

Roadmap to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Adolescent health

Priority health needs and actions - as defined by young people

BACKGROUND

One third of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population are adolescents and young people, aged 10-24 years. Adolescence is a time of great discovery, transition and opportunity. It is also a time when health needs change and new challenges arise. Despite this, existing policies and services focus mostly on children and adults meaning many young people can't access the services and supports they need or want.

Although there have been many efforts to measure and describe the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, there has been less work on defining *how* services and responses can better meet these needs. There is currently no national strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescent health, and as a result, investments have been limited and poorly co-ordinated.

We strongly believe that young people must be central to any effort to improving young people's health. Not only do young people have a fundamental right to be involved in the things that will directly impact them, but young people also bring unique perspectives and skills that are important to designing a better way forward.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

We are developing the very first roadmap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescent health in Australia, a document that will describe priority needs and related actions to assure that young people are healthy and well. To ensure this roadmap is meaningful, effective and sustainable, it's development will be governed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

The **governance group** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people will oversee all aspects of this project. The group will include 16 young people from across the country and be supported by Elders and the project team. The group will meet 4 times per year, over the 4-year project. Members of the group will also receive financial reimbursement for their time and have access to professional development opportunities.

There are two main components to the project:

- **Defining priority health needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people:** At a state and national level, we will define the health needs and priorities of young people by speaking directly with young people across the country and gathering their ideas through a national survey. We will also review data that has already been collected;
- **Defining evidence-based actions to address priorities needs and gaps:** We will ask Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people across communities to define what needs to happen to improve health and wellbeing. We will also seek advice from Indigenous and First Nations young people and researchers globally, and review what has been described in the literature.

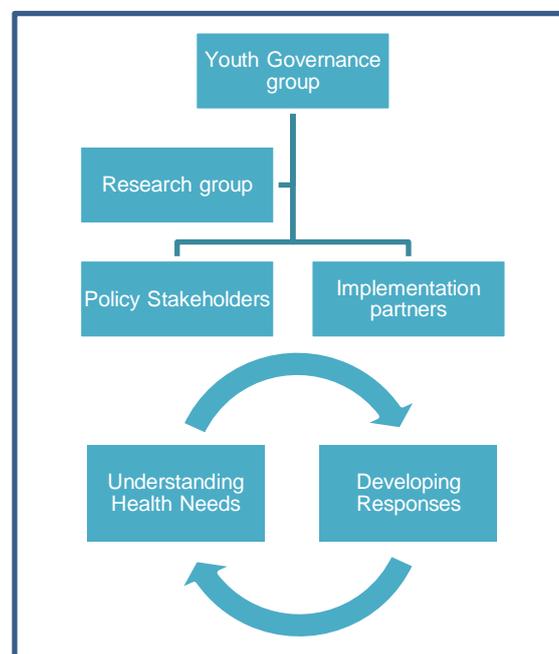
Importantly, this project will be driven by the experiences, aspirations, needs and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. We believe that our approach- of being governed by young people- can also help inform other efforts related to adolescent and youth health and wellbeing. To help share our learnings we will evaluate how this model of governance works- what is required to do it properly- and what impacts it can make on a project if done well.

MORE ABOUT THE GOVERNANCE GROUP

Our governance structure will ensure the project honours the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture; enables the capacity development of young people in research, leadership and advocacy; and enables key stakeholders to build their capacity to effectively partner with young people.

The governance group will include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who are aged 16 – 24 years. The group will include 16 young people, with two young people drawn from each state/ territory. It will be representative of gender, including LGBTQ+ and gender diverse young people; geographic representation (urban, regional, remote); and be representative of young people with chronic illness; and different abilities. Two Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Elders (male and female) will also join this governance group to provide support.

This group will meet every three months, with two in-person meetings in the first year and then meeting in-person annually at Wardliparingga SAHMRI, South Australia. This governance group will establish terms of reference that enables true youth governance (not an advisory role) whilst respecting leadership structures within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and enabling meaningful engagement with key stakeholders.



CONTACT

For any further information on the *National Roadmap project* please contact our project leads:

Project Governance Lead:

Mr. Seth Westhead
(Awabakal/Wiradjuri/Australian)

Ph. (08) 8128 4273

E. Seth.Westhead@sahmri.com

Project Research Lead:

Dr. Peter Azzopardi
(Australian/Maltese)

Ph. (08) 8128 4273

E. Peter.Azzopardi@sahmri.com