

# RESEARCH SUMMARY

## First peoples of Hobsons Bay

**Health is determined by much more than genes and lifestyle decisions. It is determined by the circumstances in which we are born, grow, live, work and age. Being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander can be a source of great pride and community connectedness, however action is essential for 'Closing the Gap' and improving the health and wellbeing of Australia's First Nations peoples.**

Through its various functions, local government plays a major role in protecting, improving and promoting the health of its residents. As the closest level of government to the community, councils work to understand the populations they serve and ensure that all residents are provided with an environment which allows everyone to equally achieve the best health and wellbeing possible.

This research summary is aimed at providing information about the social and environmental conditions that affect the health and wellbeing of Hobsons Bay residents.

*Council acknowledges the peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Owners of these municipal lands and waterways, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.*

### **How does being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander affect health and wellbeing?**

The Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) population are diverse in "gender, age, languages, backgrounds, sexual orientations, religious beliefs, family responsibilities, marriage status, life and work experiences, personality and education levels" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2013). This

diversity is highly valued, however these factors can also interact and intensify the effects of racism and discrimination (DHHS, 2017).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have poorer health outcomes than the non-Aboriginal population, in fact, they have on average 2.3 times the disease burden (Close the Gap, 2018).

While there are many strengths within the ATSI community, the following are some of the areas which demonstrate the gap in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people:

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

### First peoples of Hobsons Bay

- perinatal mortality rates for Aboriginal children are double
- family violence is 45 times more likely, and is one of the key drivers of homelessness. Women are 15 times more likely to seek crisis accommodation
- eighty-eight per cent of children in out-of-home care have experienced family violence
- children are eight times more likely to be the subject of a child protection substantiation
- Aboriginal Victorians are more likely to be in prison
- there is a higher chance of being clients of social housing and four times more likely to be homeless
- tobacco use is at three times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians
- presentation at emergency departments for alcohol related causes are four times the rate of other Victorians
- admissions to emergency departments for self-harm is four times the rate of other Victorians
- young people experience higher rates of risky alcohol and drug use
- three times more likely to experience high to very high psychological distress
- Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ Victorians are at a higher risk of mental health problems
- three times more likely to have diabetes
- higher rates of obesity and dietary risk factors
- cancer admission and treatment rates are lower, and women are more likely to develop cervical cancer

- dementia is more common and occurs at a younger age
- more likely to have a disability
- experience higher rate of blood borne viruses and sexually transmitted infections
- Aboriginal Victorians have a life expectancy gap of 9.5 years for women and 10.6 years for men (DHHS, 2017)

Health improves with improved socio economic conditions, attainable through access to adequate income, employment and education. “Underlining these factors in Australia is inherent issues of institutional racism which restrict many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from receiving better healthcare outcomes, securing long-term employment or gaining meaningful and appropriate education” (DHHS, 2017).

### What do we know about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in Hobsons Bay?

The First People of Hobsons Bay are the Yalukit-willam, meaning “river camp” or “river dwellers”. The language group is the Boon wurrung of the Kulin Nation. One of the clans within the neighbouring language groups, the Woi wurrung, was the Wurundjeri-willam, who have looked after sites of significance within Hobsons Bay over the last fifty years (Clark, 2001)

Data from the 2016 Census<sup>1</sup> shows there are 490 residents in Hobsons Bay who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. They represent 0.6 per cent of the population, a marginally higher proportion than Greater Melbourne (0.5 per cent) and an increase of

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, data in this section are sourced from ABS, Census of Population and Housing

(2016), compiled and presented in profile.id, <https://profile.id.com.au/hobsons-bay>

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

### First peoples of Hobsons Bay

101 people since 2011. The Victorian Aboriginal population increased by 12 per cent between the 2011 and 2016 Census, and is growing at a much faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population. This reflects higher fertility rates in the Indigenous community, but the ABS has identified that non-demographic factors such as the propensity to identify partly explain the increase (ABS, 2018).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Hobsons Bay are much less likely to have completed year 12 or equivalent (43.5 per cent), compared to the non-Indigenous population (59.4 per cent). Similarly, a much lower proportion of Aboriginal people (15.7 per cent compared to 30.2 per cent) have a Diploma (or higher) as their highest qualification.

Slightly fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (55 per cent) are employed in full and part time work, compared to the non-Indigenous population (61 per cent). Slightly more Aboriginal people (35.5 per cent) than non-Aboriginal people (33.6 per cent) are not in the labour force. However, the unemployment rate (i.e. those looking for both full and or part time work) for Aboriginal people is more than double that of non-Aboriginal people (8.6 per cent vs 4.2 per cent).

Almost four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (39.3 per cent) have a weekly gross income of less than \$400, compared to 30.9 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population. Similarly, a smaller proportion of Aboriginal people receive \$1,000 or more (22.4 per cent vs 35.7 per cent).

A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people volunteer through an organisation or group (21.9 per cent vs 17.7 per cent), which can be a protective factor for

health and encourage social connections. However, the prevalence of problem gambling among Victoria's Indigenous population (8.7 per cent) is more than ten times higher than the rate for the non-Indigenous community (0.72 per cent) (Hare, 2015).

### What government policies support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples?

#### International

Australia supports the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**. This declaration establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and wellbeing of indigenous peoples, and the affirmation of their rights and freedoms.

#### Commonwealth

**Closing the Gap Strategy** is aimed at eliminating the gap in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, and was set in 2008 by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

Currently, three of the seven targets are on track to be met:

- the gap in child mortality has reduced by 32 per cent (target was 50 per cent by 2018)
- enrollment in early childhood programs has increased to 91 per cent (target was 95 per cent by 2025)
- the proportion of Indigenous 20 to 24 year olds achieving Year 12 or equivalent has increased (target is to halve the gap by 2020)

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

### First peoples of Hobsons Bay

The 2018 review recommended the strategy be refreshed and that the Federal government rebuilds a national approach with leadership and ongoing funding and renews their commitment to addressing the underlying structural factors influencing the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Australians.

**National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-23** provides a long term, evidence based policy framework as part of the government's overarching approach to Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. It sets out a 10 year plan for the direction of indigenous health policy, and provides a focus to guide future Commonwealth investment. Health equality and a human rights approach are central principles of the plan.

### State

The Victorian Government has committed to self-determination, ensuring Aboriginal Victorians lead policy development and the delivery of programs.

***“Self-determination is the most fundamental of all human rights and is grounded in the idea that peoples are entitled to control their own destiny”***  
***Behrendt et al***

*Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017-27*

The purpose of this strategy is to realise the Victorian Government's vision for 'self-determining, healthy and safe Aboriginal people and communities' in Victoria. The plan details how the Department of Health and Human Services will work with Aboriginal communities, community organisations, other

government departments and service providers to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal people in Victoria. The five domains of the strategy are:

1. Aboriginal community leadership
2. prioritising Aboriginal culture and community
3. system reform across the health and human services sector
4. safe, secure, strong families and individuals
5. physically, socially and emotionally healthy Aboriginal communities

Underpinning the plan is a cultural determinants approach to health and wellbeing. It also aspires to eliminate systemic racism within the state's health and human service sectors.

**Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-18** is the state government's commitment to engage with Aboriginal Victorians in implementing the Closing the Gap Strategy.

The framework drives policy, service systems and programs across government. It drives change, provides for disadvantage to be addressed and allows for integrated action across government departments.

It takes a holistic life course approach to Aboriginal affairs which recognises the important role of supporting foundations such as home and family, links government services and investment with key stages of life and acknowledges the empowerment and pride that comes with Aboriginal culture and the importance of this in a person's outlook on life and resilience.

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

First peoples of Hobsons Bay

**Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement** is a partnership between the state government and the Aboriginal community to work together to reduce Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system and improve justice outcomes. This long term agreement is implemented in phases/stages to be rolled out over a generation.

**Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Plan** is an initiative of phase three of the *Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement* which was signed in 2013. The plan identifies key areas of focus to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in custody and after their release. More broadly, the plan also recognises the fundamental role of culture, community and spirituality in Aboriginal wellbeing.

**Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy** aims to ensure Economic participation and development are central to the Government's reform agenda for closing the gap, the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013–2018*. The Strategy extends from education, to more job opportunities with career pathways, and growing Aboriginal business enterprise and investment.

Actions under the Strategy build on efforts across the Victorian Government and leverage private sector partners, to deliver strong outcomes in education, training employment and business enterprise.

A Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board will be established to support delivery of the Strategy, cut through red tape and build strategic connections with industries and the finance sector.

**Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-26** sets out a ten-year vision for improving the success of every Aboriginal child in education, achieving their developmental potential and their ambitions for life. The plan is underpinned by the principles of self-determination.

The plan is outcomes focused and developed around the key system enablers (such as community engagement in learning and development and a culture of professional leadership) and settings for excellence in teaching, learning and development (such as early childhood, schools and higher education).

**Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Action Plan, 2016** was released by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. It is a resource for local government to further strengthen relationships between Aboriginal communities and local councils and contribute to better outcomes for all Victorians. It outlines a range of important strategies to support Aboriginal Victorians and local councils to improve outcomes for their communities through councils in their role as employers, service providers, planning authorities and asset managers. The action plan also builds on the momentum already generated through the government's partnership with the local government sector peak organisations, Reconciliation Victoria and councils.

### Local

Local government plays an important role in reconciliation for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Hobsons Bay City Council Reconciliation Action Plan 2017-19** is Council's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which was

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

First peoples of Hobsons Bay

developed through a collaborative process of community partnership between Council, Traditional Owners and our Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.

Council's vision for reconciliation is one in which the broader community is positively engaged with and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and peoples. Council envisages a community that celebrates the value and diversity of our First Nations and one in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel a sense of pride and belonging.

The plan articulates actions within the three areas of relationships, respect and opportunities, and is classified as an 'innovate' level plan by Reconciliation Victoria.

*Note: Throughout this document the term "Aboriginal" is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the term "Indigenous" is retained in the names of programs and initiatives, and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

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## RESEARCH SUMMARY

### First peoples of Hobsons Bay

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