



NATSIHWA

**National Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Health Worker Association**

Strategic Plan 2011 – 2014

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NATSIHWA

A brief overview of NATSIHWA

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA) is the professional association for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers. It was established in 2009, following the Australian Government's announcement of funding to strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce as part of its 'Closing the Gap' initiatives.

The creation of NATSIHWA is an important step in recognising the vital role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers play in providing professional, effective and culturally respectful health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities across Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers (ATSIHWs) are employed across the Government, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health and private sectors, including in Divisions of General Practice.

Wherever they work, all ATSIHWs are welcome to join as a Full Member of NATSIHWA, provided they meet the eligibility requirements. There are also opportunities for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are not ATSIHWs but are studying or working in health to be an Associate Member. Both non-Aboriginal and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who wish to support the work of NATSIHWA may become Friends of NATSIHWA.

Our vision

NATSIHWA acknowledges all of our past and present leaders in the Aboriginal health sector who have provided us with the cultural and spiritual foundations and teachings that guide us on our path. They inspire us to pursue the following vision:

A strong, credible and viable National Association that is widely recognised for its cultural and professional integrity, and commitment to advocate for and support both current and future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers.

Our purpose

According to our constitution, the purpose of NATSIHWA is to:

- ⦿ advocate on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers to ensure input and engagement on various workforce issues including recruitment and retention strategies, and career pathways and support
- ⦿ represent Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers at peak regional, state and national forums

- ⌚ facilitate networking, information sharing, mentoring and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers
- ⌚ advocate for the accreditation and registration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers
- ⌚ advocate for appropriate education, training and development needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers
- ⌚ represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers nationally with regards to relevant issues and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers
- ⌚ promote and facilitate cultural capability, understanding safety and respect within the workplace of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers
- ⌚ protect the cultural integrity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers
- ⌚ do all other things that may be incidental or ancillary to the attainment of these objects.

Our values

Our values are consistent with those passed on to us by our Ancestors:

- ⌚ cultural integrity
- ⌚ cultural respect
- ⌚ the importance of connection to community
- ⌚ strong leadership
- ⌚ resilience and determination
- ⌚ honesty and transparency
- ⌚ dedication and passion
- ⌚ commitment to quality workforce and service delivery
- ⌚ diplomacy and sensitivity.

Advancing our profession

Our goal

Over the next three years NATSIHWA will aspire towards the following goal:

To achieve recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers as a vital and valued component of a strong professional Aboriginal health workforce.

Working towards our goal

The work to address the goal is organised under four areas. Each has an objective and several key strategies that we will implement over the next three years:

1. Awareness of NATSIHWA as a peak body
2. Professional support for members
3. External stakeholder relationships
4. Advocacy and representation

Indicators to track progress

We have identified indicators to determine how well we progress toward our goals and objectives, and implement our strategies. They are divided into 'outcome', 'impact' and 'process' indicators.

- ⊕ **Outcome indicators** are used to judge progress toward or achievement of goals, and focus on difference or change.
- ⊕ **Impact indicators** are used to judge progress toward or achievement of objectives, and also focus on difference or change.
- ⊕ **Process indicators** are used to judge the effectiveness and appropriateness of strategies, and focus on issues of satisfaction, quality, audience and reach.

Outcomes indicators to judge progress towards our goal

The following outcome indicator will tell us how far we progress toward our goal:

Outcome indicator: There is an increase in Aboriginal health resources allocated to:

- ⊕ creating ATSIHW positions in all health settings
- ⊕ supporting the professional needs of ATSIHWs
- ⊕ providing workforce development for ATSIHWs.

Area 1: Awareness of NATSIHWA as a peak body

OBJECTIVE 1: To increase awareness of NATSIHWA as the peak body for the ATSIHW profession.

IMPACT INDICATORS

Impact 1.1: There is a high level of recognition of NATSIHWA as the peak body for the ATSIHW profession amongst all relevant stakeholders.

Impact 1.2: The number of NATSIHWA 'full members' exceeds 400 by 2014.

RATIONALE: NATSIHWA is a new professional association in the Aboriginal health sector and there are high expectations for the range of work it will do in advancing the ATSIHW profession. This has become even more critical given the important role that ATSIHWs have within the Aboriginal health workforce in helping to implement the current range of national and state/territory 'Closing the Gap' initiatives to reduce inequity in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians.

A solid membership base and a high level of public recognition across all health sectors will assist NATSIHWA to be a strong and effective advocate for ATSIHWs, and what they can contribute in improving health experiences and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Strategies	Process indicators
<p>1.1 Promote public understanding of the definition of an ATSIHW and NATSIHWA membership eligibility.</p> <p>1.2 Develop and implement a national membership recruitment campaign.</p>	<p>Process 1.1: Promotional and membership recruitment information is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ written in a clear manner ▪ available in a variety of formats ▪ provided to a broad range of relevant stakeholders. <p>Process 1.2: All states and territories are included in the membership recruitment campaign.</p> <p>Process 1.3: Professional networking and development activities are used as opportunities for membership recruitment.</p>

Area 2: Professional support for members

OBJECTIVE 2: To strengthen the quality and effectiveness of professional support for members.

IMPACT INDICATORS

Impact 2.1: NATSIHWA members report that support provided (information, and professional networking and development):

- contributes to their skill development
- is not easily available through other sources.

RATIONALE: Core functions of any professional association are to provide up to date information that is relevant to the role and working contexts of its members, along with professional networking and development for its members.

ATSIHWs work across every jurisdiction of Australia in a variety of health settings. While most ATSIHWs work with a range of other health professionals, some ATSIHWs work in isolation from their peers while others work in settings that have two or more ATSIHWs. This highlights the importance of NATSIHWA providing regular access to quality information, along with professional networking and development opportunities in a range of accessible formats to ATSIHWs, which are responsive to this range of work contexts.

Strategies	Process indicators
<p>2.1 Provide up to date and relevant professional information through a variety of formats on a consistent basis, including matters such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NATSIHWA activities ▪ current national policy and initiatives ▪ national registration and accreditation ▪ scope of practice. <p>2.2 Facilitate professional networking among members in liaison with other key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Process 2.1: NATSIHWA members report that support (information professional networking and development):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ is provided on a regular basis in accessible formats ▪ reflects their professional needs and expectations. <p>Process 2.2: NATSIHWA members are regular users of the NATSIHWA website.</p>

Strategies	Process indicators
<p>2.3 Provide input into educational events, resources and learning opportunities for ATSIHWs that contribute to their professional development.</p> <p>2.4 Encourage and support the development of discipline-specific networking for ATSIHWs in liaison with other key stakeholders.</p> <p>2.5 Explore the viability of establishing state and territory branches of NATSIHWA.</p>	<p>Process 2.3: There is high and representational member participation in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NATSIHWA-led events and activities ▪ other formal and non-formal training and professional development in which NATSIHWA is involved. <p>Process 2.4: Other organisations or groups regularly seek NATSIHWA’s involvement in offering professional development options for ATSIHWs</p> <p>Process 2.5: Organisations or groups who collaborate with NATSIHWA on professional development options are highly satisfied with NATSIHWA’s role and support in the process.</p> <p>Process 2.6: There is an increase in the availability of discipline-specific events for members.</p> <p>Process 2.7: A business case for establishing state/territory branches is developed.</p>

Area 3: External stakeholder relationships

OBJECTIVE 3: To strengthen the effectiveness of our relationships with external stakeholders.

IMPACT INDICATORS

Impact 3.1: Relationships with external stakeholders:

- are based on a shared understanding of mutual benefits of the relationship
- are consistent with NATSIHWA values
- result in meaningful outcomes for NATSIHWA and ATSIHWs.

Impact 3.2: There is a steady increase in the number and type of collaborative projects with external stakeholders that reflect NATSIHWA priorities.

RATIONALE: NATSIHWA is a small organisation with a full work agenda. Therefore, supportive and respectful relationships with a range of stakeholders across all health sectors, not just Aboriginal health, will be vital in NATSIHWA working towards its vision and goal. These relationships needs to be a living embodiment of professional and cultural respect, where the professional and cultural knowledge and skills of ATISHWs are viewed as essential ingredients in any collaborative project that external stakeholders undertake with NATSIHWA.

Strategies	Process indicators
<p>3.1 Develop and implement a public relations strategy aimed at a broad range of external stakeholders that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ markets NATISHWA’s identity and role ▪ fosters regular, transparent and respectful communication with external stakeholders ▪ enables NATSIHWA participation in external stakeholder activities ▪ facilitates mutual support and shared visions for the ATSIHW profession. <p>3.2 Identify and create opportunities for cooperation and collaboration with relevant stakeholders who support NATISHWA initiatives.</p>	<p>Process 3.1: External stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ demonstrate an accurate understanding of the identity and role of NATSIHWA ▪ share information relevant to ATSIHWs with NATSIHWA on a regular basis ▪ welcome NATSIHWA’s involvement in their activities ▪ are willing to be involved in NATSIHWA-led projects. <p>Process 3.2: There is an increase in the numbers of external stakeholders who become ‘Friends of NATSIHWA’.</p>

Area 4: Advocacy and representation

OBJECTIVE 4: To strengthen our leadership in advocating on behalf of ATSIHWs.

IMPACT INDICATORS

Impact 4.1: A range of stakeholders:

- identify NATSIHWA as a priority or 'first port of call' group on matters relevant to ATSIHWs
- consistently invite NATSIHWA to provide advice and direction, and to lead and/or participate in projects relevant to ATSIHWs.

Impact 4.2: NATSIHWA positions and perspectives are clearly reflected in the outcomes of initiatives that are linked to policy, planning, education, training and professional development needs of ATSIHWs.

RATIONALE: Workforce development is a critical professional need for ATSIHWs and must extend beyond the professional networking and development provided through NATSIHWA (see Objective 2). Therefore, as a dedicated voice for ATSIHWs, NATSIHWA must play a strong role in advocating on behalf of ATSIHWs with other groups that are developing policy, funding, designing and/or delivering education, training and professional development that is relevant to ATSIHWs, based on their recognised scope of practice. This incorporates the developments regarding the National Registration and Accreditation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners (ATSIHPs).

Strategies	Process indicators
<p>4.1 Collaborate with relevant stakeholders in articulating and promoting the scope of practice of ATSIHWs (noting jurisdictional implications).</p>	<p>Process 4.1: Potential employers demonstrate an accurate understanding of the scope of practice, and benefits of employing and supporting ATSIHWs.</p>
<p>4.2 Promote the benefits of employing and supporting ATSIHWs across all health sectors.</p>	<p>Process 4.2: NATSIHWA is regularly and actively involved in committees, working groups, consultation processes, submissions and reviews relevant to ATSIHWs.</p>
<p>4.3 Represent and participate in policy and planning committees and working groups addressing ATSIHW workforce business.</p>	<p>Process 4.3: NATSIHWA members report that they are highly satisfied with the leadership NATSIHWA demonstrates in advocating on their behalf.</p>

Strategies	Process indicators
<p>4.4 Advocate for appropriate ATSIHW education, training and professional development.</p> <p>4.5 Represent and participate in reviews of ATSIHW education and training.</p>	

Our language

ATSIHW: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker.

'Closing the Gap' initiatives: These initiatives were developed by the Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) and funded by the Australian, State and/or Territory Governments on either a national or jurisdictional basis. The overall intention of these initiatives is to contribute to a reduction in the gross inequity in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and non-Indigenous Australians. 'Closing the Gap' initiatives are distinct from the 'Close the Gap' Campaign, which was initiated by Australian's peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous health, health professional associations and non-government organisations. They work outside of Government and their activities are self-funded. The work of the 'Close the Gap' Campaign led to the Australian Government's 'Closing the Gap' initiatives, however the latter do not necessarily reflect the human rights-based approach of the 'Close the Gap' campaign.

National Registration and Accreditation: The process for national registration and accreditation of Aboriginal Health Workers as a profession commenced in 2011 as part of a larger process to register a range of health professions in Australia. The term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner refers to the new registered workforce who will consist of appropriately qualified and skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers. Not all people employed as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers may be required to be registered, and may prefer to stay as unregistered health workers. The inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia was appointed in July 2011. By 2012, its full range of functions will include:

- ⦿ developing standards, codes and guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice
- ⦿ approving accreditation standards and accredited courses of study
- ⦿ registering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health practitioners and students
- ⦿ handling notifications, complaints, investigations and disciplinary hearings
- ⦿ assessing overseas trained practitioners who wish to practise in Australia.

NATSIHWA: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association.

Contacts

If you would like to know more about NATSIHWA's activities please visit our website: www.natsihwa.org.au

Please also call or email our office: all contact details are provided at the website.