

Appendix 1: Detailed description of review methods

Life is health is life: Taking action to close the gap
Victorian Aboriginal health promotion framework



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1. Review of scientific research evidence

Methods

This review commenced with the development of a comprehensive search strategy to identify evidence of health promotion intervention effectiveness across the priority areas:

Priority 1

Addressing the social and economic determinants of health with a particular focus on:

- educational attainment
- family and community connections
- income, employment and housing
- race-based discrimination
- land, culture and identity.

Priority 2

Reducing exposure and vulnerability to health damaging factors with a particular focus on:

- tobacco
- physical activity
- nutrition and food security
- alcohol.

Priority 3

Reducing the unequal consequences of ill health resulting from inappropriate access and treatment within the health system.

The timeline of the project necessitated a rapid review approach, which comprised identification of relevant systematic and non-systematic reviews of interventions. These reviews were supplemented by primary studies when appropriate.

Inclusion/exclusion criteria

1.1 Types of literature

Peer reviewed and grey literature published between 2000 and 2010. Two forms of literature were included:

- Systematic reviews of health promotion interventions used to address priority areas (as identified above) within urban and regional Aboriginal populations in Australia and other countries of relevance. While initially it was determined that only reviews with a clear methods section were included, non-systematic reviews were also included in this report due to the limited information available in some priority areas.
- Primary research studies evaluating effectiveness of health promotion interventions used to address priority areas (as identified above) within urban and regional Aboriginal populations in Australia. This included both quantitative (for example, randomised controlled trials before and after studies) and qualitative studies that have incorporated a clear methods section.

1.2 Search strategy

The following sources were searched:

- Systematic review clearing houses
 1. The Cochrane Library: www.cochrane.org/reviews/index.htm
 2. Effective Public Health Practice Project (Canada): www.ehphp.ca
 3. The Community Guide to Preventive Services (United States): www.thecommunityguide.org
 4. Health Development Agency Effectiveness Reviews (United Kingdom): www.nice.org.uk/guidance/phg/index.jsp

5. Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre (United Kingdom): <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk>
 6. Health-Evidence Canada: www.health-evidence.ca
 7. The Campbell Collaboration: www.campbellcollaboration.org
 8. Evidence Network: www.evidencenetwork.org
 9. Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, York (United Kingdom): www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd
 10. National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (United Kingdom): www.nice.org.uk
- Internet searches using Google, reference lists of identified publications, contact with experts identified by Department of Health expert advisory group, key websites (for example, Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, Indigenous HealthInfonet, NACCHO)
 - Databases: MEDLINE, PsychINFO, Sociological Abstracts, CINAHL, ATSI Health, ATSI-ROM

1.3 Search terms

A comprehensive search strategy of databases was developed for each priority area. The MEDLINE strategy is available at the end of this document. This was adapted for other databases searched in this review. While every attempt was made to identify both published and unpublished studies, we acknowledge that some unpublished studies may not have been identified by this search.

1.4 Quality appraisal

Only systematic reviews and primary studies that included a clear description of research methods and that provided data on effectiveness of interventions were considered. The following critical appraisal tools were used:

- Systematic reviews:
 - *Quality assessment tool: review articles*^{[69]1}
- Primary studies:
 - *Quality assessment tool for quantitative studies*^[70]
 - *Health evidence bulletin – Wales: additional questions to assist with the critical appraisal of a qualitative study*^[71]

Reported level of Aboriginal involvement in design, implementation and evaluation of research was also considered as a key quality criterion. Research conducted in Australia after 2003 adhered to the *Guidelines for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research*.^[72]

1.5 Strength of evidence

The strength of the evidence was classified across the following levels (taken from reference 73):

1. Strong evidence of effectiveness:
 - One systematic review or meta-analysis of comparative studies, or several good quality randomised controlled trials or comparative studies.
2. Sufficient evidence of effectiveness:
 - One randomised controlled trial, one comparative study of high quality or several comparative studies of lower quality.
3. Some evidence of effectiveness:
 - Impact evaluation (internal or external) with pre- and post-testing, or indirect, parallel or modelling evidence with sound theoretical rationale and program logic for the intervention.
4. Weak evidence of effectiveness:
 - Impact evaluation conducted but limited by pre- or post-testing only, or only indirect, parallel or modelling evidence of effectiveness.
5. Inconclusive evidence of effectiveness:

¹ For reference list, see the full resource *Life is health is life: Taking action to close the gap. Victorian Aboriginal evidence-based health promotion resource*. Available at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/publications.

- No position could be reached because existing research/evaluations give conflicting results or available studies are of poor quality.
- 6. No evidence of effectiveness:
 - No position could be reached because no evidence of impact/outcome available.
- 7. Evidence of ineffectiveness:
 - Good evaluations (high quality comparative studies) show no effect or a negative effect.

1.6 Data extraction and synthesis

A narrative synthesis of findings was developed by the reviewers in consultation with VicHealth. Studies from outside Victoria were included where interventions could be applied or transferred to a Victorian context.