



Pathways to Progress: Healthcare Access in Rural Victoria

Abstract title: Workforce, Population and client demand projections for Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations

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The Aboriginal Community Controlled (ACCO) Sector workforce continues to face immense challenges in recruiting and retaining staff as service demand from the Community has continued to grow. Furthermore, with increased data needed for evidence for successful funding submissions, workforce planning and development, as well as advocacy, there is an inherent need for robust workforce data. However, the lack of available and suitable workforce data from public and government sources is a significant challenge. Also, the limited time, capabilities, data infrastructure and inconsistent reporting of data across funders are barriers for ACCOs to be able to provide and maintain workforce data.

To help address some of these challenges, in 2022 VACCHO in partnership with Social Ventures Australia (SVA), piloted a project where three interdependent models were developed that project Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, service demand and workforce need for four VACCHO Member ACCO's across regional Victoria. The model forecasted workforce needs 15 years into the future based on data collected from ACCO's relating to population, workforce, and service demand. The data and results indicated that workforce needs to grow on average 120% and increase on average of 152 full time equivalent roles (FTE) by 2037 to meet the service demand needs of the Community. Findings also forecasted that current workforce is stretched across multiple roles and services, and that the most critical roles required for the ACCO sector moving forward were Aboriginal Health Workers, Case Managers, Support Workers, and Disability Workers required to meet service demand both currently, and in the future.

This pilot incorporated and maintained data sovereignty and self-determination throughout the project. The forecasts generated in the pilot, have a dual benefit for VACCHO Members in evidence-based decision making around workforce planning and development, operational and infrastructure requirements, grant funding requests and organisational strategic planning. VACCHO, from this pilot has been able to tailor advocacy for Member workforce requirements, use data for grant funding applications and projecting the growth of the Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. The feedback and the results of the Model have been positive, and VACCHO plans to extend the Modelling to all its Members by the end of 2024, transforming the data from the modelling into action in workforce and infrastructure planning and advocacy.