

Chapter 5

ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion

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ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion

Summary

ACCHOs were established beginning in the 1970s to create primary health care services designed to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In responding to community need, ACCHOs have been leaders in comprehensive health promotion practice over many decades. ACCHOs are culturally safe spaces where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can access comprehensive primary health care. ACCHOs also promote cultural safety in mainstream services.

ACCHOs empower clients to manage their holistic health with self-determination. They strengthen and unite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by providing a space where communities learn, grow, support, celebrate, heal and take action together. ACCHOs also take a lead role in advocating for public policies that achieve equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The content within this chapter was drawn from an in-depth case study with a Regional ACCHO that was reviewed and refined by the CREATE Leadership Group and strengthened with learnings and perspectives from the ACCHO sector nationwide.

What we cover in this chapter:

- What is Health Promotion?
- Comprehensive Health Promotion in ACCHOs
- Principles of comprehensive health promotion in ACCHOs
- ACCHO Action 1. Orienting primary health care to meet community need: designed by community, for community
- ACCHO Action 2. Providing culturally safe spaces in the ACCHO and promoting cultural safe spaces in mainstream services
- ACCHO Action 3. Strengthening cultural pride and personal skills through role modelling, mentoring and education
- ACCHO Action 4. Strengthening, Empowering and Uniting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- ACCHO Action 5. Advocating for and driving the development of public policies that achieve equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Focus areas of ACCHOs Comprehensive Health Promotion
- Outcomes of ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion
- Enablers of the approach
- Challenges to the approach
- Recommendations
- Discussion
- References
- Reflection Tool

What is Health Promotion?

The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion was developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1986 and describes health promotion as:

*'the process of enabling people to increase control over the determinants of health and thereby improve their health.'*¹

Health promotion is not only focused on strengthening the skills and capabilities of individuals but is also directed at changing social, environmental and economic conditions that impact public and individual health.²

The Ottawa Charter provides a framework for implementing health promotion practice. It describes three key strategies (to advocate, mediate and enable) and outlines five health promotion action areas:

1. Reorienting Health Services
2. Creating Supportive Environments
3. Developing Personal Skills
4. Strengthening Community Actions
5. Building Healthy Public Policy

When all five action areas are addressed, this is described as comprehensive health promotion practice.

Comprehensive Health Promotion in ACCHOs

While ACCHOs didn't always use the term 'health promotion,' they have been practicing comprehensive health promotion over many decades, and long before the five action areas of health promotion were described in the Ottawa Charter:

- ACCHOs are primary health care services designed (that is, oriented) to meet the specific needs of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- ACCHOs are culturally safe spaces where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel welcome and can access primary health care and other services addressing their holistic health needs. This care encompasses services to promote physical, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing (that is, holistic health).
- ACCHOs don't tell people what to do, but rather empower clients through role modelling, mentoring and education to strengthen self-management skills, cultural pride and health knowledge and understanding.
- ACCHOs strengthen and unite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by providing a space where communities learn, grow, support, celebrate, heal and take action together.
- ACCHOs take a lead role in advocating for and driving the development of public policies that can achieve equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

¹World Health Organisation. (1986). *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*. World Health Organisation, Geneva.

²World Health Organisation. (2016). *Health Promotion*. who.int/topics/health_promotion/en

Moving beyond the five action areas outlined in the Ottawa Charter, the five actions of comprehensive health promotion practice in ACCHOs are unique in that they are:

1. Focused on the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. Inherently grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of working.
3. Designed in response to the long history of systemic racism and exclusion experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in mainstream health and social services.

Table 5 depicts the five action areas of comprehensive health promotion in ACCHOs matched against those outlined in the Ottawa Charter.

Table 5: ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion action areas and the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion action areas

ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion Action Areas	Description of the ACCHO Action Areas	Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion Action Areas
Primary health care designed by community for community	Orienting primary health care to meet community need: designed by community, for community.	Reorienting health services
Providing and promoting culturally safe spaces	Providing culturally safe spaces in the ACCHO and promoting cultural safe spaces in mainstream services.	Creating supportive environments
Strengthening cultural pride and personal skills	Strengthening cultural pride and personal skills through role modelling, mentoring and education.	Developing personal skills
Strengthening, empowering and uniting communities	Strengthening and uniting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.	Strengthening community actions
Building equitable public policy	Advocating for and driving the development of public policies that achieve equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	Building healthy public policy

Principles of comprehensive health promotion in ACCHOs

Threaded throughout the five action areas of ACCHO comprehensive health promotion are three guiding principles: a focus on strengthening self-determination, culture and holistic health. These principles are threaded through the five action areas of ACCHO comprehensive health promotion, as illustrated in Image 6 (over page).

SELF-DETERMINATION

ACCHOs value and enable self-determination by supporting clients to take control of their health and lives. ACCHO staff walk side by side with clients until they are ready to walk on their own.

As Aboriginal community controlled organisations, ACCHO governance and service provision are driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. ACCHOs do not tell clients what to do, blame clients for their health conditions, or pressure communities to reach standards of health primarily through disease treatment and management. They empower communities, place control in the hands of communities, and support communities to be self-determined in relation to their health and lives. This includes advocating for and mediating on behalf of clients with other services and service providers, and

enabling clients to take control of their holistic health and wellbeing. In particular, ACCHOs play a crucial role in building the health knowledge and understanding of their local communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are key translators in converting western medical concepts and terminology into language that can be easily understood by clients. In this way health knowledge and understanding enables health equity, since it enables clients to confidently navigate mainstream health systems to address their health needs.

CULTURE

Promotion of culture is at the forefront of health promotion in ACCHOs. Cultural pride and identity are strengthened by ACCHOs to combat the negative impacts of colonisation and racism.

ACCHOs foster cultural pride and connection and create a welcoming space where community members can feel valued and safe. ACCHOs promote culture in everything they do and strengthen the cultural pride and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They demonstrate valuing of cultural knowledge and cultural safety through employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who develop trusting relationships with community members.

ACCHOs strengthen cultural knowledge through numerous cultural activities and cultural competency training. They support communities to manage the negative consequences of colonisation and marginalisation. They also promote healing through developing respectful relationships within the community and through providing positive interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, breaking down racism, stereotypes and aiding reconciliation.

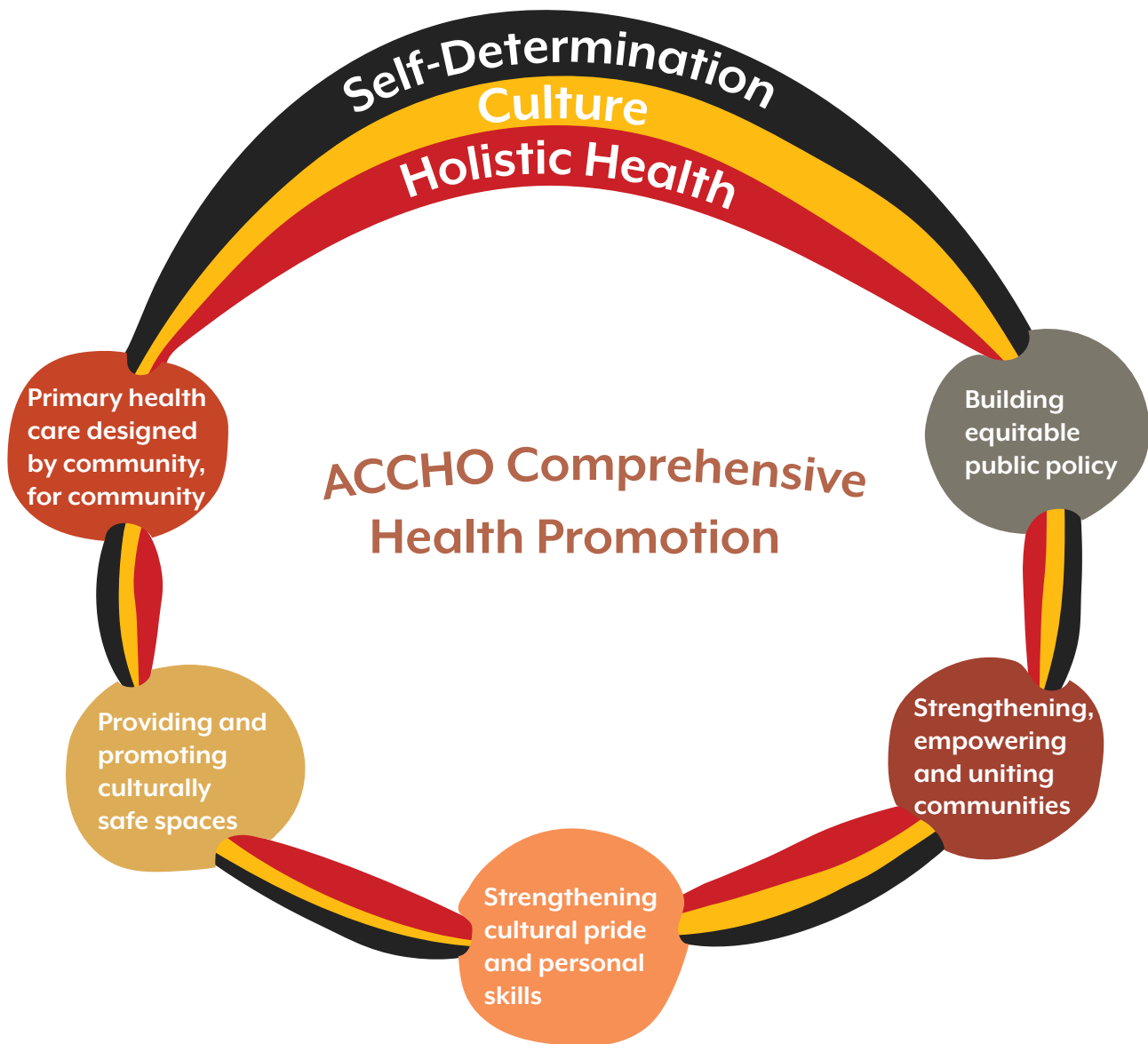
HOLISTIC HEALTH

ACCHOs focus on the promotion of holistic health, aligned with the Aboriginal definition of health.

ACCHOs practise health promotion according to the holistic Aboriginal definition of health which includes cultural, physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing. This holistic approach also considers the root causes of health inequities and risk behaviors, looking at factors

that impact health such as income, housing, available resources, education, employment, living environments and health care access. In this way, ACCHOs undertake comprehensive health promotion that targets holistic wellbeing and the social determinants of health.

Image 6: ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion Model



Model description

The model depicts how comprehensive health promotion in ACCHOs is guided by the principles that include a focus on culture, holistic health and empowerment of community through self-determination. The five action areas include providing services that are designed by community, for community; providing and promoting culturally safe spaces; strengthening both cultural pride and personal skills; strengthening, empowering and uniting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; and influencing the development of public policies that achieve equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples.

This model was developed through the CREATE project based on a case study with the ACCHO sector and consultations with the CREATE Leadership Group.

ACCHO Action 1. Orienting primary health care to meet community need: designed by community, for community

Primary health care designed by community, for community

ACCHOs were established to provide targeted and tailored services to meet the needs of their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Their unique and innovative primary health care model evolved from addressing service provision gaps in mainstream organisations. It was driven by an inherited responsibility to create better services and living conditions for local peoples, holding culture and community at the core. As an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, the strategic direction is led by a Board of Directors who represent and are elected by the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This model values a self-determination approach where the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population lead decisions that affect their health. It also sees that culture is embedded throughout organisational operations and ensures a high level of community engagement in the design and delivery of culturally responsive services. Through a holistic health approach, ACCHOs act as a one-stop-shop and provide services directly through core service provision and indirectly through their investment in partnerships. They also advocate on behalf of their community for culturally safe services, workforce and environments within other health services and beyond (e.g. hospitals, specialist services, Centrelink) to adapt their models of care to better meet the needs of community members.

The *Regional ACCHO* activities and approaches include:

- Adopting a holistic Aboriginal definition of health.
- Addressing the cultural determinants of health.
- Multidisciplinary services to create a one-stop-shop for the community.
- Development of partnerships with other services that open channels beyond the health sector (e.g. housing, education, Centrelink, drug and alcohol, rehab facilities, local police).
- Employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders staff increasing cultural safety of services.
- Provision of training and career development opportunities.
- Activities to enable the wellbeing and cultural safety of all staff.
- Advocating to other services, such as government departments, hospitals and specialist services, to adapt (that is, reorient) their models of care to better meet client needs.
- A focus on the promotion of health and prevention of illness rather than treatment of disease.

ACCHO Action 2. Providing culturally safe spaces in the ACCHO and promoting cultural safe spaces in mainstream services

Providing and promoting culturally safe spaces

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long understood the connection between health, culture and land. ACCHOs create a supportive environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the provision of a culturally safe place, located within the community, run by the community, and providing services for community. Culture is promoted to strengthen and build cultural pride. ACCHOs strive to provide a one-stop-shop where community can come to address all their holistic health needs. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are also employed to ensure that community members are receiving culturally safe quality care. The creation of supportive environments also extends beyond the ACCHO through to partner organisations. ACCHOs advocate across sectors regarding cultural rights, values and expectations of their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities increasing culturally safe spaces and workforce. Some ACCHOs provide extensive immersive cultural awareness training on Country for GP registrars, medical students and staff in mainstream health and other community organisations. ACCHOs also provide student placement opportunities such as for medical, nursing students and allied health professionals where students are mentored regarding cultural ways of working. In this way ACCHOs facilitate the development of culturally competent workforce and a culturally responsive health system.

The *Regional ACCHO* activities and approaches include:

- The service is a supportive community hub where culture is valued, promoted and respected.
- The service provides culturally safe services that aim to influence positive health changes and empower community.
- ACCHO workforce includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and non-Indigenous staff who receive cultural safety training.
- Culture is celebrated through cultural days of significance where the strengths of local communities are showcased through hiring local professionals, businesses, celebrities, artists and dancers.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are used to name the service, rooms and programs.
- Staff and leadership advocate for cultural safety across sectors to create culturally safe services and culturally competent workforce.
- Cultural competency training is provided for staff in other services to increase cultural competency and to create non-Indigenous champions to spread their gained cultural knowledge.

ACCHO Action 3. Strengthening cultural pride and personal skills through role modelling, mentoring and education

Strengthening cultural pride and personal skills

ACCHOs empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients to better manage their holistic health and lives through strengthening life skills, health knowledge and understanding, cultural knowledge and pride. ACCHOs utilise several strategies to build the capacity of clients that go over and above building personal skills and include cultural activities and mentoring clients to better navigate complex mainstream systems and services. ACCHO staff use role modelling and mentoring to share their rich cultural knowledge and strengthen client self-management and life skills such as in relation to repayment of fines, budgeting skills, parenting skills, understanding legal documentation and responsibilities, employment and housing applications and training applications. When strengthening health knowledge, ACCHOs use methods that recognise oral and visual communication traditions and that accommodate diverse levels of understanding. ACCHOs also work with clients to strengthen knowledge of health and social service systems. Community engagement skills are developed through client participation in community consultations and tailoring of ACCHO programs, services and health promotion campaigns. Some ACCHOs facilitate day trips and camps on Country to support community members to practise culture and connect with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ACCHOs also develop the personal skills and cultural knowledge of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and non-Aboriginal staff through cultural activities and cultural awareness training.

The **Regional ACCHO** activities and approaches include:

- Clients are supported to develop health knowledge and management skills and empowered to make informed decisions about their holistic health.
- Services are tailored to community need and use cultural ways of working.
- Culture is practiced at community events to strengthen cultural participation and cultural pride.
- Clients are supported to confidently navigate mainstream systems and services through walking side by side, attending external appointments and/or advocating for clients with mainstream organisations.
- Programs are provided that aim to strengthen the life skills of clients (e.g. parenting, budgeting, management of fines, employment programs).
- Community are involved in designing and tailoring health promotion programs and events.
- Employment and training opportunities are provided to local community members.
- Staff and Board members act as role models and mentors.
- Clients are supported to improve health and wellbeing through specific lifestyle interventions such as smoking cessation and physical activity programs.
- Staff are supported to take control of their health through access to onsite services, leave policies and wellness programs.

ACCHO Action 4. Strengthening, Empowering and Uniting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Strengthening, empowering and uniting communities

ACCHOs bring their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities together to form a united voice. ACCHOs strengthen and unite communities by providing a space where communities learn, grow, support, celebrate, heal and take action together. ACCHOs strengthen communities by creating a place of belonging where the voice of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples strongly influences the design of holistic service delivery to meet local priorities and needs. Communities are involved in the design, development and implementation of strategies and programs. ACCHOs identify needs and priorities both through ongoing formal and informal feedback streams due to their strong links to communities. Community action is strengthened through activities that promote culture and holistic health. These approaches enable a sense of ownership and empower community members through actively taking part in the decisions and actions that affect their health.

The *Regional ACCHO* activities and approaches include:

- The service is a place of belonging where communities can feel safe and come together to take action.
- Community members are encouraged to become a member of the service and participate in AGMs, Board of Director elections and strategic planning.
- The service coordinates cultural groups (e.g. Men's Shed, Women's group, community lunches, youth camps, Elders group, Mums and Bubs groups).
- Celebration of days of cultural significance through community events, open days, health awareness days and family events (e.g. NAIDOC).
- Local people are employed and offered training opportunities.
- Community members are empowered through formal and informal engagement processes to provide feedback that tailors services to meet community needs.
- Community and staff are offered opportunities to participate in research.
- Local champions are utilised to promote their learnings and the programs available at the service.

ACCHO Action 5. Advocating for and driving the development of public policies that achieve equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Building equitable public policy

ACCHOs influence the development of healthy public policy that is inclusive and addresses the priorities and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. ACCHOs undertake extensive advocacy work and intersectoral action at local, regional, state/territory and national levels. This drives the agenda of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing across all sectors. In this way, ACCHOs hold other sectors accountable to their responsibilities to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Through their extensive engagement in research and evaluation activities, ACCHOs contribute to the generation of evidence to support the development of evidence-based policy.

The *Regional ACCHO* activities and approaches include:

- Staff and leadership advocate at the local, state/territory and national levels (e.g. PHNs, local councils, government departments) to influence the development of healthy public policy that aligns with the priorities of local communities.
- Collaborative relationships are built with other Aboriginal health services within the region and across the state/territory to enable coordinated care approaches for communities.
- Staff and leadership provide advice to partner organisations on cultural policies and strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Advice, support and direction is provided to partner organisations through staff participation on committees and working groups (e.g. local hospitals, PHN's, peak bodies and national bodies).
- The service participates in research that contributes to the development of evidence to promote policy change.

Focus areas of ACCHOs Comprehensive Health Promotion

ACCHO health promotion activities focus on **communities, staff** and on building and maintaining **partnerships** with other services.

The Regional ACCHO focuses their comprehensive health promotion approach on the community, staff and partnerships as described below.

Communities: All health promotion efforts are designed to address local needs and priorities. The service empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live strong healthy lives enriched through their connection to culture and land. Community members are involved in strategic planning and the development and evaluation of programs and services.

Staff: The service promotes healthy, culturally strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and culturally aware non-Indigenous staff, who are accountable and are empowered to tailor services to meet local needs.

Partnerships: The development of accountable relationships with partner organisations enables the development of supportive environments beyond the ACCHO and increases access for clients to other health and social services. These partnerships also enable a more coordinated and collaborative local health and social services system.

Outcomes of ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion

- Promotion of rich local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.
- Strengthened cultural pride and cultural capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Promotion of healthy interactions between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples and organisations (bringing two worlds together).
- Promotion of healthy inclusive communities.
- Promotion of holistic health including links to culture and land.
- Promotion of a healthy workplace and workforce.

Enablers of the approach

- Strong ACCHO leadership and staff with local cultural knowledge and connections who are respected by their communities.
- Leadership and staff with extensive networks across sectors, and who undertake multi-level advocacy on behalf of communities.
- Difficult decisions are made in the best interests of the ACCHO (e.g. redistribution of funding, holding staff accountable, working only with partners that share a commitment to community).
- Multiskilled and qualified workforce who care about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and invest in developing respectful relationships with clients.
- United workforce ('like a family').
- Willingness and flexibility of clinical staff to operate under a holistic health approach.
- Effective relationships within and across teams and clear communication pathways enable staff to refer clients between clinic and community programs and share client responsibility across teams.
- Trust from communities enables an ongoing two-way process that ensure local priorities, culture and needs are being acknowledged, advocated for and addressed.
- ACCHOs drive, develop, maintain and hold partners accountable to addressing health inequities.

Challenges to the approach

Funding challenges

- Commonwealth funding mechanisms, reporting and KPI's don't support or reflect comprehensive health promotion practices.
- Funding for health promotion activities in ACCHOs is often short term, limited to the Tackling Indigenous Smoking program and other programs associated with risk behaviours, insufficient to employ qualified health promotion officers, and does not cover program evaluation.
- ACCHOs often have to compete for funding of health promotion initiatives with non-Indigenous organisations.

Establishing partnerships and keeping partnerships accountable

- Establishing and maintaining partnerships takes significant time and investment and can be slow. At times ACCHO staff engage partner organisations in relation to client needs to hold partners accountable.

Balancing self-determination and reliance

- Finding the balance between empowering clients to be self-reliant rather than relying on the service while maintaining community trust in the service.

Community privacy and participation

- Participation by community is key to comprehensive health promotion activities. Community attendance is challenged at times due to life circumstances or competing demands, which can undermine engagement.
- Client privacy can be challenging when the ACCHO is a community hub. To ensure privacy of clients, ACCHOs consider more private access doors for clinics that are separate from the main entrance.

Workforce Challenges

- ACCHO workforce challenges include staff turnover, challenges in achieving gender balance, and a lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Recommendations

Recommendations for ACCHOs

- Undertake health promotion workshops for staff to understand how health promotion is embedded across ACCHO programs and services, and build the capacity of staff using health promotion terminology.
- Undertake succession planning to maintain staff capacity in comprehensive health promotion knowledge and activities.
- Provide training for staff regarding how best to evaluate health promotion activities (i.e. how to capture and utilise health promotion evaluation data).

Recommendations for Peak Bodies

- That NACCHO develop a Framework for ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion to capture the outstanding contribution of and set future directions for Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

- Commonwealth and state/territory governments to allocate sufficient and flexible funding towards comprehensive health promotion activities in Aboriginal community controlled organisations that reflect the real time and personnel cost.
- Consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies regarding comprehensive health promotion priorities.
- Acknowledge the comprehensive health promotion practice of ACCHOs embedded within their comprehensive primary health care service delivery model.
- Allocate funding to build a qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to undertake comprehensive health promotion in ACCHOs.
- Allocate specific and adequate funding and resources for appropriate evaluation of all comprehensive health promotion activities.

Discussion

ACCHOs enact comprehensive health promotion as it was intended through enabling, mediating and advocating for community and by addressing five health promotion action areas targeted to the needs of their communities. This is in contrast with other health promotion programs which have been criticized for their focus on individuals and behaviours rather than on the creation of supportive environments and health services that enable individuals to take control of their health and lives (McPhail-Bell et al, 2015). The five action areas of comprehensive health promotion are embedded within and across ACCHO programs and services in such a way that ACCHO staff can find it difficult to identify and articulate their health promotion approach. Health promotion terminology often doesn't resonate with ACCHO staff, who see their enactment of the five health promotion actions as routine ACCHO service provision intended to support community to address their holistic health needs. In fact, ACCHO staff often describe their health promotion activities as limited to disease awareness days, cultural celebrations, social marketing methods, community groups and the Tackling Indigenous Smoking (TIS) program. Analysis of programs and services however clearly illustrates the many ways in which ACCHOs undertake comprehensive health promotion to enable clients to take greater control of their health, and the determinants of their health.

Key to implementing comprehensive health promotion in ACCHOs is an understanding of the social determinants of health. These include 'the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life' that include factors such as socioeconomic position, societal values, racism and social policies (WHO, 2018). Systems level factors are of significance in the context of colonized Australia where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long experienced racism and marginalization and faced numerous barriers to accessing mainstream health and social services. Understanding this, ACCHOs invest in building strong relationships with partners to combat racism and reorient health and social services to better meet community needs. They also work closely with community to strengthen their social, economic and living circumstances by supporting access to social services such as Centrelink, housing, employment and training programs. The extensive efforts of ACCHOs to address the social determinants of

health has been illustrated in a recent document review of ACCHO annual reports (Pearson et al, 2020).

The ACCHO comprehensive health promotion model outlined in this chapter is centered upon culture and the strengthening of cultural identity and pride. This is consistent with systematic review evidence which found that culture was at the center of all ACCHO primary health care service delivery (Harfield et al, 2018). It is similarly consistent with the findings of community consultations on the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023* which yielded seven priority areas and placed culture at the center of change (Department of Health, 2017). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities have long known the importance of culture as a determinant of health and wellbeing. Government departments are increasingly recognising that the cultural determinants of health promote resilience, foster identity and support holistic wellbeing. The cultural determinants of health are promoted through 'traditional cultural practice, kinship, connection to land and Country, art, song and ceremony, dance, healing, spirituality, empowerment, ancestry, belonging and self-determination' (Department of Health 2017, p.7). As a cultural hub, ACCHOs positively impact the cultural determinants of health for both community and staff. In this way, services positively contribute to the promotion of the 'enabling, protecting and healing aspects' of culture that are critical in fostering resilience and contributing to Indigenous identity (Department of Health, 2015). The importance of traditional knowledge and caring for country as upwards factors enabling Aboriginal wellbeing and mitigating against racism, colonisation and the loss of traditional cultural knowledge is also highlighted in the *Exploratory Framework for Aboriginal Victorian peoples' wellbeing* (Kingsley et al, 2013).

ACCHO staff consistently speak about the importance of supporting community to make their own decisions and determine their own health and lifestyle priorities. McPhail-Bell et al (2015) describe how health promotion is oftentimes actioned in a top-down paternalistic manner of telling community what is good for them and what behaviours to avoid. Poor lifestyle choices undeniably impact health and can influence health issues such as diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease and cancer. However, McPhail-Bell and colleagues (2015) highlight that health promotion programs focused on individual

risk behaviours can have an undertone of telling people what to do without consideration of the cultural and social determinants of health and the underlying causes of risk behaviours. In contrast, ACCHOs practise health promotion consistent with the call to action for 'emancipatory health promotion practice' envisioned by McPhail and colleagues (2015). Emancipatory health promotion is 'capable of resisting entrenched individualism, which stigmatises those who 'fail' in their citizenry duty to 'be healthy' (p. 198) and values the 'promotion of freedom and liberation, including from health promotion interventions that undermine individual and community control and agency' (p.198). With self-determination as a core principle underlying their approach, ACCHOs showcase how health promotion practice can be liberating and empowering rather than dictatorial.

ACCHOs invest strongly in the development of respectful relationships with partner organisations including with other health services (e.g. hospital, other ACCHOs) and a range of human and social services' (e.g. justice, housing). There are times when partner organisations lean too heavily on ACCHO staff to do their work rather than upholding their responsibility to support community with their social and human services' needs. At these times ACCHOs work with partners to keep them accountable. Challenges to the development of partnerships between Aboriginal community controlled and mainstream services have been described (Taylor et al, 2013). Successful partnerships between ACCHOs and mainstream health services are established and maintained by addressing tensions early, building trust and through leadership. The benefits of effective partnerships include broadening service capacity and improving the cultural security of healthcare (Taylor and Thompson, 2011).

In summary, ACCHOs practise comprehensive health promotion centered upon culture and holistic health and actioned through a self-determination model. The first ACCHO was established in Redfern in 1971, many years before the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion was developed in 1986. As such, ACCHOs were orienting health services, creating culturally safe environments, uniting communities, empowering clients and advocating for more equitable public policy long before the five actions of health promotion were ever articulated. The ACCHO sector should be recognized for the extensive and comprehensive health promotion activities that many ACCHOs undertake to promote health and the determinants of health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.

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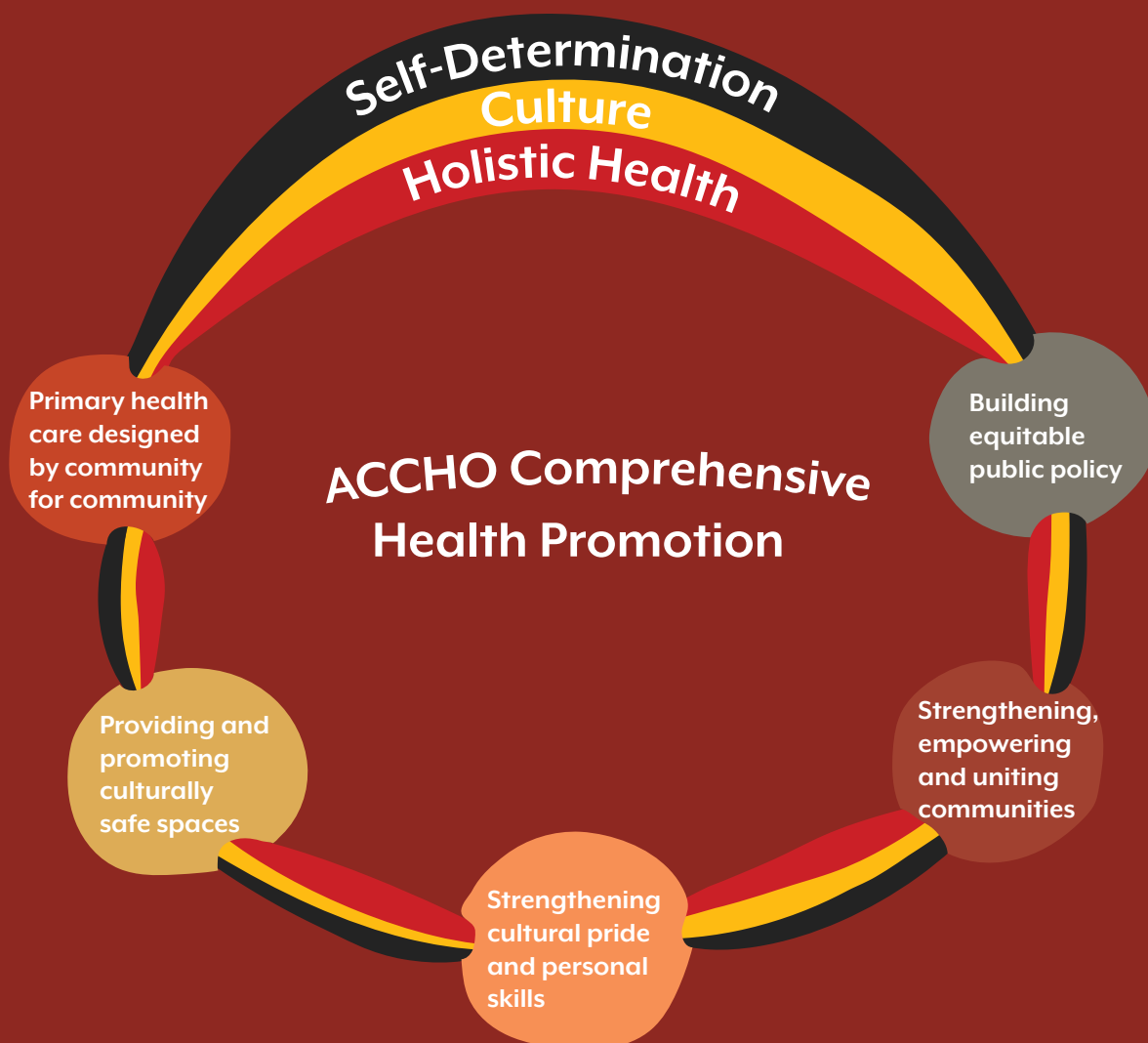
ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion: Reflection Tool

Comprehensive health promotion in ACCHOs includes five actions guided by a focus on culture, holistic health, and empowerment of community through self-determination. ACCHOs are culturally safe spaces where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can access comprehensive primary health care. ACCHOs also promote cultural safety in mainstream services and empower clients to manage their holistic health with self-determination. They strengthen and unite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by providing a space where communities learn, grow, support, celebrate, heal and take action together. ACCHOs also take a lead role in advocating for and driving public policies that achieve equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Step 1. Consider the activities your ACCHO currently practises under the five action areas.

Step 2. What other comprehensive health promotion activities could your ACCHO consider in the future and what partnerships will be needed to achieve this?

ACCHO Comprehensive Health Promotion Model



Primary health care designed by community for community

- Our local communities are involved in identifying holistic health priorities and in tailoring our culturally responsive services including the design of health promotion programs and community events.
- We provide a holistic flexible service supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of working (e.g. transport, drop in appointments, home visits, longer appointment times).
- We offer multidisciplinary services to create a one-stop-shop for the community.
- We promote client self-determination, hold culture at the core, adopt an Aboriginal definition of health, and address the cultural determinants of health.
- We develop partnerships with other services to enable clients to access services beyond the health sector (e.g. housing, education).
- We advocate on behalf of our clients with other services such as hospitals and specialist services, to adapt (that is, reorient) their models of care to better meet client needs.

Providing and promoting culturally safe spaces

- Our service is a supportive community hub where culture is valued, promoted and respected.
- We provide a culturally safe environment that influences positive health changes and empowers community.
- We celebrate culture through Aboriginal days of significance and showcasing the strengths of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through hiring of local professionals, businesses, celebrities, artist, dancers.
- We use Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages to name the service, rooms and/or programs.
- We employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to provide culturally safe quality care.
- We provide cultural safety training for our staff and advocate for cultural safety across sectors.
- We provide cultural competency training for staff in other services to increase cultural competency across organisations.

Strengthening cultural pride and personal skills

- We strengthen the health knowledge and management skills of our clients and empower them to make informed decisions about their holistic health.
- We practice culture at community events to strengthen cultural participation and cultural pride.
- We strengthen the capacity of our clients to confidently navigate mainstream systems and services through walking side by side, attending external appointments and advocating for clients with mainstream organisations.
- We provide education and services that strengthen the life skills of clients (e.g. parenting, budgeting, management of fines, employment programs).
- As a registered training organisation we offer accredited training programs to community members.
- We support clients to improve health and wellbeing through specific lifestyle interventions such as smoking cessation and physical activity programs.
- We support our staff to take control of their health through access to onsite services, leave policies and wellbeing programs.
- Our staff members and Board of Directors are role models and mentors for our communities.

Strengthening, empowering and uniting communities

- We create a place of belonging where our communities feel safe and come together to take action.
- We are a member service where community members can be involved in Annual General Meetings, Board of Director elections and strategic planning.
- We strengthen community through the coordination of cultural groups (e.g. Men's Shed, Women's group, community lunches, youth camps, Elders group).
- We promote and celebrate days of cultural significance through community events, open days, health awareness days and family events (e.g. NAIDOC).
- We empower community members through formal and informal engagement processes to provide feedback that tailors our services to meet community needs.
- We empower local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through employment and training opportunities.
- We provide opportunities for community and staff to participate in research.
- We utilise local champions to promote their learnings and the programs available at our service.

Building equitable public policy

- We advocate for our community at the local, state/territory and national levels (e.g. PHNs, local councils, government departments) to influence the development of healthy public policy that is inclusive, equitable and aligns with the priorities of our people.
- We build collaborative relationships with Aboriginal health services within the region and across the state/territory to enable coordinated care approaches for our communities.
- We provide advice to partner organisations on cultural policies and strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- We participate in research projects and contribute to the development of evidence that can promote policy change.
- We provide advice, support and direction to partner organisations through staff participation on numerous committees and working groups (e.g. local hospitals, PHN's, peak bodies and national bodies).