



Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Aboriginal Health – A High Priority**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health in Victoria is in a comparatively poor state. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people use Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) and rural health services, including GP services, Rural Workforce Agency, Victoria (RWAV), the statewide organisation responsible for the recruitment and ongoing support of doctors in rural Victoria and ACCHS, considers Indigenous health a high priority.

RWAV has established a collaborative working relationship with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), the peak body that represents the collective of 25 ACCHS in Victoria. The principles of this relationship are as follows:

- Recognition that Aboriginal people must determine their own health priorities and are the experts in the delivery of health services to Aboriginal people.
- Common agenda: VACCHO and RWAV share the goal of building up a skilled workforce in Aboriginal health in Victoria. RWAV sees its role as a mainstream organisation to take direction from VACCHO membership and "value add" with support, skills, contacts and funding where it is appropriate to do so.
- All workforce issue programs in Aboriginal health are developed along processes that respect Aboriginal community protocols and strengthen the communities' capacity to determine and manage their own health agendas.

These basic principles have many implications for project planning, research processes and ethics.

### **RWAV Recruitment and Indigenous Health**

RWAV offers a comprehensive recruitment and placement service for GPs and other medical specialists interested in pursuing professional and lifestyle opportunities in rural Victoria and in Indigenous Health. RWAV maintains an extensive listing of positions within Aboriginal communities throughout Victoria (including metropolitan areas identified as Area of Need).

Health professionals interested in working in the Indigenous sector can visit the new and improved RWAV website at [www.rwav.com.au](http://www.rwav.com.au) and click on Recruitment & Vacancies. Applying for rural ACCHS vacancies has never been easier. A vacancy search engine has been developed which allows users to filter their search and identify vacancies specifically located within Aboriginal communities.

### **Aboriginal Awareness in Practice Program**

Doctors and their staff, who are working with or may intend to work with Aboriginal people should undertake the Aboriginal Awareness in Practice Program. This training is delivered by a consultant with RWAV's and VACCHO's support. In addition, the local ACCHS often provides cultural training specific to their own communities. The purpose of this training is to provide participants with a better understanding of Aboriginal people in Victoria. Topics covered in the cross-cultural workshops include:

- How Aborigines relate to Land
- Cultural diversity
- Kinship and relationships
- Land ownership and tribal boundaries
- Sacred places and places of significance
- An overview of policies implemented in Victoria
- Ideas regarding the need for sensitivity and how best to deal with Indigenous people in a contemporary setting

### **About RWAV**

RWAV was established in 1998 to overcome the shortage of rural doctors and improve access to medical services for rural Victorians. RWAV's recruitment programs and ongoing support services have been fundamental to increasing ACCHS and rural GP numbers in Victoria.

Today, RWAV is addressing workforce shortages in rural and regional towns. Some of its key priorities include the provision of support services for rural doctors and their families, professional development programs, locum support, marketing of ACCHS, rural general practice, recruitment of rural doctors including specialist outreach services, workforce planning and research to inform government policy.

Further information on RWAV is available on the website at [www.rwav.com.au](http://www.rwav.com.au)

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