

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



Thursday, 9 January 2025

IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN CARE

The Allan Labor Government is backing Victoria's Aboriginal Community Health Organisations (ACCHOs) in their important work of providing culturally safe healthcare to Aboriginal children living in care.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today announced three new Aboriginal-led pilot programs to be rolled out by ACCHOs from February 2025, supported by a \$5.2 million investment.

These programs are about empowering Aboriginal-led teams to provide and coordinate healthcare for children in a culturally safe way, so that children feel comfortable, health issues are identified early and children get the treatments they need.

Australian and international evidence highlight that children living in care experience higher rates of poor health than the general population – resulting in chronic disease, mental health issues and developmental and learning delays for many.

In response, the Labor Government's funding enables the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) to design and deliver healthcare models that respond to critical areas of need when it comes to health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal children.

In north east Victoria, the Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation and Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service will work together as a regional partnership to coordinate culturally safe healthcare for Aboriginal children.

This program will improve access to health screenings for Aboriginal children in the region, facilitated with the help of Aboriginal health navigators at Mungabareena.

In metropolitan Melbourne, the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) will support Aboriginal children entering care by connecting kids to health assessments at VAHS clinics to help identify issues and deliver needed treatments.

A professional network will also be established to support Aboriginal kinship carers across Victoria, giving them the resources, guidance and connections they need to support the health and wellbeing of the children in their care.

VACCHO will also provide support to ensure each program upholds Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing – helping the organisations to self-determine what best practice looks like when it comes to healthcare for children and young people.

These initiatives are part of a broader \$37.7 million Labor Government investment delivering health screening, assessment and planning for all children who enter care in Victoria, known as the Pathway to Good Health program, while also delivering on the priorities set by the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum.

Quote attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"We know when we listen to Aboriginal Victorians, we get the best health outcomes – that's why we're supporting ACCHOs to deliver culturally safe services for Aboriginal children, ensuring they get the care they need."

Quote attributable to Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn

"These services will help to ensure we are creating a healthcare system where Aboriginal children in care have equitable access to healthcare that is culturally safe – keeping them healthy now and into their adult life."

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Quote attributable to Minister for Treaty and First Peoples Natalie Hutchins

“We are backing incredible Aboriginal health organisations to do their important work of ensuring Aboriginal children get the culturally safe care they deserve.”