



NATSIHWA
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Health Worker Association

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2017 – 2020**



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



As we pass through our tenth anniversary as the national representative body for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners, it is fitting that we are guided by a mature Strategic Plan. This new Strategic Plan for 2017-2020 is our third and again is based on an extensive evaluation of our achievements and shortfalls against the outgoing Strategic Plan. Our organisation is learning and adapting from feedback from our members and stakeholders. This Plan reflects our maturing refinements of purpose and sets out strategies for increasing our effectiveness for our growing membership.

From our evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 we found cause to share celebrations nationally for its successful implementation. We found that good progress made should be built on or continued into the next Plan. It was also noted that improvements were required in reaching members where they work and across the health system, whether in services specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or in mainstream services. We are aware that, despite our objectives to act for all members, our work will have varying value depending on individual member working arrangements. We must continue to work, however, on those things that matter most to the professions as a whole, even if the wide variety of employment circumstances and positions in the health system cannot be fully accommodated. In any case, our work results in support and guidance, not prescription.

We look forward with hope. There is now greater awareness across the health system of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander view of holistic health and the role of the social and cultural determinants of health. This will help create a

system more amenable to understanding the role of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners in effective health care. The ground is prepared for better integration of our members into teams with other health care professions, be they Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous.

We have faith in our members and partners as we share the main objective of achieving health equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. With mutual support we travel together. We will not be distracted by obstacles which loom in our path but which can be side-stepped as unimportant for reaching the destination.

This Strategic Plan covers four strategic focus areas, retaining some from the outgoing Plan and shifting to new ideas to meet the challenges ahead. The ongoing intention is to improve the working lives of our members so that they can best contribute to the health of their people. I invite you to join with us as we implement this Plan to consolidate the deserved recognition of our valued members as essential to closing the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Yours in health,

Josslyn Tully
Chairperson

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NATSIHWA

Overview

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA) is the national health professional association for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners. It has been funded by the Australian Government Department of Health since its establishment in 2009.

The purpose of NATSIHWA is to promote, support and increase recognition for the vital roles that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Health Practitioners play in providing professional, effective and culturally respectful health services to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities across Australia. The roles that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners undertake are critical to the efforts to close the gap in health outcomes so health equality is achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

There are three membership categories:

- **Full Members:** All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers (A&TSHWs) and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners (A&TSIHPs) are welcome to join as a Full Member of NATSIHWA if they meet the minimum qualification requirements, regardless of where they work.
- **Associate Members:** Other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are not Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers or Health Practitioners, but are studying or working in the health field, can be Associate Members. This includes people studying to become an A&TSHW or A&TSIHP.
- **Friends of NATSIHWA:** Any other individuals and organisations, who wish to support the work of NATSIHWA may become Friends of NATSIHWA.

Our vision

NATSIHWA's vision is:

An association, founded on the cultural and spiritual teachings of our past and present leaders, which best serves our members in their important role in achieving physical, social, cultural and emotional wellbeing for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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.

The NATSIHWA logo represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people coming from all parts of the country to form the association. It uses colours that reinforce our cultural identity – who we are. The u shape represents all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of our country. The small boomerangs represent our people's toughness and resilience to handle all situations. The bigger boomerangs are windbreaks and shields that provide safety, stability, education, guidance and vision towards the future.





Our purpose

The objects of NATSIHWA are to:

- promote the prevention and control of disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in pursuit of the objectives to 'Close the Gap' in life expectancy;
- address the impacts of disadvantage on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- assist Health Workers and Health Practitioners in delivering holistic health care within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in order to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- to do all such lawful things as may be incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objectives, and in pursuing the above objectives, the Company will:
 - encourage career support to facilitate a larger Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce (including through recruitment, retention, networking, mentoring, information sharing and career pathways);
 - increase public awareness of and support for the contribution that Health Worker and Health Practitioner make in improving the health outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
 - advocate for and represent Health Worker and Health Practitioner at peak regional, state and national forums;
 - advocate for and contribute to the development and maintenance of education, training and developmental needs of Health Worker and Health Practitioner to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' self-determination;
 - promote and facilitate cultural capability, safety and respect within the health workplace, to better enable Health Worker and Health Practitioner to provide effective and appropriate care; and
 - ensure that NATSIHWA is efficiently managed, is financially and ethically accountable to Members and funding bodies, and maintains high standards of excellence and innovation.

ADVANCING OUR PROFESSION

Our strategic direction and focus areas

Over the next three years NATSIHWA will pursue this strategic direction:

To improve understanding in the health system of the role, scope and effective deployment of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners, as a vital and valued component of a strong professional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce needed to close the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Our strategic focus areas

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

1. Profile of NATSIHWA as a national health professional association
2. Use of skills and professional integration where members are employed
3. Professional support and development for Members
4. Representation and promotion of workforce needs

Indicators to track progress

We have identified 'outcome', 'impact' and 'process' indicators to determine how well we progress toward our goal and objectives, and implement our strategies:

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.

AREA 1: PROFILE OF NATSIHWA ACROSS ALL HEALTH SECTORS

Objective 1

To raise the profile of NATSIHWA across all health sectors.

Impact indicators

Impact 1.1: Members and stakeholders from all sectors of the health system value NATSIHWA's role, and hold a positive opinion about the nature and effectiveness of its work.

Impact 1.2: The number of NATSIHWA Full Members exceeds 1,000 by 2020.

Rationale

Since its inception, NATSIHWA has increased awareness across the health system of its role as the national health professional association for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers (A&TSIHWs) and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners (A&TSIHPs). As of June 2017, the membership had grown to 1,326, of which 737, were Full Members. Overall membership represents an increase of 100% over the last three years.

Since 2014, NATSIHWA has built its reputation as an important organisation that supports the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, specifically A&TSIHWs and A&TSIHPs, and advises on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health at the national level. NATSIHWA is best known in the Government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sectors rather than the private sector. However, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners are employed across all health sectors within the health system, including non-Government and private sectors.

The priority focus for the next three years is to raise the profile of NATSIHWA with a clear and consistent message across all of these sectors within the health system in terms of its full range of work, progress and achievements. This will contribute to two desired outcomes. First, Members and potential Members in these sectors will gain greater understanding of the value of being a NATSIHWA Member and will wish to join. Second, external stakeholders will be encouraged to work with NATSIHWA under partnerships and collaborations.



STRATEGIES	PROCESS INDICATORS
<p>1.1 Promote the full range of work that NATSIHWA undertakes, its progress in addressing and achieving priorities to Members and stakeholders in all sectors of the health system.</p>	<p>Process 1.1: Members and external stakeholders have an appreciation of NATSIHWA's full range of work and achievements.</p>
<p>1.2 Implement NATSIHWA 's Communication Strategy promoting key messages and employing a variety of communication mechanisms (also see Strategy 4.1) including publication of policy position statements on key issues on the NATSIHWA website.</p>	<p>Process 1.2: NATSIHWA's Communication Strategy updated and available and its policy position statements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easily available to Members and external stakeholders • are reviewed and, where required, updated on a biennial basis.
<p>1.3 Refine the national membership recruitment campaign so it focuses on reaching health sectors and/or geographic locations with low representation in the membership.</p>	<p>Process 1.3: There is a greater proportion of Members from health sectors and/or geographic locations that were not well represented in the June 2017 membership figures.</p>
<p>1.4 Articulate and promote the benefits of being a NATSIHWA Member for all member categories.</p>	<p>Process 1.4: Members have a clear understanding of the rights and benefits associated with their membership category.</p>

AREA 2: SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR THE WORKFORCE

Objective 2

To increase appropriate use of skills and integration of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners into health services across all sectors in the health system.

Impact indicators

Impact 2.1: Stakeholders from all sectors of the health system report high interest in, and improved ability to develop, a scope of practice for best employment of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners.

Impact 2.2: Stakeholders from all sectors of the health system report both knowledge and use of the good practice models on the effective deployment of, and expanded career pathways for, A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs.

Rationale

An achievement for the 2014-2017 period was the development and launch of *National Framework for Determining Scope of Practice for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker/Health Practitioner Workforce*. This guideline provides the basis for documenting the knowledge and skills of A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs to be used to their full potential in each health context and jurisdiction (subject to legislative constraints). The evaluation of NATSIHWA's 2014-2017 plan demonstrated there is an appetite for this work to be extended and enhanced by identifying and/or developing, and then promoting, a range of models of care that provide good practice exemplars of effective deployment of A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs.

This is an excellent opportunity for external stakeholders, including Government, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health non-government and private health services and organisations to collaborate with NATSIHWA. Ultimately, the outcome of this work will promote greater understanding and strengthen the evidence base for best practice regarding the significant role that A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs do and can play within the health workforce. Therefore, this will promote recognition of, and respect for, the professional identity of A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs as a critical part of addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health needs and priorities. It will also foster more flexible approaches to the construction of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary teams, and enhance career pathways for the A&TSHW and A&TSHIP workforce.

Linked to this work on the recognition of skills appropriate for different types and levels of work, NATSIHWA sought to enhance the current Modern Award for improvement of the career structure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people entering these professions. The Modern Award reflects the advent of A&TSHIPs in addition to A&TSHWs but does not adequately reflect the breadth of expertise and specialisation for either professional stream. NATSIHWA is playing a significant role in engaging relevant unions and supporting the ongoing Fair Work Commission process.



STRATEGIES	PROCESS INDICATORS
<p>2.1 Promote widely the use of <i>National Framework for Determining Scope of Practice for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker/ Health Practitioner Workforce</i> among members and other stakeholders and publish worked examples.</p>	<p>Process 2.1a: Forums include sessions on the Framework with presentations of its use and with opportunities for feedback on any difficulties on use.</p> <p>Process 2.ba: Website publications of worked examples and possible improvements to the Framework.</p>
<p>2.2 Explore opportunities with stakeholders to resource the identification, documentation and promotion of models of care that demonstrate practice integration of A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs despite their diverse scopes of practice.</p>	<p>Process 2.2a: One or more external stakeholders collaborate with NATSIHWA to identify and document existing models of care that are good practice exemplars.</p> <p>Process 2.2b: Exemplars represent one or more jurisdictions, and different health sectors and contexts.</p>
<p>2.3 Continue to advance the desired changes to the Modern Award.</p>	<p>Process 2.3: Keep members up to date with progress on the Modern Award and the implications.</p>
<p>2.4 Promote and distribute good practice exemplars of effective deployment of and career pathways for A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs across all health sectors and contexts.</p>	<p>Process 2.4: The good practice exemplars are available on the NATSIHWA and other relevant websites, and promoted through NATSIHWA-led forums or invited presentations.</p>

AREA 3: PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT FOR MEMBERS

Objective 3

To improve the accessibility and quality of professional support and professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners.

Impact indicators

Impact 3.1: Members report that NATSIHWA's professional information and support, including the online portal, professional networking forums and the Conference:

- are relevant to their professional needs and expectations
- are of high quality
- are offered in accessible formats and/or locations.

Impact 3.2: Members report that NATSIHWA's information about professional development opportunities:

- is relevant to their professional needs and expectations
- offers them valuable options for skill development and new career pathways.

Rationale

The provision of professional information and support is a core function of any health professional body, along with identifying, advising on and promoting professional development opportunities. This must be built on an understanding of Member needs and priorities, which will reflect the diverse health contexts in which they work in all sectors of the health system, and the roles they undertake.

In recent years, NATSIHWA developed an approach to providing professional information and support, and promoting professional development opportunities to Members. The most effective mechanisms have been a regular online newsletter, NATSIHWA-led professional networking and development forums, and promoting and/or facilitating access to professional development opportunities available through other stakeholders.

The focus for improvement over the next three years is matching Member needs and priorities to available or new professional support and development opportunities, and coordinating with employer groups to facilitate their support and/or collaboration. A continuing focus will be bringing opportunities closer to where Members are located, either through the location of the forum and/or making videos of events and programs that can be accessed via NATSIHWA's website. The members who need to maintain their registration requirements would be served by having a tool for tracking and auditing their registration obligations. NATSIHWA sees that the website Portal can be the gateway for such a tool.



STRATEGIES	PROCESS INDICATORS
<p>3.1 Identify and provide relevant information on professional support and professional development opportunities for Members on a regular basis.</p>	<p>Process 3.1: Members report that information on professional support and development opportunities is provided on a regular basis via the Portal and newsletters.</p>
<p>3.2 Establish and implement mechanisms for identifying and documenting Member's professional support and development needs and priorities on an annual basis, for use as a planning and monitoring tool.</p>	<p>Process 3.2: Member's professional support and development needs and priorities are reviewed on an annual basis, and reflected in annual Activity Plans.</p>
<p>3.3 Provide NATSIHWA-led local professional forums in a variety of geographical locations for A&TSHWs and A&TSHPs, in liaison with providers of relevant professional support and development, and employer groups.</p>	<p>Process 3.3: NATSIHWA's locally based professional forums are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well attended by Members • well supported by employer groups and professional development providers.
<p>3.4 Hold a biennial NATSIHWA Conference focused on professional support and development, profiling the scope of practice of A&TSHWs and A&TSHPs, and interdisciplinary approaches.¹</p>	<p>Process 3.4: The NATSIHWA Conference is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well attended by Members • attracts interest from other health workforce disciplines • well supported by employer groups and professional development providers.

1. The next NATSIHWA Conference will be held in 2019 so that it coincides with the 10 year anniversary of NATSIHWA's establishment.

AREA 4: REPRESENTATION AND PROMOTION OF WORKFORCE NEEDS

Objective 4

To extend our influence on national and jurisdictional policy development and decision-making that impacts on the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce.

Impact indicators

Impact 4.1: The Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce is enhanced to better care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Rationale

National and jurisdictional health policies, programs and review processes that are specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services and outcomes. This then can shape Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce education and training, which affects A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs as unique professions within the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. As a dedicated voice for A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs, NATSIHWA must continue to play a strong role in representing and promoting Members' needs and priorities with groups and organisations who develop policy and programs, make funding decisions, and design and/or deliver education and training that is relevant to A&TSHWs and A&TSHIPs.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations and associations, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce have many shared priorities. NATSIHWA has taken an increasingly active role in national conversations, working in partnership with other national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to identify, articulate and promote understanding of these priorities across the health system, along with the system's accountability for addressing them. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan and Implementation Plan, and the Redfern Statement are recent examples of this work. Continuing this work at the national level and contributing to the jurisdictional level remains a core role for NATSIHWA.



STRATEGIES	PROCESS INDICATORS
<p>4.1 Review, revise and expand NATSIHWA policy position statements, as a foundation for national representation and promotion (also see Strategy 1.2).</p>	<p>Process 4.1: NATSIHWA policy position statements are available on the NATSIHWA website, and can be used in submissions, proposals, representation work and invited presentations.</p>
<p>4.2 Determine national and jurisdictional representation priorities based on how well they relate to NATSIHWA priorities and policy positions.</p>	<p>Process 4.2: All national and jurisdictional representation work has a direct relationship with NATSIHWA's Strategic Directions and policy positions.</p>
<p>4.3 Represent the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce and promote their its in national and, where appropriate, jurisdictional forums.</p>	<p>Process 4.3: NATSIHWA Members are highly satisfied with NATSIHWA's representation and promotion on their behalf at national and/or jurisdictional levels.</p>
<p>4.4 Engage in networking and outreach activities with stakeholders who both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead or participate in work that is relevant to NATSIHWA priorities and policy positions • can assist in addressing NATSIHWA priorities. 	<p>Process 4.4: There is evidence of increased networking and outreach that results in NATSIHWA gaining direct support for addressing its priorities.</p>

OUR LANGUAGE

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner

An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who has gained a Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice, and has successfully applied for and been registered with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker

An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who has gained a Certificate II or higher qualification in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care from the HLT - Health Training Package.

All sectors in the health system

The terms “all health sectors” and “all sectors in the health system” refers to the following sectors within the broader health system: Government, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health, non-Government and private health sectors.

Health contexts

Health contexts occur within the sectors of the health system, and are broad in range. For example, contexts such as primary health care (inclusive of clinical care, primary care, prevention and health promotion), mental health, alcohol



NATSIHWA

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