

EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council Terms of Reference

Background

The Australian Government funds Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of health services for their community, particularly for those at risk of poor health outcomes. They improve the coordination of health services and seek to improve access and quality of care. There are 31 PHNs in Australia and six in Victoria.

Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (EMPHN) achieves this goal by improving access to existing services, commissioning services to improve health outcomes and by supporting services and others to innovate and further improve local health care. We aim to improve the health of our community by ensuring people receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first people of Australia made up of hundreds of groups with distinct languages, histories and cultural traditions. In the EMPHN region, there are approximately eleven thousand people (or about 0.8% of the population) who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (ABS, 2021).

To support the health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, EMPHN commissions a broad range of programs delivered by community-controlled health services, community controlled organisations and mainstream services.

EMPHN is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right to self-determination and improving health outcomes of our First Peoples. We strive to collaborate with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and stakeholders to fulfill the needs of the population.

Members must sign the EMPHN Code of Conduct and other relevant documentation on appointment to the Aboriginal Consultative Council.



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Purpose

The EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council are committed to fostering genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health stakeholders. The intention is to build trust and strengthen shared decision making and therefore support self-determination.

The purpose of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council are to provide an ongoing perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and advice to the EMPHN Board. This helps to ensure that decisions, investments, and innovations are patient centred, aligned with contemporary ways of working, cost-effective, locally relevant, and aligned to local care systems, experiences and expectations.

Role

The role of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council are:

- Provide direction and advice for EMPHN in relation to the integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professional views and experiences into all levels of strategy, operations, planning and policy development.
- Provide strategic advice to the EMPHN Board of Directors on priority areas and issues from a clinician, clinical team, and healthcare systems perspective.

Responsibilities

In the first 12 months, the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council are responsible for:

Leading the 'what':

- Developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing action plan (the Action Plan) that will guide the provision of EMPHN's funding for future programs in Aboriginal health for the 2025-2026 fiscal year and beyond.

Leading the 'how':

- Embed self-determination in the governance of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council and development of the Action Plan.
- Guide community engagement and participation methods to inform EMPHN ways of working to enable effective and meaningful engagement.
- Recommend communication strategies to assist engagement with health services providing care to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
- Represent the views of their organisation including providing regular feedback and input into the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing strategy.
- The role of EMPHN Executive and staff will be to enable regular communication and engagement and support the sharing of decision-making between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

Leading the 'why':

- Providing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or healthcare worker's interpretation of data and other information to inform processes such as the EMPHN health needs assessment.

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- Advise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community perspectives on various health and other social issues to assist EMPHN staff to appreciate and design for the complexities of the healthcare system.

The Board’s commitment to the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council encompasses consultation, involvement and collaboration.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Composition

Each Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) can nominate a representative to the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council.

In the first instance, the Chair of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council will be Board member. A Co-Chair will be nominated by members of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council to share Chairing responsibilities and support future and ongoing meetings.

EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council members who are not Board members, are appointed with the term of appointment determined by the community-controlled organisation.

The EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council shall comprise between four (4) and nine (9) members, including:

- Aboriginal Community Controlled (Health) Organisation representatives (ACCHO). Representative appointments are determined by the community controlled organisation. A minimum of one (1) and a maximum of two (2) representatives from each relevant community-controlled organisation from the EMPHN catchment will be appointed to the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council. Meeting attendance may be delegated to other organisation representatives as deemed appropriate by the community controlled organisation.
- Members must be representatives of community-controlled organisations with existing programs supported by EMPHN and/or provide health and wellbeing services to First Nation Peoples’ residing in the EMPHN catchment area.

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- EMPHN Board Directors. A minimum of one (1) and a maximum of two (2) EMPHN Board Directors as nominated by the EMPHN Board Chair. The minutes of EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council meetings will be submitted to the EMPHN Board.
- Other organisational representatives. Other organisational representatives may also be invited to attend on a time-limited basis or to progress specific discussions or initiative such as subject matter experts, mainstream healthcare providers invitations to attend will be considered and approved by the co-Chairs of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council with advice from members.

The CEO and relevant Executive will also attend meetings and act as a conduit between senior management, staff and the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council. The Chief Executive Officer will provide information and clarification at meetings as required.

ACCHOs are required to attend 75% of meetings in any given calendar year.

OPERATIONS

The EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council will meet three (3) to four (4) times per annum. The Chair of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council may call additional meetings, as required. Members will be advised of additional meetings no later than one week before the day of the meeting. The program of work for the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council may also involve additional meetings or consultations by invitation.

Disclosure of interest

EMPHN Disclosure of Interest policy applies to EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council members and any interests will be noted by the Chair at each meeting. A register of interests shall be maintained EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council members will declare potential conflicts at the start of each meeting in accordance with EMPHN's Disclosure of Interest policy. The EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council will determine how any potential conflict should be handled, including whether that member should remain present and have speaking rights or not for the item concerned.

Agenda and minutes

Meeting documentation, including the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting and other relevant documents, will be distributed to EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council members and attendees one week prior to the meeting.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing action plan will include outlining the key themes for each meeting and significant matters to be discussed.

The key actions emanating from all meetings will be minuted to reflect the work done by the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council. The minutes will be circulated to members after a meeting, following approval by the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council Chair and confirmed by EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council members at the next meeting. The minutes will then be submitted to the Board for noting at the Board meeting next following a EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council meeting (both confirmed and unconfirmed).

Secretariat functions will be provided by the EMPHN.

Governance documentation will be housed in a secure online central repository shared with members of the Aboriginal Consultative Council and managed by the EMPHN secretariat.

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Authority

The EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council are a consultative committee to the EMPHN Board and has no delegations.

Reporting

The EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council shall provide an annual report of the Council to the EMPHN Board of Directors, including a review of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council Terms of Reference.

Remuneration and Expenses

Remuneration is paid to community controlled organisations represented by one or two members. The remuneration rate aligns with EMPHN's Engagement Rates Schedule for meeting attendance. EMPHN Board members who are members of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council will be compensated as agreed by the Board.

Intellectual Property and Confidentiality

Matters discussed at EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council meetings must be treated as confidential. Meeting papers and other materials must only be used or disclosed for the purpose of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council, unless as otherwise advised by the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council Chair. Members can only disclose information for the purpose of advising the EMPHN Board.

Members are responsible for ensuring that the individual confidentiality and privacy of EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council members, and their issues, as discussed within meetings, is maintained. Information relating to EMPHN services development and management should not be provided to the public unless agreed by the Chair and Executive management member.

All matters discussed at EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council meetings will be treated confidentially by members. EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council members are not authorised to make media statements or announcements on behalf of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council or EMPHN in their capacity as members of the EMPHN Aboriginal Consultative Council.