



Victorian Healthcare Association



VICTORIA'S COMMUNITY HEALTH SECTOR – A MODEL FOR SUCCESS

The Victorian Healthcare Association

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WHAT IS COMMUNITY MANAGED COMMUNITY HEALTH IN VICTORIA?

In Victoria, the community health sector is at the forefront of a proactive approach to prevent ill health before it occurs and target the most disadvantaged in the community. Community Health Centres (CHC) operate to provide a unique range of services targeted at local communities. These CHC offer governments a pathway in which the social determinants of health are addressed through integrated service provision based on multi-disciplinary health care teams of primary healthcare professionals working in partnerships with a range of sectors.

CHC have evolved to meet community needs through providing a range of services to fill community gaps through partnerships. CHC are governed by local boards of management and pool funds from a range of funders including federal, state and local governments, philanthropic bequests and emergent public/private partnerships. A typical CHC may provide the following services:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allied health ● Social support ● Community nursing ● Drug and alcohol services ● Counselling ● Mental health ● Health promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youth Services ● General practice ● Disability Services ● Dental ● Community development ● Health education and support groups ● Early intervention programs
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A BRIEF HISTORY

Victoria's established networks of 100 CHC operating from over 400 sites are uniquely placed to offer services that cross the care continuum and support communities most at risk to access vital services. These programs operate within a framework of a "social model of health" that incorporates a holistic approach to service provision, commitment to continuous quality improvement and the development of diverse programs that help to improve community health and wellbeing. The internationally recognised Alma Ata Charter for Primary Health Care, the Social Model of Health and Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion acts as guiding frameworks for CHC.

Given the growing body of evidence on the social context of health and wellbeing, CHC provide a model platform for improving health outcomes across local communities.

Table 1: The Victorian Community Health Model				
Enablers				Core Philosophy
Service models	Funding models & pooling	Governance	Workforce	Healthy Living
				Responsiveness
				Community Development
				Professional Multi-disciplinary Health Care Teams
				Community Participation and Access
				Connection to Local Communities
				Locality
				Social Justice
The Social Model of Health				
Local Planning				
Intersectoral Collaboration				

CORE PHILOSOPHY

Healthy Living – CHC have a strong focus on social connectedness, prevention of illness and injury and the management of chronic conditions. The sector acts as the fence at the top of the cliff, rather than the ambulance down in the valley. CHC are agents of social change, enabling communities to manage and improve their general wellbeing.

Responsiveness – CHC identify, target and address local community needs by adopting a proactive and responsive approach to service planning and delivery. CHC operate at arms length from the pressures of a curative model and are therefore able to be both flexible and versatile. CHC deliver services where the need exists including in people-based settings - where people live, work, play, and shop.

Community Development – CHC work with people, rather than on people, operating holistically with a client-centred approach. By addressing "people" rather than "illnesses," CHC become partners in both an individual and a community's health and wellbeing. This partnership approach links communities, service providers and governments to increase the capacity of communities to address local needs. Through community development, a 'whole of health' approach to addressing the social, environmental and economic determinants of health status is achieved.

Professional Multi-disciplinary Health Care Teams – CHC are an important platform for the delivery of health services in Victoria. Through a multi-disciplinary approach, they embody the principles of comprehensive primary

health care, community development and innovation in theory and practice. Within CHC, the community can access a range of health practitioners operating holistically, as part of cohesive teams. The composition of these teams vary, depending upon the needs of the population.

Community Participation and Access – CHC allow clients and communities to take an active role in service development and delivery and are committed to delivering culturally, geographically and socio-economically accessible services. Community involvement benefits both the service and the community.

Connection to Local Communities - Community ownership is central to Victoria's CHC that are community-managed and - as such – uniquely connected to its clients. The services are locally owned and run in the best interests of their population, which in turn enhances outcomes. This results in capacity building for the population and enables services to advocate for the needs of their communities, based on specific local knowledge.

Locality – CHC services are diverse, innovative and respond to local needs. CHC are strategically located within communities. This enables and encourages access, interaction, social inclusion and community participation. CHC operationalise the Ottawa Charter declaration that “health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and love.”

Social Justice – CHC deliver programs and services to those most in need in the community, particularly the socially disadvantaged and those with complex health needs. This focus on the interplay between high need, high disadvantage, low access and low visibility is significant in a preventative health approach. The core aim of the community health sector is to reduce social inequalities, strengthen communities and focus on the provision of services to improve overall wellness.

ENABLERS

Service Models – CHC balance promotion, prevention, curative and rehabilitative services and improve community health by addressing the social determinants of health. Evidence-based service models deliver quality, safe and best practice programs. CHC also incorporate teaching and research in a range of areas that cross the service provision spectrum. This develops the workforce and identifies and makes possible innovation.

Funding Models & Funds Pooling- CHC represent value for money in the spectrum of health care and social policy. The value of the funding dollars spent on CHC is mirrored by substantial outcomes in terms of improving the health of constituent communities by focussing on prevention and health promotion - though to treatment interventions. CHC access funding from a range of sources including federal, state and local governments, philanthropic bequests and emergent public/private partnerships, resulting in the pooling of a myriad of funding sources. In addition, CHC also make use of Medicare Benefits Schedule items to provide holistic health care based on public/private service models. CHC make sense of complex funding system to provide local cohesive primary health care solutions for populations and communities. Budgets of typical CHC range from \$1 million to \$30 million.

Governance – local solutions for local needs are achieved through boards of management. This decision-making model enable CHC to deliver services that best meet the needs of the communities they serve based on independence, community knowledge and leadership.

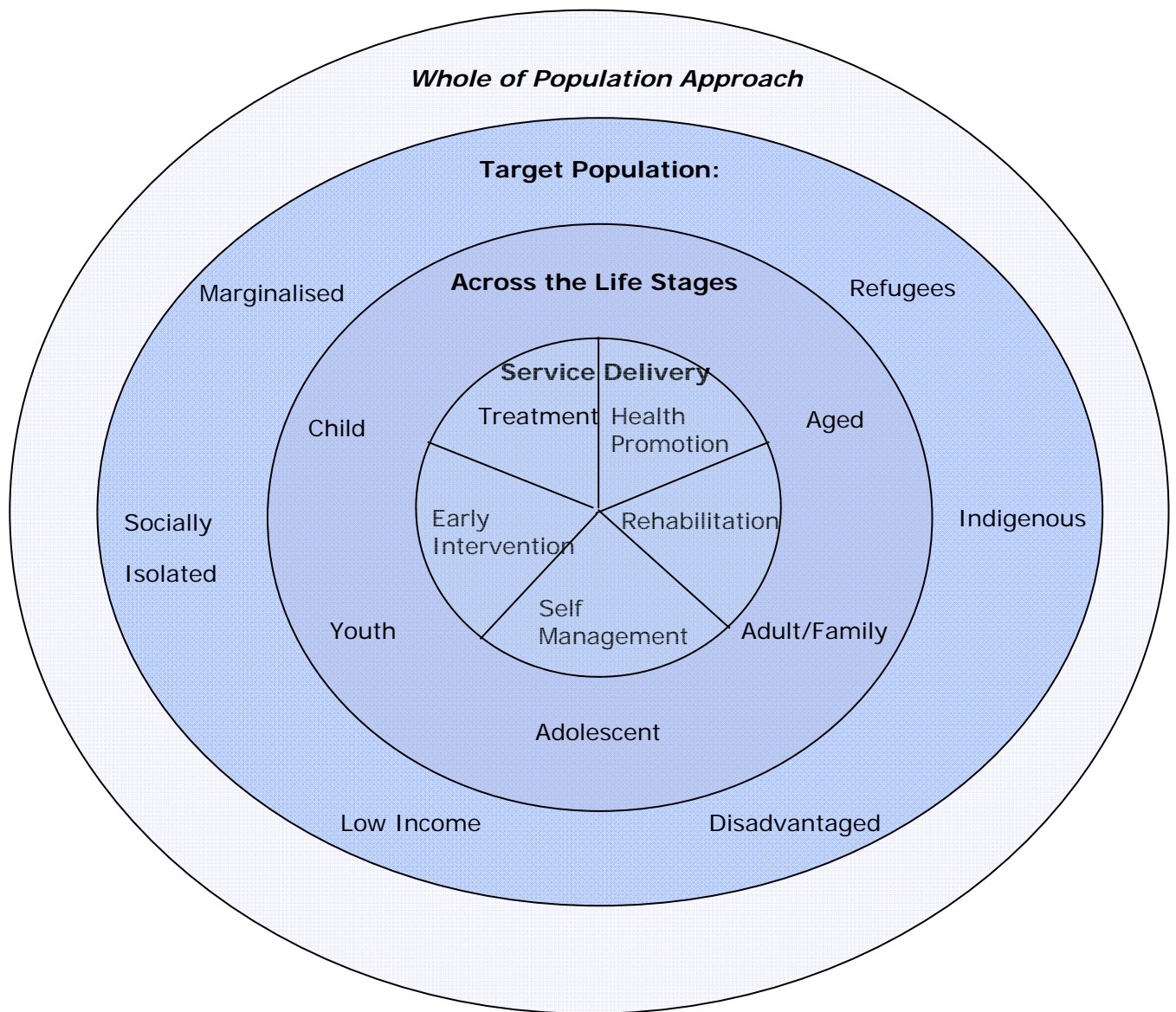
Workforce – the CHC workforce is recruited to provide innovation in service delivery models and workforce structures. Multi-disciplinary teams across the organisation contribute to best practice service delivery. Through their role in teaching and research, CHC are settings that are well placed to educate future practitioners in multidisciplinary and preventative approaches to health and wellbeing.

FRAMEWORKS

The social model of health – CHC apply the social model of health service provision and, as such, are ahead of the current shift in thinking from a beds-based approaches to ambulatory and preventative approaches that achieve and maintain overall wellbeing. Importantly, these services are provided through participatory community development models that empower and build local and individual capacity.

Local Planning— CHC aim to improve the health of populations through population based strategies which empower communities and enable stakeholders to work cooperatively on key health and well being issues to plan, monitor and evaluate the health and wellbeing of communities

Intersectoral collaboration – CHC are often the ‘common denominator’ that facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration across a breadth of services from within and outside the health sector. Collaborations with the Departments of Justice, Education, local government and children/youth services are common. CHC operate with many partners to deliver comprehensive health services across Victoria. It is precisely this cross-sectoral cooperation that allows the CHC to promote healthy outcomes and meet existing and emerging community needs with a diverse and vibrant approach that offers a national benchmark.



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