


South Australian Aboriginal Health Promotion Strategy 2022-2030

Strengthening and
promoting the Cultural
Determinants of
Health and Wellbeing



Government
of South Australia

Wellbeing SA



Wellbeing SA acknowledges and respects Aboriginal peoples as the state's First people and recognises Aboriginal people as the traditional owners and occupiers of South Australian lands and waters.

This document may contain images of Aboriginal people who are now deceased. Wellbeing SA apologises for any upset or distress that this may cause.





The Artwork

The artwork by Jordan Lovegrove, a Ngarrindjeri man of Dreamtime Creative, shows Wellbeing SA working together with the community to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in South Australia. The artwork depicts that recognition of connection to land, traditions, culture, spirituality, family and community are all important to Aboriginal people. The large rainbow represents Wellbeing SA, the three large meeting places are the former ATSIC Regional Councils, and the patterning on the outside is the different communities around South Australia.

Contents

Message from the Minister for Health and Wellbeing	6
Message from Chief Executive Wellbeing SA	7
Statement of Acknowledgement	8
Principles	9
Background	11
Purpose	12
Process for developing the Strategy	13
A focus on equity and a strengths-based approach	13
The Cultural Determinants of Health	14
Health and wellbeing as a holistic concept	14
The Social Determinants of Health	14
The Cultural Determinants of Health	15
Priorities for the South Australian Community	18
Aboriginal community consultations	18
Key themes	19
Summary of potential action areas.....	22
Development of an Action Plan	24
Accountability	24
Description of key terms	25
References	26

Message from the Minister for Health and Wellbeing

With a long-term vision to create a balanced health and wellbeing system that supports improved physical, mental and social wellbeing for all South Australians, it is important we take every opportunity to reduce gaps in health outcomes and be responsive to the needs of South Australian Aboriginal people – as identified by Aboriginal people, and in ways that acknowledge the importance of traditional knowledges.

In recognition of the critical role of culture in shaping Aboriginal health and wellbeing outcomes, I am delighted to release the first South Australian Aboriginal Health Promotion Strategy (the Strategy); developed by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people. Using a strengths-based approach, the Strategy focuses on strengthening the Cultural Determinants of Health¹:

- Connection to Country
- Indigenous beliefs and knowledges
- Indigenous Language
- Family, kinship and community
- Cultural expression and continuity
- Self-determination and leadership.

We know that Aboriginal people require a health system, underpinned by policies, programs and services across all sectors, that supports physical, mental, social, and wellbeing needs holistically and in a culturally appropriate way. This Strategy outlines the strategic objectives and priority action areas that will guide the work of Wellbeing SA to achieve this. Additionally, in 2022 an Action Plan will be co-designed, implemented and evaluated in collaboration with stakeholders and the South Australian Aboriginal community.

As the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, I am committed to working with Wellbeing SA and the South Australian Aboriginal community, empowering Aboriginal people to determine what is required at a local level to strengthen cultures and communities to support good health and wellbeing. The Aboriginal Health Promotion team, staffed by Aboriginal people, ensures the agency has the essential infrastructure, knowledge, and relationships in place to help close the gap in health outcomes for all Aboriginal people living in South Australia.

I would like to thank the South Australian Aboriginal community members and stakeholders who have actively contributed to the development of this Strategy – together, we can create the systematic change that is needed to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all South Australian Aboriginal people.



Hon Chris Picton MP
Minister for Health
and Wellbeing

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Picton'.

Hon Chris Picton MP
Minister for Health and Wellbeing

1. As outlined in the Mayi Kuwayu literature review (2014).

Message from Chief Executive Wellbeing SA

It gives me great pleasure to present our inaugural South Australian Aboriginal Health Promotion Strategy 2022-2030 (the Strategy), which aims to support and strengthen the Cultural Determinants of Health and Wellbeing within the South Australian Aboriginal community.

Since our inception in 2020, Wellbeing SA has proudly followed through on our commitment to establishing an Aboriginal Health Promotion team (the Team) to focus on strengthening cultural resilience and capacity in the Aboriginal population.

The Team has provided an invaluable skillset and cultural lens to the work Wellbeing SA has accomplished over the past two years and will do so into the future. The Strategy is the culmination of the Team and the collective voice of South Australian Aboriginal communities coming together to provide a positive way forward.

Wellbeing SA will continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities and stakeholders to ensure local action that improves health and wellbeing outcomes. We will also continue to challenge and grow in our understanding of working with Aboriginal staff, communities and stakeholders to ensure our internal processes and working environments are culturally appropriate, safe and support a strong Aboriginal workforce.

This Strategy celebrates the history and diversity of Aboriginal cultures in South Australia and intends to champion the leadership of Aboriginal people, whether from community, the non-government sector, and within government, to design and deliver policies and programs with a focus on prevention, utilising a strengths-based population health approach.

Wellbeing SA will partner with the community and other key partners to deliver and support action against the themes outlined in this Strategy that seek to improve the health and wellbeing of the South Australian Aboriginal population. Our ongoing responsibility is to work in collaboration with the Aboriginal community and our stakeholders over the next eight years; working with honesty and transparency, highlighting the achievements and challenges, investments and resourcing – we will walk this journey together.



Lyn Dean
Chief Executive, Wellbeing SA



Lyn Dean
Chief Executive,
Wellbeing SA

Statement of Acknowledgement

The Cultural Determinants of Health are central to Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing. In fact, they are intrinsic in their importance to all aspects of Aboriginal knowledge, life and being.

Focusing on strengthening the Cultural Determinants of Health provides an opportunity for these factors to be considered more explicitly in the development and implementation of policies, practices and programs, **with** and **for** Aboriginal South Australians.

This focus also provides an important shift towards utilising a strengths-based approach to improving Aboriginal health and wellbeing outcomes.

Aboriginal guidance and leadership will be critical to the success of this Strategy and we look forward to seeing Aboriginal people and voices embedded into the delivery of work over the life of the Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.

This Strategy was prepared by the Aboriginal Health Promotion team in Wellbeing SA in 2022. The team would like to acknowledge the contribution from the agencies, community groups and organisations represented during the state-wide consultations in 2021.

Agencies, community groups and organisations represented at the state-wide consultations include:

Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia

Catalyst Foundation

Ceduna District Health Service

Centacare

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Child and Family Health Service

Connected Beginnings

Crossways Luthern School

Department for Child Protection

Department for Education (Port Augusta and Ceduna)

Department for Premier and Cabinet (Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation)

Eyre and Far North Local Health Network

Family Violence Service

Flinders University

Limestone Coast Local Health Network

Lowitja Institute

Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service

Nunukuwarrin Yunti of SA Inc

Our Town Ceduna/Far West

Pangula Mannamurna Aboriginal Corporation

Parenting SA

Pika Wiya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation

Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service

Riverland Mallee Coorong Local Health Network

SA Health – Aboriginal Health

SA Health – Communicable Disease Controlled Branch

SA Health – Office for Chief Psychiatrist

Save the Children

Services Australia

Sonder

South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) - Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity theme

Tauondi College

The Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (ADAC)

Wellbeing SA

Women's and Children's Health Network

Yadu Health Aboriginal Corporation

Yarredi Services



Principles

Wellbeing SA is committed to working **with** Aboriginal communities and organisations, on priority issues identified **by** Aboriginal people, to achieve the best outcomes **for** Aboriginal communities across South Australia.

The following Principles have been developed as one way of ensuring that Wellbeing SA works in a way that is culturally appropriate and safe, and that delivers the best possible outcomes for Aboriginal South Australians.

The Principles build on those included in the Wellbeing SA Strategic Plan, the Connection to Country Joint Statement of Action (SA Government) and the SA Aboriginal Health Research Accord (SAHMRI), and have been shaped through the community consultation process that informed the development of this Strategy.



In order to meaningfully incorporate these Principles into Wellbeing SA's practices and ways of working, Wellbeing SA will commit to embracing reflexivity and transformative unlearning and relearning, in order to change inherent biases.



Background

Wellbeing SA was established in 2020 with a commitment to delivering a renewed focus and action on prevention and health promotion in South Australia, through applying a broad and inclusive understanding of wellbeing.

[Wellbeing SA's Strategic Plan](#) sets out three key priority areas:

1. Early Years
2. Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention
3. Mental Health and Wellbeing.

The process for developing Wellbeing SA's Strategic Plan and Wellbeing SA's strategic direction more broadly, was informed by a series of community consultations. Aboriginal communities were asked to identify the key priorities for improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal South Australians.

The key priorities identified were:

- Focus on children from birth through to young adulthood
- Focus on families and carers of children
- Address the harmful and ongoing impacts of all forms of racism, and
- Recognise the intrinsic and central role of culture in identity, relationships and health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people.

In response to the feedback received through these consultations, a dedicated Aboriginal Health Promotion team – staffed by Aboriginal people – was established within the new Health Promotion Branch in Wellbeing SA, and was launched in March 2021 with a focus on strengthening cultural resilience and capacity through promoting and supporting action on the Cultural Determinants of Health.

It is important to acknowledge that the development of this Strategy has occurred alongside the development and implementation of a number of other relevant strategies, plans and frameworks, including:

- All South Australian Government agencies are required to develop and report on progress against Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs). Wellbeing SA launched its first Reflect RAP in July 2022, with the development and implementation of the accompanying action plan due to occur later in 2022.
- Under the collaborative Healthy Parks Healthy People SA Initiative, Wellbeing SA and the Department for Environment and Water, with support from the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute's Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity theme, worked with a range of Aboriginal community organisations and community members to develop the Joint Statement of Action – [Connection to Country for Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing](#). The statement highlights 12 key asks from the Aboriginal community, identifying how government can work better to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people through supporting connection to Country initiatives and policies. There is strong alignment between these Key Asks and the Principles within the Joint Statement of Action, and the intent of this Strategy.
- Wellbeing SA is also leading the development of a whole of government Anti-Racism Strategy, with an initial focus on addressing systemic and interpersonal racism in the public sector. The Anti-Racism Strategy will be developed and launched in 2022.
- There are also a number of new strategies, and some under development, which aim to strengthen and/or provide further support to the Aboriginal Workforce, including the [SA Health Aboriginal Workforce Framework 2016-22](#), the [SA Rural Aboriginal Health Workforce Plan 2021-2026](#) and the Wellbeing SA Health Promotion Workforce Development Strategy which is due to be released later in 2023.

Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to:

- Articulate an agreed framework of the Cultural Determinants of Health for Aboriginal South Australians – based on a strong evidence base and endorsed by the South Australian community.
- Guide and help prioritise the actions for Wellbeing SA, not only for the Aboriginal Health Promotion team, but across the organisation as a whole, to strengthen and promote the Cultural Determinants of Health.
- Inform the development and implementation of culturally appropriate policy and practice, including program design and partnerships between Wellbeing SA, other organisations and the Aboriginal community.
- Provide a clear set of Principles that will guide the way Wellbeing SA works with Aboriginal communities and organisations in a culturally appropriate and respectful way, and to achieve the best outcomes for Aboriginal people.
- Identify opportunities to work in partnership with the Aboriginal community and with other sectors, which will be further explored through the co-design of an Action Plan.



Process for developing the Strategy

The development of this Strategy has been informed by a desktop analysis of relevant plans and strategies, a review of existing evidence-based frameworks for the social and cultural determinants of Aboriginal health and wellbeing, and through a series of state-wide community consultations.

The process for developing the Strategy has been led by the Aboriginal Health Promotion team within the Health Promotion Branch in Wellbeing SA. The initial scoping and process for developing the plan was informed by an initial forum that was held with high-level stakeholders and academics. The forum comprised representatives from:

- South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI) – Wardliparingga Aboriginal Health Equity theme
- Lowitja Institute
- Department for Health and Wellbeing
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet (Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation)
- Flinders University, and
- Wellbeing SA.

The forum confirmed the value of focussing on the Cultural Determinants of Health; confirmed the use of the framework to guide the consultation process; and informed the process to be undertaken with community to develop the Strategy.

A focus on equity and a strengths-based approach

It is acknowledged that there are many factors which contribute to health and wellbeing outcomes, and these factors exist at different levels. The health system predominantly focuses on treating ill health once illness or injury arises and, to a lesser degree, on addressing the risk factors that lead to disease (such as obesity, smoking, sedentary behaviour, etc). Acting on the determinants of health – known as the causes of the causes, as they often contribute to the prevalence and distribution of both risk and protective factors amongst a population – provides an opportunity for a more equitable and upstream approach to promoting good health and wellbeing and preventing illness.

Importantly, a focus on the Cultural Determinants of Health (which are known to be *protective factors*) also provides an opportunity to apply a strengths-based approach to promoting good health and wellbeing, which the literature shows is the most effective way to achieve positive health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people.

There has been a powerful shift in the narrative around Aboriginal health and wellbeing outcomes in recent years, with a move away from a focus on comparing the poorer health outcomes of Aboriginal Australians to other population cohorts, towards a focus on the factors that can support wellbeing and improve health outcomes. Overwhelmingly, these factors have included both the Social Determinants of Health and the Cultural Determinants of Health.

As outlined in the 2021 Close the Gap Campaign Report, adopting a strengths-based approach recognises the successes, resilience and strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities.¹ Strengths-based approaches enable leadership by the community. They also enable the design of responses that are holistic, culturally-centred and that utilise community assets to identify and address varying geographical, cultural, linguistic, health and infrastructure needs. The effectiveness of such place-based community-driven responses during recent crises, such as the COVID-19 outbreak, has demonstrated the importance and sound ability of local leadership to ensuring health and safety.

The Cultural Determinants of Health

Health and wellbeing as a holistic concept

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the concept of health and wellbeing is holistic - encompassing mental, physical, cultural, environmental and spiritual wellbeing of individuals, families and communities throughout the entire life course.² Different elements of health and wellbeing are intrinsically linked and cannot be easily separated to fit with western understandings of health and wellbeing. This is an important consideration in the development of health policies and systems, however it is also applicable for other sectors whose policies and services impact Aboriginal health and wellbeing.

The Social Determinants of Health

There are many factors that contribute to health and wellbeing outcomes, and these factors exist at different levels. Some of these exist at the individual level and can be controlled (to some extent) by individuals, but most are determined by the social, environmental and political contexts in which people live, learn, work and play. These are, in turn, shaped by a wider set of influences: economics, social policies, and politics – which individuals largely have no immediate control over.³

Collectively, these factors are commonly referred to as the social determinants of health. The social determinants of health provide a conceptual framework to shape health and wellbeing outcomes, at a global, national and community level.

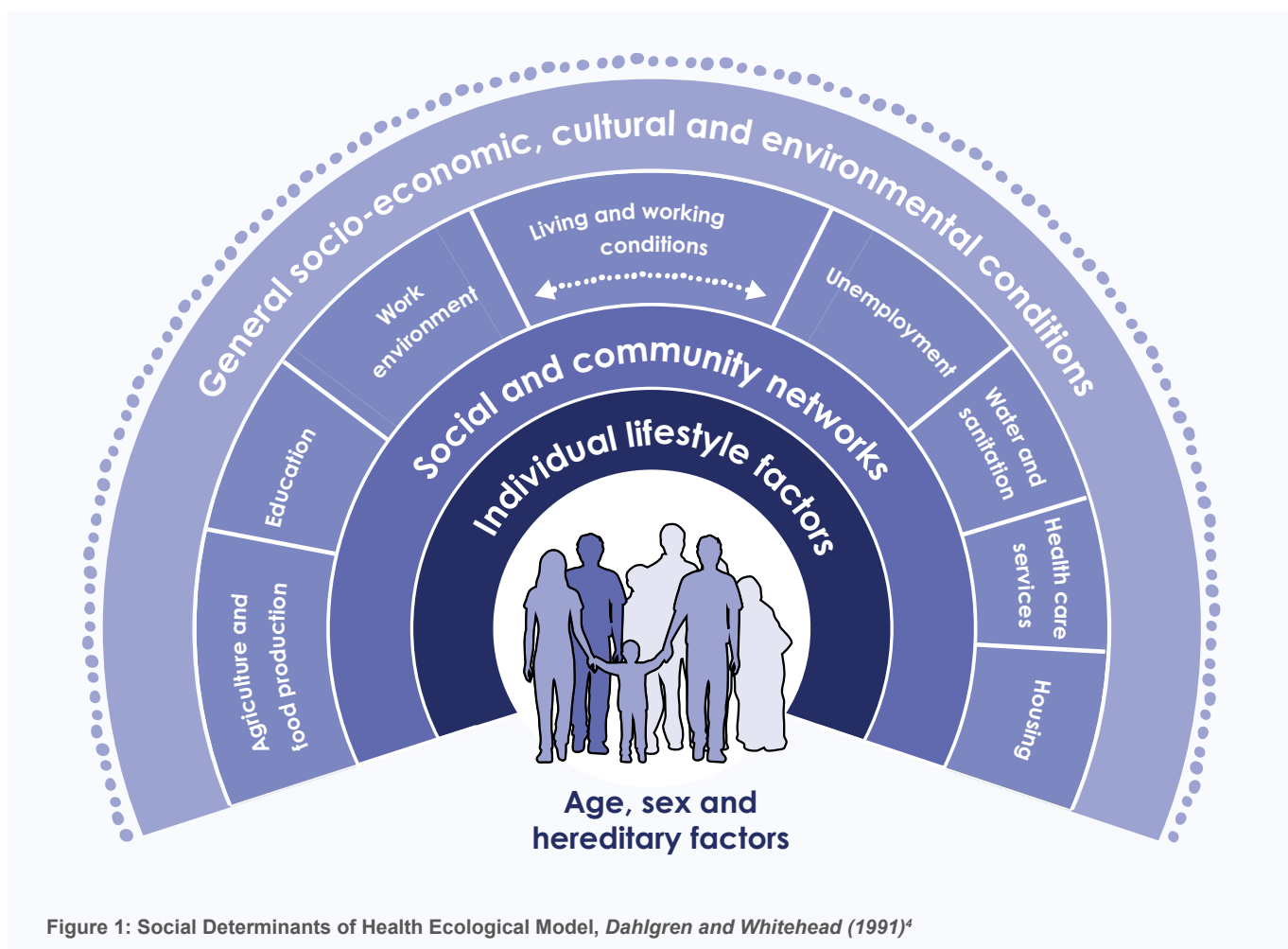


Figure 1: Social Determinants of Health Ecological Model, Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991)⁴

The Cultural Determinants of Health

More recently, there has been an emphasis on further defining culture as an important determinant that highlights the critical linkages between Aboriginal culture, health and wellbeing.

Professor Ngiare Brown describes the Cultural Determinants of Health as factors that “*originate from and promote a strength based perspective, acknowledging that stronger connections to culture and Country build stronger individual and collective identities, a sense of self-esteem, resilience, and improved outcomes across the other determinants of health including education, economic stability and community safety*”.⁵

An important piece of research in this space, and one that Wellbeing SA is drawing on significantly to inform its focus on the Cultural Determinants of Health, is the Mayi Kuwayu study.⁶ Mayi Kuwayu is a major study that will provide a far greater understanding of the value of culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Study looks at how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing is linked to various elements of culture, including connection to Country, cultural practices, spirituality and language use.

In the Mayi Kuwayu study, the six domains and their sub-domains (as outlined in figure 2 below) have consistently been reported by Aboriginal people from across Australia as the common factors that can be collectively referred to as the Cultural Determinants of Health.



Since social and cultural factors are connected, and cannot be easily separated from one another, it is important to understand that current studies show that strong cultural links and practices improve outcomes across the social determinants of health. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan (2021-2031) describes the links between the Cultural and Social Determinants of Health in the following way:

“ Culture is a foundation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. It is a protective factor across the life course, and has direct influence on the broader social determinants outcomes. Gains across these broader determinants, in turn, reinforce cultural connectedness, maintenance, resurgence, nation building and pride in cultural identity”.²

The responsibility and ability to address these determinants does not sit with any one sector or agency. Therefore, partnerships between government agencies, with the non-government sector and – most importantly – with communities, are critical.

A focus on Cultural Determinants of Health is intended to outline how strengthening the previously mentioned domains and sub-domains, by empowering the development of Aboriginal community-led initiatives, can achieve positive outcomes across many health indicators. The importance of the current focus on Cultural Determinants stems from the recognition that the role of culture as a determinant of health remains largely unexplored.

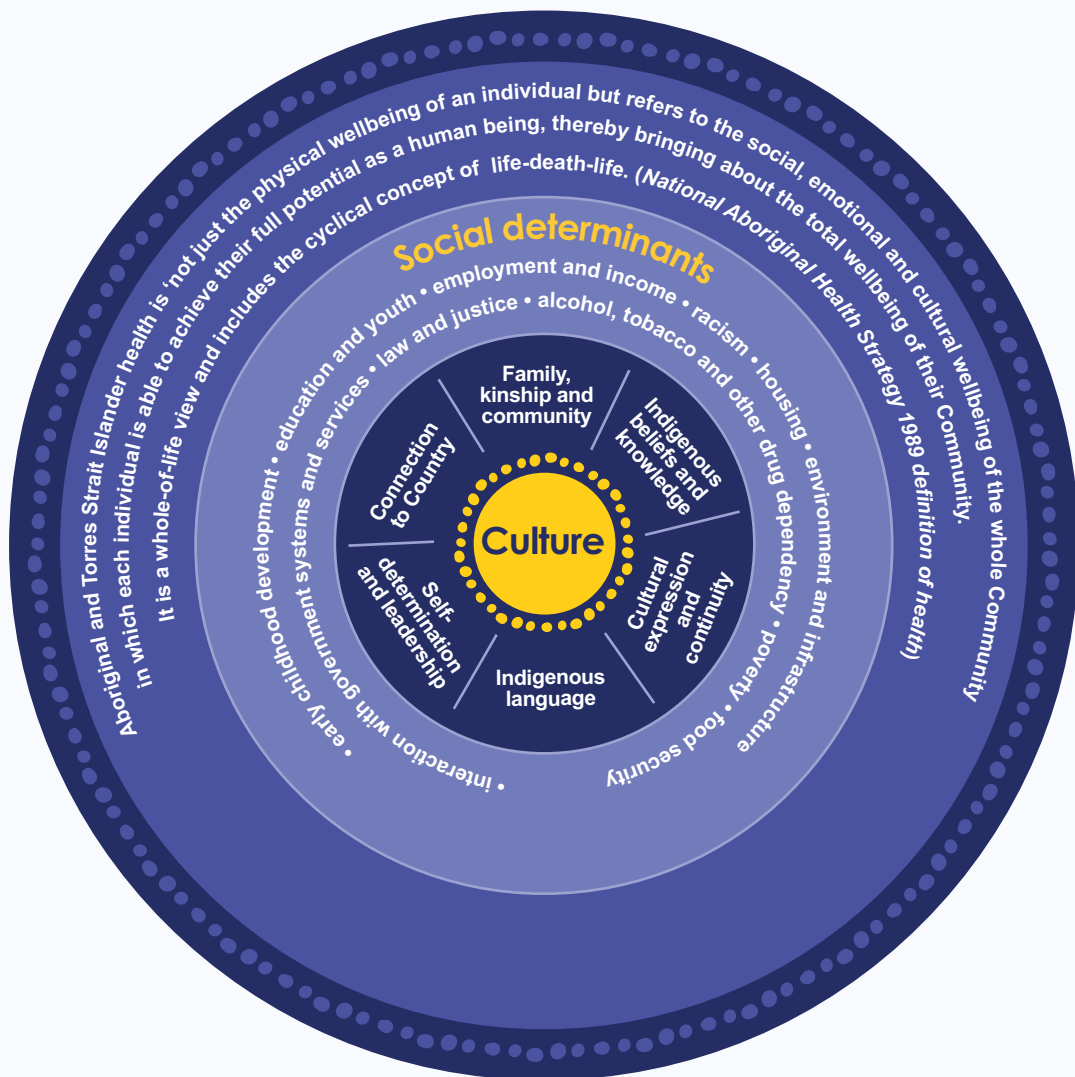


Figure 3: Social and Cultural Determinants of Health model, *Close the Gap Report (2020)*⁸

Due to colonisation, along with a long history of destructive policies, Aboriginal cultures, health and wellbeing have experienced intergenerational grief, loss and trauma. The impacts of these policies are still very much felt by Aboriginal people today, and many current systems, institutions and policies are still built on the underlying beliefs and/or intentions of those historical policies.

Change is therefore also required at the system level in order to simultaneously remove the system-imposed barriers that prevent Aboriginal people from being able to draw on cultural knowledge and practices, and empower Aboriginal people to lead the decision-making process with culture at the forefront.



Priorities for the South Australian community

Aboriginal community consultations

A key component of the development of this Strategy was obtaining the voice of the Aboriginal community. A series of consultations were held across South Australia between 12 May and 21 September 2021. Directors of Aboriginal Health, senior Aboriginal people in government and community roles, including respected Aboriginal community leaders, were invited to participate in the consultations. The consultations were held across the state, including in Adelaide, Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge, Ceduna, Port Augusta and Port Lincoln.

The purpose of the consultations was to:

- Test the concepts of the Cultural Determinants of Health framework, namely the six domains as identified through the Mayi Kuwayu study
- Determine what the domains mean at a local/community level
- Commence discussions about priorities and potential types of actions that could support strengthening the Cultural Determinants at the community level
- Begin to understand what role Wellbeing SA can play as an agency to lead and/or support action on the Cultural Determinants of Health, including the development of a series of principles that would guide how Wellbeing SA can work in a culturally appropriate and respectful way with Aboriginal communities and organisations.

Community members highlighted the interconnected nature of the Cultural Determinants of Health and reinforced what the evidence has demonstrated about culture and wellbeing being intrinsically linked. Many community members commented on the fact that the Cultural Determinants of Health were viewed more as a “way of being” and that it was difficult to separate them into a theoretical construct.

The consultation process did, however, show that action across each of the domains is critical to supporting good health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Quotes from community members include:

“ **Accurate data is essential to ensure change is occurring in communities**”

“ **Open communication, and transparency, is vital - not behind the backs of Aboriginal people**”

“ **We are not trauma informed people; we are culturally informed experts**”

A recurring theme across the consultations was the use of language and the impact that can have on how Aboriginal people view health and wellbeing status and associated outcomes. In line with the current shift in framing of Aboriginal health and wellbeing at the strategy level, there was a strong emphasis on shifting away from a deficit focus, towards describing the supporting and enabling factors required to improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing outcomes. These factors are largely reflected in the 6 domains of the Cultural Determinants of Health.



Key themes

Following completion of the community consultations, the data was reviewed and analysed to determine whether there were any issues that were raised consistently by community members and issues were grouped into themes.

The purpose of analysing the outcomes of the consultation process in this way was to begin the process for informing the next stage of the Strategy, which is the development of an accompanying Action Plan. The Action Plan will be informed by a second round of community consultations, building on the outcomes of the first, and will seek specifically to elicit what actions Wellbeing SA can take to support the strengthening and promoting of the Cultural Determinants of Health at the community level, through a range of policies, programs, and other activities to support action at the local level.

A number of key themes emerged from discussions with community as factors that required strengthening to achieve better outcomes at the community level, most crossing multiple domains presented in the Cultural Determinants of Health Framework (Figure 2).

Workforce development

Supporting and growing the Aboriginal workforce was a key theme across the community consultations. We know that a strong Aboriginal workforce is critical for improving outcomes for Aboriginal people across a range of determinants. For members of the workforce, there are direct benefits at an individual level – including employment, income, a sense of purpose and a sense of belonging, which can contribute to positive mental and physical health outcomes for that individual and their family. More broadly, having an Aboriginal workforce that is able to support and respond to the needs of the community has significant benefits for the community as a whole.

Aboriginal public sector employees improve the development of policies and programs and the delivery of services by providing knowledge from a different paradigm of health and healing as well as lived experience of ongoing colonisation that is unique and critical for health system transformation. Retaining these positions, as well as identifying opportunities to incorporate additional positions for Aboriginal people in future workforce planning, ensures the maintenance and growth of a strong Aboriginal workforce.

There were a number of suggestions made in relation to addressing development, support and retention of the **Aboriginal workforce**. Specific areas for potential actions included:

- Improving human resource policies, including on-boarding processes
- Increasing leadership opportunities to allow more Aboriginal people to hold more senior positions, particularly across the public sector, in policy, program and service delivery positions
- Ensuring the local workforce is representative and reflects the community the workforce is serving
- Prioritising the establishment and maintenance of culturally safe workplaces to enable the Aboriginal workforce to identify and respond to the needs of the community.

Importantly, there was also acknowledgement that there is a role for the **non-Aboriginal workforce** in working better to support the Cultural Determinants of Health. Specific areas for potential actions included:

- Training in Cultural Competence, Cultural Responsiveness and/or Cultural Safety to be delivered regularly, appropriately, at a high quality, and in a way that ensures what is being delivered is relevant to a) the community the organisations serves and b) the type of role the organisation has within the community
- Making better use of Reconciliation Action Plans, as a tool that is mandated across government agencies
- Promoting anti-racism messages in workplaces and enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to racism.

Leadership and self-determination

Leadership is a critical enabler of self-determination. It contributes to a sense of autonomy both at an individual and community level. Leadership promotes learning through interaction and connection with Elders, community, Country and culture, and in particular engages and nurtures young Aboriginal people as emerging and future leaders. Aboriginal leadership requires the right people in the community sharing their knowledge and guiding people in the community to continue and revive traditional spiritual teachings and practices to ensure they are continued into the future. Elders and Cultural Leaders are important and respected positions within the community, and it is important that community engagement processes are cognisant of this and engage the community appropriately.

Community expressed that Aboriginal people in leadership roles, particularly at a local level, experience a range of challenges that exist due to the ongoing impacts of colonisation (eg. intrapersonal racism and lateral violence). Whilst seen as a barrier for people taking on leadership roles, the implementation of this Strategy will take an approach to support leaders in their roles as local people leading their communities through local challenges.

While this is one of the six domains, leadership was identified as a key theme as it was highlighted across all the domains in two key contexts: one being the employment of Aboriginal people in leadership roles (especially across the public sector) and the other being supporting more Aboriginal young people to take on leadership roles within the community.



Specific areas for potential actions included:

- Actively supporting the development of Aboriginal young people to take on leadership roles within the workforce (such as through providing access to leadership programs – both Aboriginal-specific programs and general leadership programs)
- Supporting communities to encourage Aboriginal young people to take on leadership roles within the community
- Supporting community leaders to address challenges.

Language

For Aboriginal people, culture, Country and language are interwoven and inherently linked.

Recognising culture and language as determinants of Aboriginal health and wellbeing ensures that services are designed and delivered in ways that are culturally safe and responsive, and that involves the inclusion of Aboriginal people. This recognition is essential in increasing opportunities for Aboriginal people to connect with culture and Country.

Specific areas for potential actions included:

- Supporting the use of language by ensuring the availability of interpreters, and prioritising the translation of resources and messaging to ensure accessibility by community (and that this is done as part of the initial process of developing resources)
- Acknowledging culture through the use of language, by including Aboriginal place names included on signage and using Aboriginal place names when referring to locations of interest
- Supporting the revival and preservation of South Australian Aboriginal languages.

Acknowledging the value and importance of Aboriginal knowledge

Aboriginal People are the sovereign owners of their knowledge and therefore have ownership over the impact that this has for their health and wellbeing. Acknowledging and valuing the ownership and sovereignty of this knowledge is critical for addressing Aboriginal business, and also makes valued contributions to the broader SA community.

Acknowledging and providing more opportunities for Aboriginal voices to be heard is an effective way to address the historical and continued power imbalance experienced by Aboriginal people in our society. When working in partnership with Aboriginal communities the use of cultural knowledge is negotiated and informed by Aboriginal owners. This is particularly important in relation to the Cultural Determinants of Health. Specific areas for potential actions included:

- Greater support for traditional healing practices (including Ngangkari and other First Nations' healing knowledges and practices)
- Incorporating Aboriginal values and knowledge into decision-making processes and the development and delivery of policies, programs and services, such as incorporating and acting on holistic models of health and wellbeing, rather than a segmented approach
- Facilitating stronger ownership of Aboriginal knowledge and information, and how it is used to inform decision-making that impacts Aboriginal communities (including data sovereignty).

Addressing racism and promoting cultural safety

It has considerable impacts on social, economic, health and wellbeing outcomes at the individual and population level and is a significant contributing factor to the gap in healthy life expectancy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal South Australians.

70% of Aboriginal people in SA have experienced racism in their lifetime, compared with around 30% of non-Aboriginal people. In March 2020, 40% of South Australian Aboriginal adults experienced racial discrimination in the past 12 months, compared with only 10% of non-Aboriginal adults.⁹

Racial discrimination is recognised as a key social determinant of health and driver of health inequities. Studies have shown that people exposed to racism have poorer health outcomes (particularly for mental health), alongside both reduced access to health care and poorer patient experiences.¹⁰

Racism can be:

- Interpersonal - discriminatory behaviour from one individual towards another
- Systemic or institutional - expressed by institutions through policies or practices that reduce benefits and opportunities among the oppressed group
- Internalised - the adoption by the stigmatised people of negative beliefs about their capacity and value.

Addressing racism at all levels is critical to ensuring better health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people. Specific areas for potential actions included:

- Addressing systemic racism across the public sector – in the design and delivery of services and programs
- Addressing interpersonal racism to improve the experience of Aboriginal people accessing services and programs
- Focussing on a zero-tolerance approach to racism that reflect the ever-changing needs of South Australians to help grow the state’s prosperity and wellbeing.

Summary of potential action areas

The potential action areas identified through the community consultations (Table 1) will form the basis of a consultation framework that will be utilised to develop a final Action Plan through a second round of community consultations. These consultations will aim to elicit specific actions under these five themes, against the following output areas:

- A **Community Grants Program** (to be co-designed with community)
- The establishment and formalisation of different types of **partnerships**, including the development of Public Health Partner Authorities
- **Policy** design and reform
- **Research, evaluation** and **data sovereignty**.

Table 1: Summary of themes and potential action areas

1. Workforce development
1.1 Aboriginal Health Promotion Workforce - development, retention and support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving human resource policies, including on-boarding processes • Increasing leadership opportunities to allow more Aboriginal people to hold more senior positions, particularly across the public sector, in policy, program and service delivery positions • Ensuring the local workforce is representative and reflects the community the workforce is serving • Prioritising the establishment and maintenance of culturally safe workplaces to enable the Aboriginal workforce to identify and respond to the needs of the community.

1. Workforce development

1.2 Non-Aboriginal Workforce – supporting action on the Cultural Determinants of Health

- Training in Cultural Competence, Cultural Responsiveness and/or Cultural Safety to be delivered regularly, appropriately, at a high quality, and in a way that ensures what is being delivered is relevant to a) the community the organisations serves and b) the type of role the organisation has within the community
- Making better use of Reconciliation Action Plans, as a tool that is mandated across government agencies
- Promoting anti-racism messages in workplaces and enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to racism.

2. Leadership and self-determination

- Actively supporting the development of Aboriginal young people to take on leadership roles within the workforce (such as through providing access to leadership programs – both Aboriginal-specific programs and general leadership programs)
- Supporting communities to encourage Aboriginal young people to take on leadership roles within the community
- Supporting community leaders to address challenges.

3. Language

- Supporting the use of language by ensuring the availability of interpreters, and prioritising the translation of resources and messaging to ensure accessibility by community (and that this is done as part of the initial process of developing resources, not as an afterthought as the need is always there)
- Acknowledging culture through the use of language, by including Aboriginal place names included on signage and using Aboriginal place names when referring to locations of interest
- Supporting the revival and preservation of South Australian Aboriginal languages.

4. Acknowledging the value and importance of Aboriginal knowledge

- Greater support for traditional healing practices (including Ngangkari and other First Nations' healing knowledges and practices)
- Incorporating Aboriginal values and knowledge into decision-making processes and the development and delivery of policies, programs and services, such as incorporating and acting on holistic models of health and wellbeing, rather than a segmented approach
- Facilitating stronger ownership of Aboriginal knowledge and information, and how it is used to inform decision-making that impacts Aboriginal communities (including data sovereignty).

5. Addressing racism and promoting cultural safety

- Addressing systemic racism across the public sector – including in the design and delivery of services and programs
- Addressing interpersonal racism to improve the experience of Aboriginal people accessing services and programs
- Focussing on a zero-tolerance approach to racism that reflect the ever-changing needs of South Australians to help grow the state's prosperity and wellbeing.

Development of an Action Plan

A separate Action Plan will be developed which articulates clear actions related to the themes. A second round of community consultations will be held to build on the outcomes of the first, and the ensure that Wellbeing SA is able to prioritise actions that will support the strengthening and promoting of Cultural Determinants of Health at the community level. The Action Plan will also provide accountability for the achievement of the action, identifying the agency with lead responsibility and timeframes for achievement.

Table 2: Examples of potential outputs

The following provides examples of the types of outputs Wellbeing SA will apply to achieve actions against the themes:
A Community Grants Program, with a cultural determinants approach to addressing key themes with a focus of supporting children’s, youth and older Aboriginal people’s health and wellbeing.
Developing new partnerships, and leveraging current partnerships, to support the delivery of programs and actions addressing key themes and strengthening cultural determinants.
Policy design, and reform, to ensure Aboriginal people are provided an opportunity to govern the creation, collection, ownership and application of their data. ¹¹
Partnering with relevant research bodies to ensure plans are measurable, culturally safe and honours Aboriginal data sovereignty.

The Action Plan will be developed in 2022 with implementation to occur from 2022–2030.

Accountability

Wellbeing SA is committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal South Australians through strengthening and promoting the Cultural Determinants of Health. In order to achieve this, Wellbeing SA has committed resources for the duration of this Strategy to ensure its implementation, including through the development of an accompanying Action Plan. The Strategy and Action Plan will be made available on the Wellbeing SA website, and progress will be reported regularly.

Description of key terms

Term	Description
Cultural Determinants of Health	Cultural Determinants of Health (CDH) originate from and promote a strength-based perspective, acknowledging that stronger connections to culture and Country build stronger individual and collective identities, a sense of self-esteem, resilience, and improved outcomes across the other determinants of health including education, economic stability and community safety. ¹²
Cultural Safety	Cultural safety is defined with reference to the experience of the Indigenous health care consumer, of the care they are given, their ability to access services and to raise concerns. Some of the essential features of cultural safety include an understanding of one's culture; an acknowledgment of difference, and a requirement that caregivers are actively mindful and respectful of this difference; and the ability to recognise, address and prevent racism. The presence or absence of cultural safety is determined by the experience of the recipient of care and is not defined by the caregiver (AHMAC 2016). ¹³
Cultural Competency	<p>Cultural competence is the ability to participate ethically and effectively in personal and professional intercultural settings.</p> <p>It requires knowing and reflecting on one's own cultural values and world view and their implications for making respectful, reflective, and reasoned choices, including the capacity to imagine and collaborate in cross cultural contexts.</p> <p>Cultural competence is ultimately about valuing diversity for the richness and creativity it brings to society.¹⁴</p>
Cultural Responsiveness	Cultural responsiveness refers to the ability to learn from and relate respectfully to people from your own and other cultures. It requires openness to experiencing and thinking about things from other people's points of view. It requires you to adjust your behaviour and language, and be responsive to another person's cultural frameworks (or ways of thinking and doing). It requires us to be open to working in different ways and developing new skills, and honour and respect our own cultural frameworks and those of the people we are working with. ¹⁵
Cultural Awareness	Cultural awareness is sensitivity to the similarities and differences that exist between two different cultures and the use of this sensitivity in effective communication with members of another cultural group. ¹⁶
Health Inequities	Health inequities are the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries, populations, or people within a community or population. ¹⁷
Health Promotion	Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. ¹⁸
Holistic Health and Wellbeing	A holistic approach means to provide support that looks at the whole person, not just their mental health needs. The support should also consider their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing. ¹⁹
Social Determinants of Health	<p>The social determinants of health (SDH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.</p> <p>The SDH have an important influence on health inequities.¹⁷</p>
Social and Emotional Wellbeing	The term social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) is used by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of a person. The term recognises connection to land, sea, culture, spirituality, family and community which are important to people and impact on their wellbeing. It also recognises that a person's SEWB is influenced by policies and past events. ²⁰

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ISBN: 978-1-76083-526-2

Suggested citation:

Wellbeing SA. South Australian Aboriginal Health Promotion Strategy: Strengthening and promoting the Cultural Determinants of Health and Wellbeing - 2022-2030.

Government of South Australia. Adelaide, South Australia.

<https://www.wellbeingsa.sa.gov.au/about-wellbeing-sa/strategy-plans/aboriginal-health-promotion-strategy-2022-2030>



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