Glossary:
some important terms explained

This Glossary draws upon several sources, including definitions used in the ‘Better Cardiac Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Post-Forum Report’ (May 2014), but includes many modifications.

**Acute coronary syndrome**: an overall term used for sudden reduced blood flow to a portion of heart muscle due to (incomplete or complete) blockage of a coronary artery. ACS is classified as either **unstable angina** (no evidence of permanent damage to heart muscle) or acute **myocardial infarction** (evidence of heart muscle damage).

**Age-standardised rates**: a summary rate used to account for the difference in the age of populations in order to make a valid comparison of rates.

**Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS)**: A service that provides primary healthcare, run by and for local Aboriginal communities to improve access and health outcomes. They can also have a significant role in supporting mainstream delivery of effective health care to Aboriginal people. Alternatively called an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO).

**Aboriginal health workforce**: The Aboriginal health workforce can be part of a registered or unregistered profession and be employed in a range of job roles often involving liaising between other health professionals and Aboriginal patients and their families, providing information and advocacy. While a large majority are employed in ACCHSs or the Government health sector, many also work within mainstream non-government services. This term also refers to Aboriginal people who have graduate professional skills in traditional clinical roles e.g. doctors, midwives, nurses, physiotherapist.

**Aboriginal health professionals, Aboriginal Health Workers and Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers** are commonly used titles and vary across Australia and may or may not describe specialty or level of training. Since 2012 Aboriginal Health Practitioner is a registered profession with a protected title and an increasing number of the Aboriginal health workforce are registered as such in WA.

**Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS)**: A health service funded principally to provide services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, either run by a community board or by a state/territory government.

**Angina**: A sensation of pain or discomfort (often described as ‘pressure’, ‘squeezing’ or ‘tightness’) due to inadequate blood flow to heart muscle, usually caused by narrowing or spasm of a coronary artery. Angina is usually felt in the chest, but can also be felt in the jaw, neck, back, shoulders or arms, or a combination of these.

**Antiplatelet therapy**: Medicines (such as aspirin) that reduce blood cells sticking together to form a blood clot.

**Arrhythmia**: see dysrhythmia

**Atherosclerosis**: A process in which fatty and fibre like deposits (‘plaques’) build up on the inner walls of arteries that can then cause blockages. It is the main underlying condition in heart attack, angina, stroke and peripheral vascular disease.

**Audit**: A planned, formal, documented evaluation by qualified personnel to determine whether a program has been implemented effectively and according to agreed procedures.

**Capacity building**: An approach to the development of people or communities that focusses on enhancing the skills, competencies and abilities they need to achieve their goals.

**Cardiac event**: Any severe or acute cardiovascular condition including acute myocardial infarction, unstable angina or cardiac death.
Cardiac rehabilitation: Cardiac rehabilitation (cardiac rehab) is a professionally supervised program to help people recover from heart attacks, heart surgery and coronary procedures such as stenting and angioplasty. Cardiac rehab programs usually provide education and counselling services to help heart patients increase physical fitness, reduce cardiac symptoms, keep taking their medications, improve health (e.g., change in diet and stress reduction) and reduce the risk of future heart problems, including heart attack.

Cardiac rehabilitation program: Describes all measures used to help people with heart disease return to an active and satisfying life and to prevent recurrence of cardiac events.

Care plan: An agreement between a consumer and health professional (and/or social services) to help manage day to day health. It can be a written document or something recorded in patient notes.

Carers: People who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disease, disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or general frailty. Carers include parents and guardians caring for children.

Chronic: persisting over a long period

Clinical pathway: A clinical pathway explicitly states the goals and key elements of care based on clinical guidelines, best available evidence and patient expectations by facilitating communication, coordinating roles and sequencing activities of the multidisciplinary care team, patients and their carers; by documenting, monitoring and evaluating variances; and by providing the necessary resources and outcomes.

Clinician: A healthcare provider, trained as a health professional. Clinicians include registered and non-registered practitioners, or a team of health professionals, who spend the majority of their time providing direct clinical care.

Community development: A process where community members come together to generate solutions to common problems and take collective action.

Community engagement: A planned process by which an individual or organisation builds a long-term relationship with a community to understand and address issues affecting the well-being of community members

Comorbidity: the presence of one or more additional disorders (or diseases) co-occurring with a primary (main) disorder

Contraindication: A symptom, condition or factor that serves as a reason to withhold a particular treatment or procedure because it may be harmful to the patient. For example, unstable coronary heart disease would typically be a considered a contraindication to having elective surgery for a non-life-threatening condition (e.g., a hip replacement).

Coronary angiography/angiogram: A procedure in which a special X ray of the heart’s arteries (the coronary arteries) is taken to see if they are narrowed or blocked.

Coronary heart disease: Caused by a slow build up of fatty deposits on the inner wall of the blood vessels that supply the heart muscle with blood (the coronary arteries). These fatty deposits gradually clog the arteries and reduce the flow of blood to the heart.

Coronary arteries: The blood vessels that supply heart muscle, so called because they encompass the surface of the heart in the pattern of a crown.

Coronary revascularisation: Procedures used to restore good blood supply to the heart, for example, coronary angioplasty, which involves inserting a catheter with a balloon into a narrowed coronary artery and coronary artery bypass graft surgery.

Cultural awareness: In the context of healthcare for Aboriginal people, cultural awareness means general or basic knowledge of Aboriginal culture, customs and values, without this knowledge necessarily leading to any specific action or practice

Cultural safety: Knowledge of Aboriginal culture, customs and values that informally influences an individual’s practice or an organisation’s guidelines
**Cultural security:** Knowledge of Aboriginal culture and customs and values that is *formally* incorporated into the design, delivery and evaluation of services, thereby directly linking understanding with organisational policies and guidelines.

**Demographic characteristics:** These characteristics describe the composition of a population in terms of age and sex distribution, socio-economic variables (e.g., education, income, employment status), ethnicity, religion, marital status, household composition and religion.

**Dysrhythmia:** any of a group of conditions in which the electrical activity of the heart is irregular or is faster or slower than normal (irregular heartbeat).

**Electrocardiogram (ECG):** A test that records the electrical activity of the heart, commonly used to detect abnormal heart rhythms (dysrhythmias) and to identify evidence of myocardial damage (such as myocardial infarction).

**Evaluation:** A systematic and rigorous assessment of the design, implementation, improvement, or outcomes of a program.

**Fibrinolysis:** The breakdown of fibrin, the principal component of blood clots. This term is sometimes used in place of thrombolysis (‘clot busting’).

**Health promotion:** The process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health.

**Health service:** A separately constituted health service is responsible for the clinical governance, administration and financial management of a service unit(s) providing health care. A service unit involves a grouping of clinicians and others working in a systematic way to deliver health care to patients and can be in any location or setting, including pharmacies, clinics, outpatient facilities, hospitals, patients’ homes, community settings, practices and clinicians’ rooms.

**Health service provider:** A person or organisation providing a health service, such as a private/self-employed doctor (GP/specialist), dentist, or allied health practitioner or a hospital or clinic.

**Heart attack:** A common lay term for myocardial infarction. This condition is often confused with—but does not mean the same thing as—cardiac arrest, a condition in which the heart stops beating completely.

**Hospital:** A licensed facility providing healthcare services to patients for short periods of acute and subacute illness, injury or recovery.

**Hypertension (high blood pressure):** A chronic condition in which the blood pressure in the arteries is elevated, resulting in an increased risk of health problems such as stroke, ischaemic heart disease and kidney disease.

**Incidence:** A measure of new cases of a health condition in the population per population at risk in a given time period. It is a measure of risk of the condition in the population.

**Intercultural:** something that occurs between people of different cultures, e.g., between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people

**Intersectoral:** Based on the recognition that health is determined by a complex network of factors, an intersectoral approach to health policy refers to the inclusion of government sectors beyond the health sector alone (e.g., education, transport, employment) in the design and implementation of public policies to improve health.

**Ischaemia** (spelled ischemia in American publications): when there is not enough blood flow to part of the body. Ischaemic (or ischemic) heart disease (IHD) and coronary heart disease (CHD) both mean the same thing—a common condition in which not enough blood flows to the heart muscle because of narrowed arteries. This is the underlying cause of angina and myocardial infarction (heart attack).

**Key performance indicator:** a type of performance measurement used to evaluate the critical success factors of an organisation or of a particular activity in which it engages.
Knowledge translation: The activities involved in moving research results into the hands of people and organisations who can put them to practical use.

Linked data: The electronic linking of information belonging to a particular person or persons from different data sources do that case histories and outcomes can be determined, e.g., linking a person’s birth, hospital, maternity and death records.

Medication: A chemical substance given with the intention of preventing, curing, controlling or alleviating disease, or otherwise improving the physical or mental welfare of people. Prescription, non-prescription and complementary medicines, irrespective of their administration route, are included.

Model of care: An overall design for providing a particular type of health care service, shaped by theory, evidence and defined standards.

Mortality rate: Death rate from all causes or due to a specific cause (often in a population)

Myocardium: heart muscle

MSOAP: The Commonwealth Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program funded specialists to undertake outreach services in rural areas to improve the access of rural and remote communities to medical specialists. Various funding streams have now been consolidated under the Rural Health Outreach Fund.

Myocardial infarction: A potentially life threatening emergency that occurs when heart muscle is damaged by lack of oxygen. The usual cause is a sudden blockage of a coronary artery by a blood clot, which in turn is typically due to rupture of an atherosclerotic plaque. The common lay term for this condition is a heart attack.

Non–ST elevation myocardial infarction (NSTEMI): A type of heart attack (myocardial infarction) identified by what is seen on the electrocardiogram. In a NSTEMI, the artery is only partly blocked, so only part of the heart muscle being supplied by that artery is affected.

Non–ST segment elevation acute coronary syndrome (NSTEACS): A condition where patients have acute chest pain but do not have ST segment elevation in their electrocardiogram. NSTEACS is further divided into unstable angina and non–ST elevation myocardial infarction.

Percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI): A procedure that opens blocked or narrowed coronary arteries. A thin, flexible tube with a balloon or other device on the end is threaded through a blood vessel to the narrowed or blocked coronary artery. Once in place, the balloon is inflated to compress the plaque against the wall of the artery. This restores blood flow through the artery. During the procedure, the doctor may put a small mesh tube called a ‘stent’ in the artery.

Policy: A course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organisation or individual

Prevalence: The proportion of a population found to have a condition (typically a disease or a risk factor such as smoking or seat-belt use) at a specific point or period in time

Primary care: The day-to-day health care given by a health care provider in the community, who usually acts as the first contact and main point of continuing care for patients within a health care system, and coordinates other specialist care that the patient may need.

Primary Prevention: Measures aimed at healthy people (before they become ill) to promote good health or provide specific protection of target group against disease or injury—aims to minimise the number of new cases (incidence) of a disease or condition.

Reperfusion: The restoration of blood flow to an organ or tissue.

Rheumatic heart disease: is permanent damage to the heart (particularly the heart valves) following rheumatic fever.

Risk factor: Any variable (e.g., smoking, abnormal blood lipids, elevated blood pressure, diabetes) that is associated with a greater risk of a health disorder or other unwanted health condition or event.
Risk stratification: Categorisation of people according to their level of risk of developing a particular health problem in the future. This is calculated based on the presence of risk factors for the health problem.

Rural Health Outreach Fund: Commonwealth-supported program funding specialists to undertake outreach services in rural areas to improve the access of rural and remote communities to medical specialists.

Secondary prevention: Treatment to manage existing disease and risk factors to prevent recurrence of acute events and to prevent complications of an existing condition. Aims to minimise morbidity and reduce mortality.

Sector (of government): Department of government responsible for particular portfolio e.g., health, education, housing, agriculture

Social determinants of health: The conditions of advantage or disadvantage in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, and are largely responsible for health inequities, i.e., the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries.

Specialists: In the context of cardiac conditions, specialist physicians with appropriate expertise include both general physicians and cardiologists. For patients being considered for surgery, specialist cardiothoracic surgical review is required.

ST segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI): A type of heart attack (myocardial infarction) identified by what is seen on the electrocardiogram. In an STEMI, the artery supplying blood to an area of the heart muscle is completely blocked.

Statins: A group of cholesterol lowering medicines that reduces the risk of heart attack or stroke.

Strengths-based approach: Policies, practice methods, and strategies that identify and draw upon the strengths of individuals and communities, and thereby shift away from a ‘deficit’ approach, which emphasizes problems and pathology

Stroke: An injury to part of the brain caused by sudden disruption to brain circulation, usually because of either blockage or leakage of blood from an artery

Thrombolysis: The breakdown of blood clots blocking an artery by medical treatment, colloquially referred to as ‘clot busting’.

Troponin: A heart muscle protein, which, when present in the bloodstream above a defined concentration, is suggestive of myocardial damage. Testing of troponin in the blood at the bedside or sent to laboratories is a key diagnostic test for myocardial infarction.

Unstable angina: A form of angina usually attributed to new blockage of a coronary artery by a blood clot. It is manifested by sudden onset or worsening of angina. Unstable angina is a medical emergency: although it is defined by the absence of evidence of myocardial infarction after appropriate investigation (i.e., no sign of heart muscle injury on ECG or blood tests), it is part of a continuum with myocardial infarction and can rapidly evolve to become an infarction.

Vertical service delivery: Health service delivery in which facilities or programs selectively target specific diseases, risks and populations, and are not integrated with the broader health system.