



Aboriginal Health Report Card

2020 / 2021





COORDINARE acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Yuin, Dharawal, Ngunnawal / Ngambri, and Ngarigo Nations upon which we live and work.

We offer respect to Elders, past, present and emerging and acknowledge the vital role of Aboriginal people, their culture and customs. We recognise and value the ongoing enriching contribution of Aboriginal people and communities across our region. The impacts of colonisation, trans-generational trauma, racism, discrimination, marginalisation and disadvantage while having devastating outcomes, have diminished neither Aboriginal peoples' connection to country, culture and community nor their resilience, strength and wisdom.

Introduction

South Eastern NSW is home to over 25,800 Aboriginal people, representing 4.2% of our local population. Our region's geographic footprint covers an area of 50,000 square kilometres and encompasses large areas of the Traditional Lands of the Yuin, Dharawal, Ngunnawal/ Ngambri and Ngarigo Nations.

A key priority for COORDINARE is to address the unacceptable health inequities experienced by Aboriginal people and to improve health and wellbeing. We are committed to tackling inequality and commission targeted services for Aboriginal people needing care coordination, mental health and suicide prevention support, and alcohol and other drugs support services.

We continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and mainstream primary care to identify needs and co-design and commission services specifically for Aboriginal people.

We commission four ACCHOs in our region to deliver a range of services:

- ▶ Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service
- ▶ Katungul Aboriginal Corporation Regional Health and Community Services
- ▶ South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation
- ▶ Waminda — South Coast Women's Health & Welfare Aboriginal Corporation

This is the third Report Card we have produced, and it showcases our contribution to 'Closing the Gap' in health outcomes and our work to improve social and emotional wellbeing for Aboriginal people in the South Eastern NSW region.

At COORDINARE, the term 'Aboriginal' is generally used in preference to 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander,' in recognition that Aboriginal peoples are the original inhabitants of South Eastern NSW.

What do we mean by 'Aboriginal health'?

We draw our understanding of Aboriginal health from the words of the original National Aboriginal Health Strategy (1989): 'Aboriginal health' means not just the physical wellbeing of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being, thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their community. It is a whole-of-life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life. These words remain relevant today and have been reiterated in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023.

Approximately 25,800 people identify as Aboriginal in South Eastern NSW, or 4.2% of our local population



A key priority for COORDINARE is to address the unacceptable health inequities experienced by Aboriginal people and to improve health and wellbeing.



Aboriginal community engagement

We continue to strengthen our consultation and engagement with Aboriginal communities to build relationships, grow our knowledge of local communities and their needs, and to improve our own awareness and practices. We are committed to broadening Aboriginal input and representation at all levels of our organisation:

- ▶ We have appointed an Aboriginal-identified Director to our Board, and Community leaders, Aboriginal health workers, and general practitioners from local ACCHOs participate in our governance committees
- ▶ We are increasing our profile of Aboriginal-identified staff and employ a Community Engagement Consultant to support culturally safe community engagement
- ▶ We seek the advice of COORDINARE's Aboriginal Health CEOs Advisory Group, which meets regularly throughout the year
- ▶ We include Aboriginal community members on assessment panels to ensure cultural safety is considered during the commissioning process and funding intent is specific to improving Aboriginal health outcomes
- ▶ We encourage Aboriginal community members to participate in our community consultation group 'Mudji's of COORDINARE'—an expansion on 'Friends of COORDINARE'— which is specific to and for Aboriginal people
- ▶ We partnered with Beyond Empathy, a not-for-profit community, arts and cultural development organisation and engaged Aboriginal youth to create #fabvac —a campaign to reinforce the importance of COVID-19 vaccination in Aboriginal communities
- ▶ There is Aboriginal representation on the Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan implementation committee
- ▶ The Illawarra Shoalhaven Suicide Prevention Collaborative has an Aboriginal working group to drive culturally sensitive suicide prevention activities.





Our ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The strength of our alliances and partnerships with the Aboriginal health sector in our region have enabled us to respond to the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have provided funding and assistance to our commissioned providers and other health partners for a range of activities, including:

▶ Telehealth for service providers

We continued to assist service providers to deliver health and coordination services to Aboriginal communities via telehealth consultations (phone and video calls). Providers from the Integrated Team Care program, chronic pain self-management, mental health, alcohol and other drug programs, as well as general practices, were assisted to transition to telehealth models.

▶ Distribution of educational and planning resources

We distributed a suite of culturally sensitive COVID-19 health resources from the NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council, and NSW and Commonwealth Health Departments to our commissioned providers. The resources promoted COVID-19 testing and vaccination uptake. GP respiratory clinics were also provided with culturally appropriate resources and our website housed many resources for the Aboriginal community to access.

▶ Short-term relief funds

We distributed funds to the four ACCHOs in our region as part of our on-going support for Aboriginal communities. Some of the funding has been used for the distribution of wellbeing packs, including:

- Waminda and the South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation distributed wellbeing packs to the Shoalhaven community. The packs contained information and merchandise that supported wellbeing, such as hygiene packs, COVID safety information, Strong Foundations activity booklets
- ACCHOs arranged two community bulk food drops throughout the year in the following communities: Batemans Bay, Mogo, Moruya, Narooma, Bodalla, Wallaga Lake/ Bermagui, Eden, Bega, Wreck Bay, Jerrinja, and Cobargo.



Chronic conditions

Integrated Team Care

The Integrated Team Care (ITC) program aims to improve access to effective, high quality, coordinated health care services for Aboriginal people with chronic conditions. The program provides eligible people with a dedicated Care Coordinator to work closely with them, their GP, practice nurse, allied health practitioners, and specialists as part of ongoing care.



In 2020, COORDINARE commissioned Ngarruwan Ngadju, an Indigenous-led health and wellbeing research centre at the University of Wollongong, to conduct a review of our ITC program. The next iteration of the ITC Program has been grounded in these recommendations including the introduction of a weighted capitation model for resource allocation by Indigenous areas considering population requirements, as well as relative socio-economic disadvantage.

Reconnecting to Country - Clinical Redesign Project

The Reconnecting to Country project aims to provide culturally safe, seamless, appropriate care and positive person-centred experiences for Aboriginal people transitioning between acute and community primary health care in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region. The project is part of the Agency for Clinical Innovation Redesign program and is a collaboration between the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, Grand

Pacific Health, COORDINARE, and Waminda. Some of the issues tackled in this project are service duplication, inadequate referral processes, delays in primary health care supports and care coordination, and improving understanding of service providers and staff regarding appropriate health service pathways.

This project is also supporting two Care Coordinators to undertake a post graduate certificate in Clinical Redesign through the University of Tasmania.

Chronic pain

In 2017, COORDINARE commenced a partnership with Southern NSW Local Health District, the St Vincent's Hospital Sydney Pain Clinic and the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation to implement a quality improvement approach to chronic pain management.

In 2020/2021, we commissioned the delivery of the Chronic Pain Management Programs across four locations in Southern NSW and one online. Overall, 4.8% of participants in the Chronic Pain Management Program identified as Aboriginal.

We facilitated a range of meetings and events across the region to assist the St Vincent's Hospital Sydney Pain Clinic develop relationships with local Aboriginal people and health services and understand more about pain management issues for Aboriginal people:

- ▶ We hosted a 'Yarn Up' in Batemans Bay on Closing the Gap Day, 18 March with representatives from the Southern NSW Local Health District including Aboriginal health workers, local Aboriginal service providers and community members
- ▶ Katungul Aboriginal Medical Service in Narooma hosted a Pain Clinic. The success of the Clinic led to the commencement of a regular Pain Clinic at Katungul and established an ongoing relationship with St Vincent's Sydney Pain Clinic
- ▶ Team members from the Sydney-based Pain Clinic met with Goulburn-based Aboriginal health workers to discuss options for providing an outreach service in Goulburn
- ▶ We supported Aboriginal health workers from Southern NSW Local Health District who attended an education and mentoring day at the St Vincent's Hospital Sydney Pain Clinic.



Prevention initiatives

Smoking cessation

Since 2018, COORDINARE has commissioned the Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine to trial Programmed Shared Medical Appointments (pSMA) for the management of smoking in our region.

The pSMA program offers smoking management along with a self-paced on-line learning component with resources for practitioners as well as clients. Waminda is one of the trial sites and conducted a pilot of pSMA for smoking management among the Aboriginal community, proving to be successful with approximately 18% of participants identifying as Aboriginal. The pSMA program is now being adapted specifically for Aboriginal peoples, re-named as Medical Yarning, and is being extended to include a weight management module.



Mental health

There are four ACCHOs in our region commissioned to deliver culturally safe mental health services:

- ▶ The Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service, Katungul, Waminda and the South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation all provide holistic mental health services
- ▶ The South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation focuses on resilience building and psychological support for young people as part of their Strong Foundations program
- ▶ Strong Yawa, an after-hours support line managed by Waminda and delivered by local Aboriginal staff, supports Aboriginal people who are experiencing acute mental illness, alcohol and other drug-related issues, thoughts of or intent to suicide and impacted and bereaved by suicide
- ▶ COORDINARE is one of 11 Primary Health Networks who fund NewAccess, a service developed by Beyond Blue and delivered by Wellways, that provides accessible psychological therapy for anyone finding it hard to manage life stress, depression and anxiety. We have commissioned a Shoalhaven-based, Aboriginal-identified NewAccess Coach who is working with local men's groups, the South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation and employment providers to promote the service to Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal people continue to access mainstream commissioned mental health services. In 2020/21 a substantial proportion of total people who accessed our mainstream services identified as Aboriginal:



Bushfire recovery

Community wellbeing is vital to the resilience and recovery of people impacted by bushfires, as well as the emotional healing of individuals. We continued to fund a range of services and natural disaster community grants across the region:

- ▶ We commissioned Katungul to provide additional mental health clinical services and funded an outreach clinic to provide access to psychiatry services for Aboriginal people experiencing increased distress or trauma as a result of the bushfires
- ▶ Five non-clinical support positions were recruited in 2021. Recovery Officers (3) at the Katungul Aboriginal Corporation in Batemans Bay and Aboriginal Support Officers (2) at the South Coast Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation in Nowra will work with Aboriginal communities to improve their social and emotional wellbeing.





Alcohol and other drugs

Our commissioned providers continue to increase the number and effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment services in our region:

- ▶ Waminda acts as the lead agency for a drug and alcohol brokerage and community program for Aboriginal women and their families who are affected by substance misuse in the Illawarra Shoalhaven and Far South Coast regions
- ▶ Marathon Health provides care coordination for young Aboriginal people in Yass who seek assistance in negotiating care from a range of health and community providers. This is an outreach service and safe space for young people to have a yarn about alcohol, smoking, and other drug concerns to help improve social and emotional wellbeing
- ▶ Lives Lived Well oversees the Mudjilali Aboriginal Men's Group in Eden, Wallaga Lake, and Bega which collaborates with partner agencies and Elders to provide peer support through offering informal group activities to build leadership, a sense of identity and empowerment for Aboriginal men of all ages
- ▶ Lives Lived Well in partnership with Watershed delivers the Nana Muru ('Better Road') service in Jervis Bay and St Georges Basin/Sanctuary Point areas of the Shoalhaven. The service incorporates both day programs and withdrawal support, using a blend of place-based service delivery and mobile outreach, in which 52.17% of the clients identified as Aboriginal
- ▶ Aboriginal peoples continue to access mainstream commissioned alcohol, and other drug services with 31.4% clients in the services delivered by Salvation Army and 15% in the services offered by Directions Health identified as Aboriginal
- ▶ Waminda is one of three general practices commissioned to implement a practice change initiative to improve early identification and quality care to people with alcohol and other drug concerns. Waminda will implement strategies to identify and support clients at risk of alcohol dependency or misuse including assessments and patient education through yarning circles.

The 'Alcohol and other drugs treatment guidelines for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in non-Aboriginal settings', was funded and supported by a consortium of six PHNs including COORDINARE and developed with consultation and advice from Aboriginal peoples and communities. The guidelines aim to support services to establish better relationships and linkages with Aboriginal organisations and communities, and to provide practical guides and resources to support workers and organisations to improve their service delivery when working with Aboriginal service users. An audit tool was also developed to help support the implementation of the guidelines.

The guideline can be found at:

<https://nada.org.au/resources/alcohol-and-other-drugs-treatment-guidelines-for-working-with-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people-in-a-non-aboriginal-setting/>



End of life care

To improve outcomes for patients with palliative needs and their families and carers, we are working towards supporting and strengthening the coordination and management of palliative and end of life care.

The following projects are continuing:

- ▶ Waminda has enhanced the coordination of palliative and end of life care in the Shoalhaven by training and credentialing a number of Aboriginal health workers in advanced palliative and end of life care, and provided a range of resources to Aboriginal communities and health care professionals
- ▶ We continue to partner with Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District to co-fund an Aboriginal health worker in palliative care to ensure there is culturally sensitive support for both the Local Health District and general practice staff who are supporting Aboriginal people at the end stage of their lives.

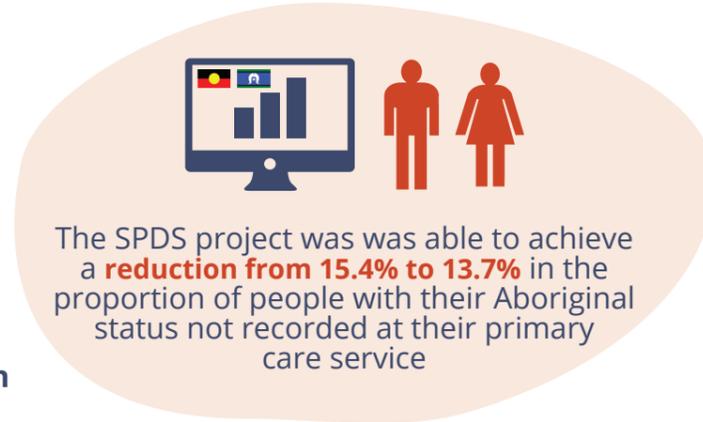




Access to health services

Recording Aboriginality

One of the quality improvement domains as part of our Sentinel Practices Data Sourcing (SPDS) project is to increase the recording of Aboriginality in general practices in order to enable clinicians to promote the uptake of Aboriginal specific services and health assessments. As of May 2021, the SPDS project was able to achieve a reduction from 15.4% to 13.7% in the proportion of people with their Aboriginal status not recorded at their primary care service.

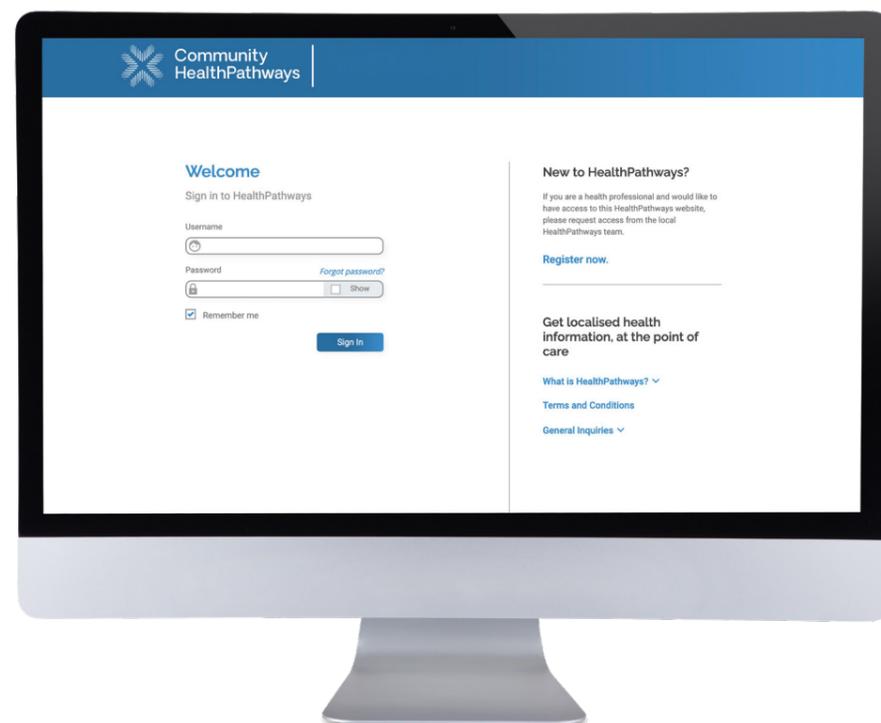


Referral pathways for Aboriginal health

HealthPathways is an online health information portal for GPs, that provides information on how to assess and manage medical conditions, and how to refer patients to local specialists and services. We have established localised HealthPathways referral guides for Aboriginal people which include referral pathways for the Integrated Team Care program, Aboriginal health assessments, and training for cultural competencies.

In 2021, the ACT & Southern NSW HealthPathways program undertook a review of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HealthPathways, leading to the creation of four new pathways. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services Directory was developed in partnership with local health service providers in Southern NSW and the ACT.

In the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven region, there has been increased usage of the Aboriginal Services/Medical Providers pathway and the Integrated Team Care pathway. Work has commenced on a specific pathway to streamline referrals for Aboriginal people at end of life. A key part of the program's work this year has been ensuring that the COVID-19 specific pathways incorporate relevant national, state and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific information for the community.



Improving our understanding

COORDINARE strives to be culturally sensitive, respectful and meaningful in all that we do. We take this opportunity to thank those who have worked with us along this journey of improving our own cultural understanding and sensitivity and weaving this into our daily thinking and work.

- ▶ We continued the important journey of reconciliation and established a community working group to guide the development of our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Conditionally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia in May 2021, this is our commitment to the organisations and communities we engage with to be truthful in our work together with a vision to progress and celebrate health, wellbeing, and equity for and with First Nations people
- ▶ Our staff have continued to deepen their cultural awareness and participated in a series of RAP 'Yarn Up' sessions facilitated by members of the local Aboriginal communities. These truth-telling sessions have reinforced our resolve to achieve reconciliation
- ▶ Eight COORDINARE staff participated in the Reconciliation Australia national conference and shared important learnings with the broader staff group.

“
Our Innovate RAP is our commitment to the organisations and communities we engage with to be truthful in our work together with a vision to progress and celebrate health, wellbeing, and equity for and with First Nations people
 ”

The artwork used in this report was painted by Rhiannon Chapman from the Djiringanj Yuin nation.

The painting is titled 'Heal our Country'

“Including our sacred sites, our cultural heritage, our waters, our animals, our bush medicines, our traditional practices, our health but most importantly heal us as First Nations people, through all the pain and suffering we have endured through generation to generation. Our children and our people deserve a better future.”



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