

JILL GALLAGHER AO

Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*

Ms Jill Gallagher AO is a Gunditjmara woman from Western Victoria and a highly respected leader who has dedicated her life to advocating for self-determination outcomes on behalf of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Ms Gallagher's lived experiences in community, her voice and unwavering commitment to advancing Aboriginal health over the past several decades has been fundamental to the wellbeing of communities across Victoria and Australia.

Ms Gallagher's commitment to Aboriginal health and wellbeing is demonstrated through her work at the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) where she has led the organisation as Chief Executive Officer since 2003. Ms Gallagher was a key partner for the Victorian Department of Health during the pandemic and central to the many successes that the Aboriginal communities delivered. Jill's advocacy has influenced how the government has worked with, and supported, culturally safe services to Victoria's Aboriginal community, including targeted testing, vaccination programs, and engagement activities.

Her direct influence in raising awareness of health issues and improving access to dedicated services includes developing the Well Persons Health Check program which began in 2000. This program ran across Victoria and was subsequently adopted nationally by Medicare, as the Aboriginal Health Assessment. Ms Gallagher also developed the Koori Maternity Service program to help Aboriginal women access antenatal services and information and was instrumental in achieving bipartisan support for the Statement of Intent, signed by the Victorian Government, to close the 17-year life expectancy gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Most recently, Ms Gallagher has championed the establishment of the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ageing & Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC), which will function as a peak national body for all policy and program matters related to the ageing and aged care. As the NAGATSIAC Chair, Ms Gallagher led strategic dialogues with Ministers Greg Hunt and Richard Colbeck in respect to leading reform across the aged care sector to ensure elders can access culturally safe services, packages and necessary supports.

In her ongoing tenure as CEO of VACCHO, Ms Gallagher has increased membership and growth of the organisation to enable support of over 30 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations across the state. Ms Gallagher's determination, deep understanding of community and effective collaboration skills has seen VACCHO become one of the largest and most effective state Aboriginal peak advocacy organisations.

In 2018 Ms Gallagher was appointed by the Victorian Government to become Victoria's first Treaty Advancement Commissioner. In this role she led consultations with Aboriginal communities in Victoria and the development of the first piece of Treaty Legislation in Australia, which is now an Act of the Victorian Parliament.

As a respected Aboriginal leader who has dedicated her life to advocating for Community, Ms Gallagher has been inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women (2009), awarded the Order of Australia (2013) and inducted into the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll (2015). She has sat on various committees including the Victorian Early Childhood Development Advisory Committee, the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria Indigenous Reference Group, the Child Death Review and the Cooperative Research Centre on Aboriginal Health, and the Premier's Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

Ms Gallagher has a long relationship with the University of Melbourne via Onemda at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Wellbeing, Equity and Healing Unit, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, and with the Melbourne Medical School, where she is involved in numerous research projects and placements for medical students with co-supervision. Through VACCHO, Jill Gallagher is also leading the Victorian Aboriginal Research Accord Program in collaboration with Victorian universities (including the University of Melbourne) to establish standards and processes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research in Victoria.