

# 1. BACKGROUND

## 1.1 THE NSW ABORIGINAL HEALTH PLAN 2013-2023

The goal of the *NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013-2023*<sup>2</sup> (the 'Plan') is to work in partnership with Aboriginal people to achieve the highest level of health possible for individuals, families and communities. The Plan focuses on strengthening the health system to ensure policies, programs and services meet the needs of Aboriginal people. The Plan was developed collaboratively by the NSW Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW (AH&MRC), through extensive consultation with key stakeholders.

The underpinning principles of the Plan are:

- trust and cultural respect
- recognition of the cultural values and traditions of Aboriginal communities
- holistic approaches to the health of Aboriginal people
- the valuable and unique role of Aboriginal community-controlled health services (ACCHSs)
- the participation of Aboriginal people at all levels of health service delivery and management
- partnership with Aboriginal communities through ACCHSs and the AH&MRC
- recognition of the contribution the health system can make to the social determinants of health.

The six strategic directions of the Plan are:

1. Building trust through partnerships
2. Implementing what works and building the evidence
3. Ensuring integrated planning and service delivery
4. Strengthening the Aboriginal workforce
5. Providing culturally safe work environments and health services
6. Strengthening performance monitoring, management and accountability.

The Plan outlines a series of actions designed to support achievement of these strategic directions. The main stakeholders responsible for Plan implementation include the MoH, NSW Health pillars, local health districts (LHDs) and specialty health networks (SHNs).

Plan implementation is monitored through routine reporting of Aboriginal health indicators, patient surveys, and system performance reporting. Progress is also tracked through various strategic committees, partnerships and networks.

## 1.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the mid-term evaluation were to:

1. Assess the breadth and effectiveness of NSW Health initiatives against the strategic directions of the Plan.
2. Identify key achievements of the Plan to date and successful initiatives suitable for sharing and scaling up.
3. Identify areas that require additional focus to enhance service delivery and improve health outcomes in the remaining years of the Plan.



## 1.3 EVALUATION METHODS

The mid-term evaluation had five components:

- **a self-administered survey of NSW Health organisations**, exploring the range and quality of current and recent initiatives aligning with the Plan, planned activities, and staff views on areas requiring increased focus. All NSW Health pillars, LHDs, SHNs and relevant branches of the MoH completed the survey
- **a critical review of Aboriginal health policy and program documents** and evaluation reports of Health Cluster initiatives. The document review method was used to supplement survey findings
- **an assessment of progress against indicators of health system performance**. Indicators were chosen based on their alignment with the strategic directions of the Plan and were defined in line with the *NSW Health Performance Framework*.<sup>3</sup> Administrative data were analysed to describe indicator trends from pre- to post-implementation of the Plan, at the NSW and LHD/SHN levels and in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patients
- **semi-structured interviews with Aboriginal community-controlled health sector staff**, exploring their views on Plan implementation. Interviewees were Chief Executive Officers and other senior staff of 10 purposively selected ACCHSs and the AH&MRC. Ten of 11 interviews occurred in ACCHSs and AH&MRC offices and all were conducted by MoH staff. Interview data were analysed thematically
- **semi-structured interviews with Managers and Directors of Aboriginal Health** from six LHDs, exploring their views on Plan implementation. The procedure used mirrored the method for the interviews with ACCHS and AH&MRC staff.

A full description of these methods—including their strengths and limitations—as well as additional findings of the survey and document review are included in the Appendix.

## 1.4 EVALUATION GOVERNANCE

A working group provided advice and input into the mid-term evaluation and included representatives of: the AH&MRC; the Centre for Aboriginal Health, MoH; the Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, MoH; and the NSW Aboriginal Health Strategic Leadership Group.

