



**NACCHO**  
National Aboriginal Community  
Controlled Health Organisation

# ARF & RHD Newsletter

MAY 2026

**ARF and RHD**  
Acute Rheumatic Fever  
Rheumatic Heart Disease

## IN THIS EDITION

- Welcome
- Key NACCHO Priorities
- ACCHO Workforce Supports
- Program Deliverables
- Other Updates
- Events Spotlight
- Meet the NACCHO RHD Team!



## WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of our ARF and RHD quarterly newsletter!

We're proud to be working alongside you to deliver Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled, sector-led Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) Program. Together, we're growing a dedicated ARF and RHD workforce and supporting community-driven strategies that are evidence-based, sustainable, and grounded in local strengths.

The program currently supports 29 ACCHOs reaching more than 100 clinics and homelands, with approximately 100 full-time equivalent roles across clinical, community and environmental health.

## KEY NACCHO PRIORITIES

Some of the key priorities for the next six months include:

### **Funding**

We are pleased to announce an extension to the ARF and RHD Program for an additional 12-months. This extension reflects the current funding commitment, and NACCHO will continue to work closely with our funding partners to progress longer-term, sustainable investment to support this important work.

### **Echo in ACCHOs pilot project**

This project aims to strengthen the capacity of primary health care workers in the ACCHO sector to deliver Community-led, evidence-based, culturally safe, equitable echocardiography services that better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at risk of ARF and RHD.

### **National ARF and RHD Summit 2026**

We are excited to announce the third annual National ARF and RHD Summit will be held in Perth, WA on 10-11 November 2026.

### **ARF and RHD Workforce Training Needs Project**

As many of you know, we are working on a new project to address gaps in ARF and RHD training resources for the ACCHO sector. This work builds on outcomes from both National ARF and RHD Summits and discussions at the CoP.

### **National ARF and RHD awareness campaign**

Also building on outcomes from the last National ARF and RHD Summit, work has commenced on developing a national ARF and RHD awareness campaign.

## SAVE THE DATE!

**National ARF and RHD Summit 2026** 10-11 November, Perth WA  
(venue TBC)

Invitations and further details to come!

If you are interested in presenting, hosting a workshop or have any suggestions, please reach out to us at [rhd@naccho.org.au](mailto:rhd@naccho.org.au).

Please note this will be held prior to the World Congress on RHD.

## ACCHO WORKFORCE SUPPORTS

### RHD Community of Practice

For those who may not know, we run a monthly Community of Practice to bring together all ACCHOs funded through the Program. The CoP is a great place to share learnings, identify common issues, support each other to progress solutions, or ask any questions you may have. We also provide regular updates on the Program and other emerging issues such as medicines shortages.

CoP members also have an opportunity to contribute to shaping the national program and support continuous quality improvement, for example through participating in National Summit workshops, informing the development of reporting templates, and participating in targeted working groups.

Please let us know at [rhd@naccho.org.au](mailto:rhd@naccho.org.au) if you would like to be added to the CoP mailing list.



### Resource Channel

All ACCHO staff funded through the program receive access to the RHD CoP Resource Channel, a central platform to collate and share key Program information.

On the Channel you will find:

- ACCHO developed resources
- Program information
- CoP meeting information, including monthly summaries
- National ARF & RHD Summit presentations and reports
- Other resources and toolkits developed by NACCHO

### ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

Many of you will know that NACCHO is advocating for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander environmental health workforce embedded within ACCHOs. Our new Roadmap sets out a clear pathway for growing this workforce and supporting the important work already happening across communities. You can read the Roadmap [here](#).

Following the launch of the Roadmap, we're now preparing to offer **environmental health training for ACCHOs** that employ environmental health workers through their ARF and RHD Program. We're aiming to hold this training on **22-26 June 2026** and will share further details soon.

## PROGRAM DELIVERABLES

### Final Report Update

As many of you know, there is a Final Report due this year. This provides an opportunity to self-evaluate your ARF and RHD Program from contract execution to 30 June 2026.

A big thank you to everyone who shared feedback on the Final Report template, toolkit and consolidated Financial Report. Your insights are greatly appreciated and have been incorporated into the documents.

The Final Report is due **30 September 2026**.

### Upcoming Deliverables

The next deliverables are due 31 July 2026:

- **RHD Data Report 16** (covering 1 April 2026 to 30 June 2026)
- **6 monthly Progress Report** (covering 1 January 2026 to 30 June 2026)

We will send out a reminder with templates closer to the date.

## OTHER UPDATES

### Medicines Update

The Therapeutic Goods Association (TGA) have recently advised the shortage of Bicillin LA pre-filled syringes has been extended to **30 November 2026**. Please see further details [here](#).

NACCHO continues to advocate to secure supplies, but we anticipate continued reliance on approved alternatives due to the supply constraints.

Please reach out to us if you have any queries or would like to raise concerns.

### Independent evaluation of the Rheumatic Fever Strategy (RFS)

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing has engaged Nous Group to undertake an independent evaluation of the Rheumatic Fever Strategy to assess the implementation, impact and effectiveness of the 'new approach to RHD' by evaluating the coordinated delivery of RFS funded activities.

The evaluation will examine how these components work together to achieve the Australian Government's goal to end new cases of RHD for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by 2030, and identify key achievements, and opportunities to strengthen collaboration, accountability and outcomes across the RFS investment.

## EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

### World Congress on RHD - Abstract submissions are now open!

The World Congress on Rheumatic Heart Disease is coming to Australia in 2026. From 11-14 November 2026, the World Heart Federation and the Heart Foundation of Australia will co-host the second World Congress on Rheumatic Heart Disease in Perth.

This global gathering brings together researchers, clinicians, community leaders, patients, and advocates to share the latest evidence, strengthen partnerships and explore practical solutions to end RHD.

The event is a powerful platform to showcase the incredible community-led work happening across ACCHOs in the prevention, diagnosis and management of ARF and RHD.

### Parliamentary Friends for Ending RHD

In March, our team joined ACCHO representatives and NACCHO Executive staff at Parliament House for the launch of the Parliamentary Friends for Ending Rheumatic Heart Disease. NACCHO CEO Dr Dawn Casey spoke on a panel and reminded governments that real progress comes from long-term investment in community-controlled, community-led solutions – not short bursts of funding or more talk.

The event reinforced what you already show every day: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are leading the solutions, and Community Control delivers better outcomes.

To read more about the event, see NACCHO's Media Release [here](#) and NITV article [here](#).

## ABSTRACT SUBMISSIONS

**Abstract submissions are now open** for both oral and poster presentations across the following areas:

- Health Systems, Programs & Implementation Science
- Clinical Care
- Clinical Research
- Group A Strep Vaccines
- Basic & Translational Science

You can find more information about the submission process [here](#).

Abstract submissions close **2 July 2026**.

We are available to support ACCHOs with preparing abstracts, please reach out at [rhd@naccho.org.au](mailto:rhd@naccho.org.au).

## MEET THE NACCHO RHD TEAM!

### Additional support

We are always happy to assist with any queries you may have – whether you need a quick phone chat, a check-in meeting or an onboarding session for new team members, we’re here to help. We can also link you in with other ACCHO teams to discuss an identified challenge or hear more about a program activity if helpful.

Please reach out to us at [rhd@naccho.org.au](mailto:rhd@naccho.org.au).



## TEAM CONTACTS

- Claire O’Neill, Director RHD Program
- Prue Spence, Assistant Director, RHD Program
- Emily Goodwin, Senior Program Officer, RHD – QLD & SA ACCHO contact
- Sharon Sieley, Senior Project Officer, RHD – NT & WA ACCHO contact
- Sam Harley, Senior Project Officer, Environmental Health
- Dr Shani Rupasinghe, Public Health Registrar

### THANK YOU!

We’d love to include more stories and insights from across the sector in future editions.

If you have something you would like to share or suggest, please reach out at [rhd@naccho.org.au](mailto:rhd@naccho.org.au)



For more information about the Program, scan here