunity and direction to refocus our approach in Aboriginal youth health. It guides us to harness young Aboriginal people's inherent value and strengths and provides ways to foster their right to self-determination. The Strategy helps us to maximise the contributions of young Aboriginal people as they steer their way to becoming future leaders. The Strategy compels us to mentor, inspire and mobilise our young people to find

their rightful place as leaders, as carriers of culture, as holders of wisdom to share with future generations.

The Strategy has broad application for addressing the health needs of young Aboriginal people. Although tailored to improve Aboriginal youth health and social and emotional wellbeing through a range of health-related key actions, any service provider can use the Strategy to improve ways of working with young Aboriginal people. Strategic Actions under the Strategy will foster collaboration and joined-up service delivery. In this way, the Strategy is relevant for any service provider who is concerned about or working in the area of Aboriginal youth health.

AHCWA Aboriginal Youth Health Program

The shared goal of the Commonwealth Government with the Australian community is to achieve health equality for Aboriginal people by 2031.

Through the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023, the Commonwealth Government is committed to Closing the Gap on health inequalities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. AHCWA welcomes the opportunity to work with all Governments in closing the gap in Aboriginal youth health.

AHCWA has a long and proud tradition of leadership and advocacy in prioritising Aboriginal young people and placing their health needs at the forefront.

For almost a decade AHCWA has delivered dedicated programs and initiatives to advance Aboriginal youth health reform.

Establishing the first coordinated Aboriginal Youth Health Program in Western Australia in 2011, and later the first Aboriginal youth program coordinator role, with funding support from member services, AHCWA has continued to advance the agenda for addressing the health inequalities experienced by the young Aboriginal people of Western Australia.

Through funding under the Indigenous Australians Health Programme - Youth Program, the Commonwealth Government provided an opportunity for AHCWA to continue its strategic policy and program activities to address the health needs and issues of young Aboriginal people of Western Australia. The concept of developing an Aboriginal youth health strategy emerged, and at the core of this was representing young Aboriginal people's views, experiences and recommendations about their health.

Aboriginal Youth Governance

An AHCWA Youth Committee (Committee) and AHCWA Youth Program Reference Group (Reference Group) provided oversight and input towards the development of the Strategy.

Young Aboriginal people from across Western Australia, some of whom are working in our member services and all of whom represented the unique and particular views and experiences of their communities, joined

the Committee. AHCWA established a youth policy officer position to work with AHCWA's Aboriginal youth program coordinator to lead the development of the Strategy and chair the Reference Group. The Group members included a range of government and non-government stakeholders with experience in youth health. Going forward AHCWA will draw on the membership of the Committee, to establish an Aboriginal Youth Performance Outcomes Committee to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.

Yarning with young Aboriginal people – why listen?

Young Aboriginal people have every right to expect equity of access to health services.

They have a right to be encouraged in their cultural perspectives and to self-determination when having their health needs and issues addressed. Respecting young Aboriginal people's culture and understanding their health needs are therefore essential ingredients for meeting these expectations.

This is why we listened.

The planning and delivery of responsive health services and programs for young Aboriginal people must be predicated on a commitment to incorporate their views, experiences and recommendations.



The Strategy Development

Drawing on AHCWA's many years of experience in working alongside young Aboriginal people and learning about their health needs, AHCWA continued the approach of listening to what young Aboriginal people have to say about their health. We also listened to the views of their families, communities and service providers.

These views were added to those captured through our annual Statewide youth conferences and have helped to shape the Strategy. The views of young Aboriginal people have assisted us to identify the strategic actions necessary to create opportunities, advocate for and support community development and capacity building initiatives to address Aboriginal youth health.

We have learned from young Aboriginal people about their health priorities, health issues, and the health influences which support or impede their health.

AHCWA has visited many communities and locations across Western Australia over the years, listening to young Aboriginal people, service providers, and community members.

Digital platforms are another tool AHCWA has utilised to obtain views, experiences and recommendations about Aboriginal youth health.

We have talked to stakeholders who are involved in the delivery of health services or who engage with young Aboriginal people in providing education, employment, social and emotional wellbeing or youth services.

Guiding Principles

Health services are in a unique position within our communities and are an important element of the infrastructure necessary to maximise opportunities for young Aboriginal people to grow and develop as strong Aboriginal leaders of the future.

The Strategy provides practical guidance for health services to work with AHCWA to engage with young Aboriginal people, their families and communities to develop strong and healthy young Aboriginal people across Western Australia. Health services who proactively work with AHCWA and ACCHS to support implementation of the Strategy, will contribute to building the infrastructure necessary for prioritising the health and wellbeing of young Aboriginal people living in Western Australia.

The guiding principles capture the views and perspectives of young Aboriginal people about what is important to them in relation to health.

Strength in Culture - Strong Young Aboriginal People

The strengths of young Aboriginal people are harnessed, to empower and encourage strong Aboriginal leaders and positive role models in their community.

Young people are provided opportunities to voice their opinion on the issues affecting them, and are valued and recognised for their contributions.

Health related services and staff understand, acknowledge and respect the diverse cultural values, views and rights of young Aboriginal people, and identify ways in which to work with these values to achieve better health outcomes.

Self-determination and Empowerment

Self-determination and empowerment are central to attaining and maintaining good health.

Young Aboriginal people are the experts on their own lives, and accordingly central to knowing what is best for their overall health.

Young Aboriginal people must be empowered to have meaningful involvement in the life decisions that affect them, including in relation to their health and social and emotional wellbeing.

Working Aboriginal Way

The holistic, whole-of-life, whole person concept of health and social and emotional wellbeing adopted by Aboriginal people must be fully embraced in health service and program delivery. The views and experiences about health held by young Aboriginal people must be central to the planning, development and implementation of the health services and programs intended for them.

Future Focused - Developing Future Aboriginal Leaders

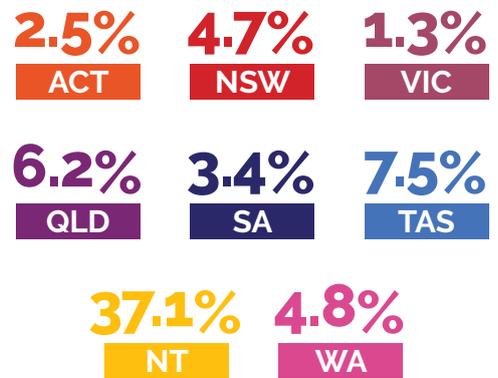
Adopting a future focused approach inspires and prepares young Aboriginal people to be leaders of their own journey.

Health services that adopt future focused approaches are flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of young Aboriginal people and enable them to build the skills to thrive in life's journey of challenges and changes. Future focused approaches will support and assist young Aboriginal people to engage in their own health care, enable them to be self-determining and empower them to aspire and shape a healthy, and fulfilled future.

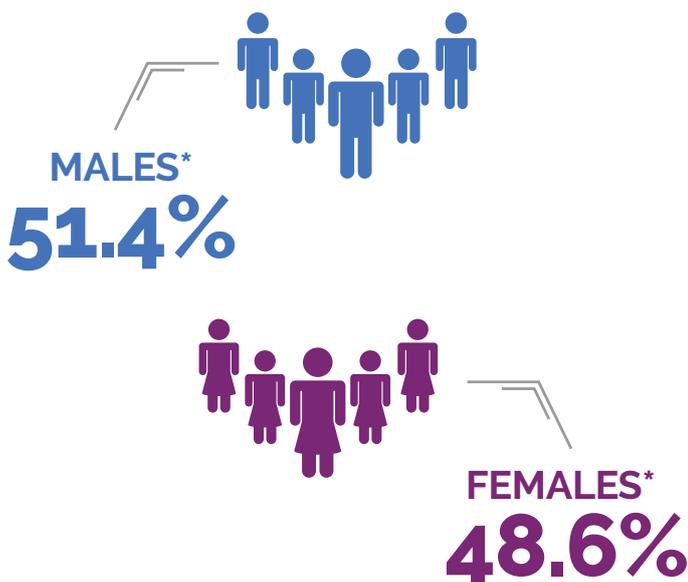
Who are Western Australia's Young Aboriginal people?



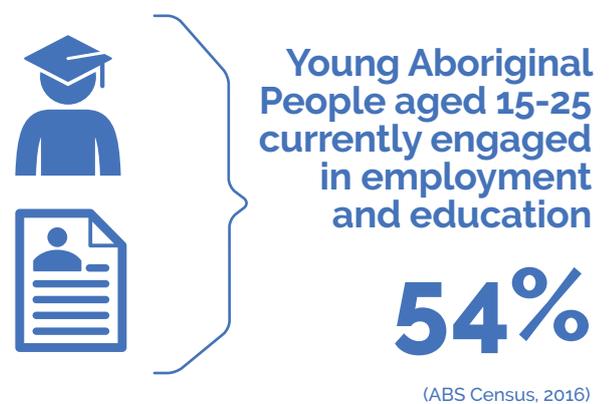
Proportion of WA Aboriginal youth aged 10 to 25 compared to other states.



Gender



Employment

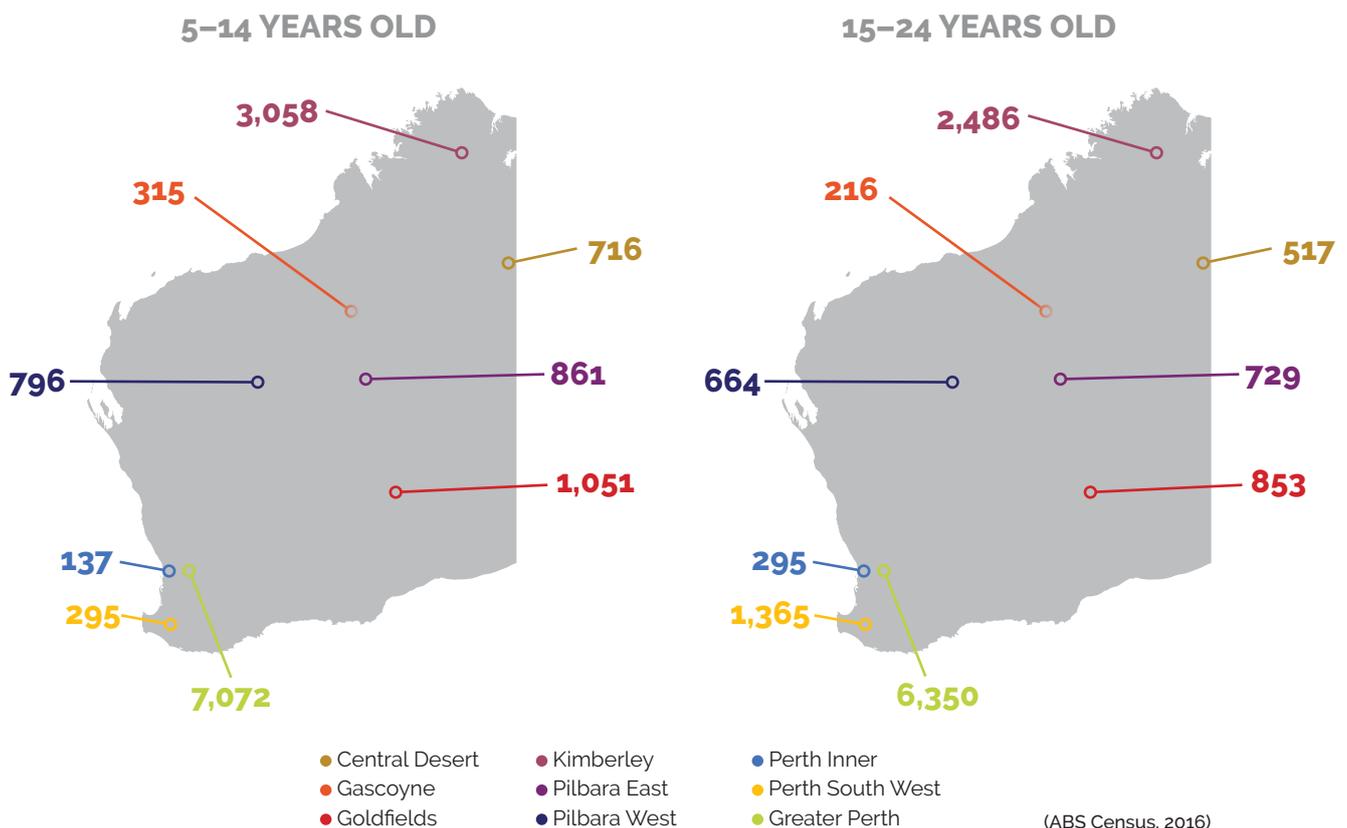


In 2016 in Western Australia, the median age of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people was 23 years.

Of all the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in WA in 2016 33.4% were children aged 0 to 14 years. *(ABS 2016 Census)*



Aboriginal young people by age and location



Developing Tomorrow's Aboriginal Leaders

The word healthy to me means being physically healthy, mentally and emotionally happy and healthy, and feeling socially included.

Health Influence Areas

AHCWA has established a firm evidence base for the Health Domain Areas of the Strategy. Over the years, talking with young Aboriginal people, AHCWA has heard of common experiences, views and opinions from young people about their health and the factors which influence health. In more recent conversations, the majority of young people spoke about health as a multifaceted domain, one with many dimensions. Young Aboriginal people, and many service providers, have identified four broad areas of health influence.

These were cultural, emotional (mental), social, and physical. Young people viewed these health influence areas as equally important to overall health.

Unpacking these health influence areas further with young Aboriginal people uncovered obstacles to good health such as living in a state of boredom due to a lack of youth appropriate extracurricular activities, sporting programs or other avenues to enhance social and emotional wellbeing and build personal capacity and strength. Of major concern for some young Aboriginal people were experiences of poverty, of homelessness, and of not having adequate food or water available within their community. These systemic structural barriers to good health require urgent attention from Governments at all levels.

Significantly young Aboriginal people shared experiences of how boredom was a factor

contributing to violence, mental health problems, and alcohol and other drug use issues. Young people also told us that racism, bullying and discrimination were factors affecting their health. Expanding on this, young Aboriginal people told us that the use of social media platforms to mitigate boredom was a factor in experiences of cyber-bullying, peer pressure and personal violence. These correlating and dependent conditions in turn lead to young Aboriginal people experiencing depression, stigma, trauma, social isolation and racism.

Young Aboriginal people also told us how to address these barriers to good health and the ways to improve their overall health and social and emotional wellbeing.

These factors included creating opportunities to access and engage in:

- culture and identity
- after-school activities
- skill-development
- social connectedness and healthy relationships
- formal learning and employment.

The health influence areas can be mapped across five Health Domain Areas. Within each Health Domain Area there are Key Priorities, under which Strategic Actions encapsulate young Aboriginal people's recommendations about strategies and approaches for improving their health and social and emotional wellbeing.

Health Domain Areas

The five Health Domain Areas represent the signposts for health service providers to understand and develop effective approaches under the Strategy. The five Health Domain Areas under the Strategy are:

1. **Strength in culture - capable and confident**
2. **Educating to employ**
3. **Strength in family and healthy relationships**
4. **Empowering future Aboriginal leaders**
5. **Healthy now, healthy future.**

Key Priorities

The Key Priorities describe what is necessary to follow the signposts. They point the way, provide direction and guide health services to follow the path to improving young Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing. Encapsulated within the Key Priorities are the Strategic Actions.

Strategic Actions

The Strategic Actions are the mechanisms that AHCWA will implement and work with others to engage with young Aboriginal people about their health.

The Strategic Actions will be supported by an Implementation Plan, and AHCWA will work with health services to plan, to develop, to build and implement effective health approaches that are appropriate and will meet the health needs of young Aboriginal people.

The Strategic Actions require stakeholders to come together, to collaborate with AHCWA and to adopt a shared responsibility to supporting and developing our young Aboriginal people on the journey to becoming future Aboriginal leaders.

Championing joined-up and connected service delivery within local communities is a key priority which AHCWA will lead under the Strategy.

The current health and community based service system has many strengths. However, fragmentation and a lack of coordination in some areas make it difficult for young Aboriginal people to find and access the services they need. Joined-up service delivery is paramount to addressing the health needs of young Aboriginal people.

The Strategy provides the opportunity for community led solutions aimed at repairing the service fragmentation, and opening doors to improved navigation pathways for young Aboriginal people. Leading the implementation of the Strategic Actions, AHCWA will work to reconcile, to unite, to bring everyone along on the journey - young Aboriginal people, families, communities, government, non-government, schools and other institutions, business and industry - to join as one in developing strong, healthy and resourced Aboriginal leaders, the ultimate custodians of our future.

AHCWA will work with stakeholders to implement the Strategic Actions. This will require forward-looking and visionary thinking, to when our young Aboriginal people are our future leaders. AHCWA will use the Strategic Actions to encourage health services and others to involve young Aboriginal people in developing the approaches and programs to sustain the journey of development as we support and address young Aboriginal people's health needs - now and into the future. Through AHCWA's leadership the Strategic Actions provide us with the vision for the journey's end, guiding us to ensure that young Aboriginal people ultimately find their rightful place as the strong, culturally proud, and healthy leaders of our future.

All Health Domain Areas: Strategic Actions

Strategic Actions common to all health domain areas are outlined as follows.

AHCWA will:

- Establish the Aboriginal Youth Health Program Outcomes Council.
- Establish and support local community-based Aboriginal Youth Cultural Knowledge and Mentor Groups.
- Draw and build on the existing strengths, relationships, trust and cultural knowledge of young Aboriginal people, their families and communities to inform program development.
- Develop an implementation plan in consultation with young Aboriginal people to deliver on the strategic actions of the Strategy.
- Create mechanisms to support young Aboriginal people to contribute to the planning and development of initiatives and strategic actions under the Strategy.
- Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan for fostering joined-up ways of working to support implementation of the strategic actions.
- Conduct a descriptive mapping exercise to identify existing Aboriginal youth focused programs relevant to the five health domain areas.



Health Domain 1

Strength in culture – capable and confident

We need to share our culture, or else it will die with us.

For many years AHCWA has heard of the importance of culture to young Aboriginal people.

In developing the Strategy AHCWA again heard about the importance of culture, with young Aboriginal people telling us that culture and health are intrinsically linked. Young Aboriginal people told us they gained strength from having a connection to their culture and spirituality, and to traditional practices. Culture and identity were cited as significantly important individual health influences and factors for building healthy communities.

Bringing culture into the school environment to share knowledge about and teach lore, language, country and culture was recommended by young Aboriginal people as important ways to enhance overall health and wellbeing. So too was access to cultural camps, learning from elders and cultural mentors, and opportunities to understand more about oneself, know culture and language. Young Aboriginal people told us that culture helps them embrace their identity, to know who they are, where they came from and where they are going. Culture provides opportunities for expression of knowledge, thoughts and feelings. In this way culture and understanding and feeling positive about culture, are important ingredients to develop into strong, healthy future Aboriginal leaders.

Cultural health means taking care of yourself, your country and your people and passing things on to keep your culture going.

Health Domain 1 Key Priorities

AHCWA will:

- Improve access for young Aboriginal people to gain information and learning about culture, to learn language, cultural lore, country and traditions.
- Draw and build on the existing strengths, relationships, trust and cultural knowledge of young Aboriginal people, their families and communities to inform program development. Create opportunities for young Aboriginal people to connect with cultural mentors, community leaders and elders.
- Enhance the understanding of health services and other providers about the importance of culture generally and as it relates to young Aboriginal people.

Health Domain 1 Strategic Actions

AHCWA will:

- Develop cultural knowledge and mentor programs that can be tailored for delivery to a range of service providers and agencies.
- Over time, expand delivery of cultural knowledge and mentor programs to other institutions, including for example youth detention centres and for children in out-of-home care.

SHOWCASE:

The **Red Dust Healing Program** aims to provide individuals with a greater understanding of identity, to equip them with self-evaluation skills, to deal with concepts of grief and loss, stress, anxiety and fear, to develop future role models and importantly, to restore family relationships. The program is written from an Indigenous perspective for Indigenous Men and their families. The program examines the intergenerational effects of colonialism on the mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing of Indigenous and non-Indigenous families of colonised countries.

Health Domain 2

Strength in family and healthy relationships

Many young Aboriginal people told us of the importance of family, about kinship and about shared bonds to family, country and community.

They spoke about the strength and resilience they draw from healthy and positive relationships with family, country and community. Young Aboriginal people identified the importance of opportunities for building healthy relationships; in some locations they spoke about the need for after-school programs and activities to assist them with social cohesiveness, bond-forming and, for obtaining peer support and positive experiences.

Opportunities for social-connectedness and to develop healthy relationships through initiatives like after-school programs and education-to-employment activities were viewed as highly important to good health and wellbeing by many young Aboriginal people. Conversely, some young Aboriginal people told us of the negative impacts on health and social and emotional wellbeing when family and other relationships were not healthy.

The AHCWA Family Wellbeing Program (FWP) is a key initiative aimed at building strength and strong life foundations in individuals and families. AHCWA is committed to expanding the roll-out of the FWP as a key priority under the Strategy.

Health Domain 2 Key Priorities

AHCWA will:

Improve opportunity of access for young Aboriginal people to gain information about healthy relationships and family support programs.

Engage at the local level to promote and roll out the AHCWA Family Wellbeing Program.

Engage with existing healthy relationships and family wellbeing and strengthening programs to identify synergies.

Health Domain 2 Strategic Actions

AHCWA will:

Commence planning and development for engaging at the local level to promote and roll out the AHCWA Family Wellbeing Program.

Commence planning and development for roll out of the AHCWA mental health, social and emotional wellbeing professional development program.

SHOWCASE:

Predicated on the proposition that strengthening family units strengthens the whole community, the **AHCWA FWP** works with people to explore the individual's capacity to recognise and deal effectively with troubling life situations.

The AHCWA Family Wellbeing Program addresses how to:

- Understand individual needs.
- Communicate effectively.
- Recognise healthy relationships.
- Recognise and manage relationships that become unhealthy.
- Recognise and resolve conflict effectively.
- Manage crisis situations based around social and emotional needs.
- Cope with grief and loss.
- Deal with one's own stress and psychological health.
- Build on inner qualities.

Health Domain 3

Educating to employ

Give young students more opportunities to do things they want but cannot do, due to their home situations or money costs.... Have more youth workers around to help with school or career pathways making a brighter future.

Young Aboriginal people told us of the importance of education to maintaining overall health and wellbeing. Education has a significant role in the development and future life opportunities of young Aboriginal people. It plays a major role in capacity building, addressing disadvantage and in enabling young people to make positive, informed life decisions. Young Aboriginal people told us that education was important to them and they not only want opportunities for formal education, but also opportunities for learning essential life skills. Having Aboriginal youth workers to support them in the transition from education to employment was also considered highly important and relevant to overall health. Providing support and access to information was cited as integral to assisting young Aboriginal people in choice and decision making in relation to education and employment opportunities.

Health Domain 3

Key Priorities

AHCWA will:

- Establish pathways and links for young Aboriginal people to transition from education to employment.
- Create opportunities for young Aboriginal people to succeed in education and employment, including through the provision of a range of supports, such as after-school activity based programs to enhance social education, peer support,

emotional and physical safety and overall health outcomes.

- Partner with industry and business to establish volunteering, traineeship and employment mentoring programs.
- Develop connections with existing initiatives to maximise opportunities for young Aboriginal people to attend university if they choose.
- Support young Aboriginal people who have left school early or are at risk of disengaging from education to access education, training and employment assistance.

If you don't have an education, then you don't have as many options.

Health Domain 3

Strategic Actions

AHCWA will:

- Work with local schools and stakeholders to implement education-to-employment plans for young Aboriginal people, including those most at risk of disengaging from education.
- Connect with a range of stakeholders to tailor and deliver cultural knowledge programs.
- Connect with stakeholders and existing programs to establish school-based traineeships, apprenticeships, work-readiness training, mentorships and work experience programs.
- Through descriptive mapping, identify existing programs that provide employment and training assistance to young Aboriginal people who have left school early or are at risk of disengaging from education.
- Connect young Aboriginal people to education and employment opportunities and pathways.

SHOWCASE:

The **Geraldton Flexible Learning Centre (FLC)** is part of Edmund Rice Education Australia's national initiative, Youth+, responding to the needs of young people in the Midwest community of Western Australia. The young people include young men and women of secondary school age who have typically experienced one or more significant and complex educational, social, health and wellbeing situations which demand unique responses. Geraldton FLC provides an educational framework where teachers and youth workers support social and wellbeing needs along with their academic requirements. Teaching and learning is aligned with state curriculum requirements and characterised by small class sizes and a flexible delivery that draws on individual interest and need.

Health Domain 4

Empowering future leaders

If I was the boss of my town, I would get more engaged with the community, I would be a part of the community so I could have the best understanding of what needs to change, so that the funding and people power could be better directed.

Young Aboriginal people told us they felt strong and resilient when they had healthy relationships with others, including friends, families, community and mentors. They shared experiences of the things that positively influenced their health and wellbeing, such as opportunities to be mentored and supported by other Aboriginal people and leaders. As well as being able to connect with existing Aboriginal leaders, young Aboriginal people spoke about becoming future leaders, citing opportunities for development as leaders as ways to positively influence health, create hope and aspiration for a better future.

Connecting to local Aboriginal mentors, role models and leaders represented important mechanisms for young Aboriginal people to recognise and develop their own leadership potential. The opportunities to engage with, learn from and be mentored by Aboriginal leaders within community were considered invaluable for developing a sense of identity and belonging, and supporting them to remain in school or work towards their future leadership aspirations.

Health Domain 4

Key Priorities

AHCWA will:

- Create opportunities for young Aboriginal people to engage with peer mentors, positive role models and leaders, cultural mentors and elders.
- Create opportunities for health services to understand the importance of family, peers, community and of elders and mentors.
- Create opportunities for health services to provide peer support information to young

Aboriginal people to assist them to identify when peers may need support.

- Support young Aboriginal people to develop programs to educate health service providers about culture and about the importance of culturally appropriate services.
- Establish pathways for health services to link young Aboriginal people to cultural mentors, community leaders and elders.
- Through descriptive mapping, identify existing programs that provide leadership development programs for young Aboriginal people.

Health Domain 4

Strategic Actions

AHCWA will:

- Commence planning and development for young Aboriginal people to tailor and deliver cultural awareness information programs to health services.
- Work with health services to deliver peer support information to young Aboriginal people.

SHOWCASE:

The focus of the **Warburton College program** is to offer young adults opportunities both on and off the Lands. The program focuses on youth leadership, and all the young women attending the program are very strong young women with outstanding leadership potential. The program aims to develop core capability through the National Core Skills framework which aligns with a competency based learning approach, to develop a work ethos in the youth.

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School works to a Big Picture Education Model, where learning programs are developed based on each individual's interests and skills.

Health Domain 5

Healthy now, healthy future

From a youth perspective I believe we need more training and direction on how to identify what someone that needs support looks like and how to tackle the bigger things in life that can be overwhelming and seem impossible to conquer, so that we can pick our friends, family and other members of the community up out of the dark or point them in the right direction if the problem is too big to take on ourselves.

Young Aboriginal people told us about their experiences of attending health services. They spoke about barriers which prevented them or stopped them from attending health services, including a lack of adequate health services in their community, racism and discrimination, rudeness and not being listened to.

Young Aboriginal people shared with us some of the reasons for not engaging with health services. Some of these can be easily addressed, and do not require major investment, rather an attitudinal change and willingness to create more culturally appropriate health service environments. Young people told us they want to have confidence that health services will respect confidentiality and privacy, be non-judgemental and open to understanding culture, including by creating comfortable, culturally appropriate environments.

[I like] seeing Aboriginal posters and information, having friendly and nice people at the front desk to welcome you, seeing the same doctor or nurse. That they are culturally appropriate and aware of Aboriginal people.

Health Domain 5

Key Priorities

AHCWA will:

- Champion the development of joined-up service delivery, working at the local level to foster community led solutions aimed at repairing service fragmentation and opening doors for improved navigation pathways.
- Break down the barriers that inhibit young Aboriginal people's access to health services.
- Create opportunities for mainstream health services and ACCHS to work collaboratively to enhance the cultural responsiveness of mainstream health services.

Health Domain 5

Strategic Actions

AHCWA will:

- Engage with a range of stakeholders to establish local joined-up service delivery approaches.
- Work with health services to establish Aboriginal ways of working, including understanding the holistic concept of health and implementing practical environmental changes to enhance the health service environment.

Barriers are cultural in the main. If our health services were less officious and started employing Aboriginal ways of working, then young people might be more inclined to participate.

SHOWCASE:

The **Young Warriors Program** is a joint initiative run by Headspace Broome, in partnership with Broome Youth and Families Hub and Red Cross.

The program seeks to meet the needs of a groups of young people in the Broome community who have been identified as being at risk of entering into behavioural patterns which will likely lead to offending and involvement with the justice system. Many of these young people are currently disengaged from school, have unstable home lives, display challenging behaviours and are at risk of homelessness.

Deadly Outcomes

How will we measure progress?

Establishing the evidence base

There is a paucity of evidence on the outcomes of policy approaches which have been implemented over the years to address health issues of young Aboriginal people and close the gap in health outcomes. The challenges of short-term funding cycles and limited resources are often barriers to establishing effective data collection and evaluation frameworks for Aboriginal youth health programs. Conversely, certain types of performance monitoring and reporting methodologies create restrictions which impede innovation and creativity in the delivery of Aboriginal youth health programs which are implemented.

There is little doubt that understanding the value of the policy approaches adopted in Aboriginal youth health is a critical factor for ensuring success. Equally important is striking a balance between the need to measure value, efficiency, cost-benefits, and accountability of public policy, with the need to ensure the voices of young Aboriginal people are heard in the performance, monitoring and evaluation process. Young Aboriginal people, as those most affected by these policy approaches, must ultimately be the ones that tell us if they work.

Implementation measures

AHCWA will develop an Implementation Plan to achieve the Strategic Actions and Key Priorities of the Strategy. The Aboriginal Youth Health Program Outcomes Council will oversee the development of the Implementation Plan.

Strategic Actions

- Develop the Aboriginal Youth Health Strategy Implementation Plan.
- Commence planning for the roll out of the Implementation Plan.
- At six-months conduct a review and report on the achievements under the Implementation Plan.

Measuring progress

An Evaluation Framework will support the implementation of the Strategy. It will measure the outcomes against the Key Priorities and Strategic Actions of the Strategy. The Evaluation Framework will incorporate short, medium and long term outcomes and include method, data disaggregation measures, data sources and reporting features and frequency mechanisms. The Evaluation Framework will provide a mechanism for accountability, transparency, flexibility and continuous improvement. It will support the establishment of an evidence base and guide us in achieving the Strategic Actions of the Strategy.

Strategic Actions

- Develop the Aboriginal Youth Health Program Evaluation Framework.
- Tailor evaluation and reporting methods to align with implementation of Strategic Actions.

References

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TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE



TOMORROW'S LEADERS



