

3

MEASURE





“If you feel okay, then that’s a starting platform to have a healthy, stable life – that’s a platform for the same thing for your children and your grandchildren.”

**Community forum participant,
Lakes Entrance**

Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023

The VAAF brings together a comprehensive set of data that can help community hold government to account on whether our combined efforts are improving the lives of Aboriginal Victorians. Further information on our evaluation approach is available in the 'Evaluate' section.

OUR VISION

All Aboriginal Victorian people, families and communities are healthy, safe, resilient, thriving and living culturally rich lives.

OUR DOMAINS



**1. Children,
family
& home**



**2. Learning
& skills**



**3. Opportunity
& prosperity**



**4. Health
& wellbeing**



**5. Justice
& safety**



**6. Culture
& Country**



SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination is a human right. The Victorian Government will advance self-determination through **11 guiding principles** and action on **4 enablers**.



OUR GOALS

The VAAF sets out **20 goals** across **6 domains**. These are clear statements that provide a definition of what the future should look like if we fulfil our vision.



OUR OBJECTIVES

The VAAF outlines a total of **32 objectives**. Every goal contains one or more objectives. These focus attention on where we need to see change in order to meet our goals.



OUR MEASURES

The VAAF outlines **111 measures**. These include measures on cultural safety, service or system access, and equity.



Domain 1
**Children,
family
& home**



Our shared commitment: 'All Aboriginal children and young people are safe, resilient, thriving and living in culturally rich, strong Aboriginal families and communities.'²



Goal 1: Aboriginal children are born healthy and thrive

Objective 1.1 Improve maternal and infant health

Objective 1.2 Children thrive in their first 1000 days

The first five years of a child's life are fundamental to shaping their future. Delivering better maternal and early childhood services means removing barriers, promoting genuine and effective partnerships and supporting Aboriginal families to access culturally safe services.

Ongoing investment in community-led responses to optimise maternal health and the development of Aboriginal children is an essential platform for Aboriginal self-determination, ensuring that all children have an equal chance to thrive and grow.

“We want healthy babies, so working with young women and educating young families to rear/grow up strong healthy children.”

Online survey respondent



Goal 2: Aboriginal children are raised by Aboriginal families

Objective 2.1 Eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in care

Objective 2.2 Increase Aboriginal care, guardianship and management of Aboriginal children and young people in care

Objective 2.3 Increase family reunifications for Aboriginal children and young people in care

Culture, language and connection to community and Country all support children and young people to thrive.² Despite this, Victorian Aboriginal children and young people remain vastly over-represented in child protection and care.

Community-led responses that focus on prevention and early intervention are critical for reducing the number of Aboriginal children and young people in child protection and care. For those in care, it is important they

remain connected to kin, culture and community, and have the opportunity to be reunited safely with their families. Where this is not possible, the transfer of responsibility for Aboriginal children to Aboriginal organisations is a key action in progressing Aboriginal self-determination.

We need to keep families together.

Community forum participant, Mildura



Goal 3: Aboriginal families and households thrive

Objective 3.1 Reduce the incidence and impact of family violence affecting Aboriginal families

Family violence has a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal people in Victoria, particularly women and children, regardless of whether they live in rural, regional or urban areas. Aboriginal communities in Victoria have consistently led the way in developing strategic priorities and actions to prevent family violence. This is demonstrated through strong whole-of-community engagement initiatives that bring together women, men, children and Elders to collectively break the cycles of violence.

The Victorian Government's Aboriginal 10 Year Family Violence Agreement 2018-2028, *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* articulates a vision for the future where Aboriginal people, families and communities live free from violence.

All parties need to be supported with community education and services to help break the cycles and foster safe family environments.

Community forum participant, Seymour



Objective 3.2 Increase income and housing security for Aboriginal households

In achieving true equity, the fundamental importance of both a stable home and a secure income must be recognised. Housing is a key social determinant of health and wellbeing for Aboriginal Victorians. Secure, culturally safe and coordinated housing and support services can break cycles of homelessness, facilitate family reunification and promote safety. Stable housing is essential for physical and mental health, maintaining social networks, and accessing education, training and employment. Home ownership for Aboriginal Victorians can also play an important role in tackling disadvantage and increasing housing security for Aboriginal households. Home ownership is further detailed in Domain 3: Opportunity & prosperity.

It always comes back to homelessness – if you don't have a home, you don't have anything.

Community forum participant, Robinvale

Economic factors play a part in school attendance and feelings of safety – for example not being able to send children to school with lunch or not being able to afford to go on the excursion.

Community forum participant, Shepparton



Domain 2:
**Learning
& skills**



Our shared commitment: 'Every Koorie person achieves their potential, succeeds in life, and feels strong in their cultural identity.'³



Goal 4: Aboriginal children thrive in the early years

Objective 4.1 Optimise early childhood development and participation in kinder

Education is well known to be linked to improved wellbeing and increased equity, with kindergarten and early schooling a critical starting point to set Aboriginal children up for life.

Increased enrolment and participation in kindergarten and early-start programs can significantly improve social and emotional skills and resilience, and ensure Aboriginal children are in the best position to achieve their potential.

Children need to be school ready, and schools need to be ready for them.

Community forum participant, Mildura



Goal 5: Aboriginal learners excel at school

Objective 5.1 Bring Aboriginal achievement at school in line with learners' aspirations

Objective 5.2 Increase the proportion of Aboriginal students who feel safe and connected at school

For Aboriginal learners to excel at school, it is vital that schools are culturally supportive and responsive learning environments. Cultural safety and connection to culture is a critical foundation that supports Aboriginal children to be confident learners and makes schools more inclusive of Aboriginal students and their aspirations.

Educational outcomes for Aboriginal students can be better supported by ensuring learning environments are addressing inequity, such as

experiences of racism and bullying, and increasing the confidence that Aboriginal students and their families have in the school system.

Aboriginal children should be encouraged to be astronomers, scientists, engineers.

Community forum participant, Ballarat



Goal 6: Aboriginal learners are engaged at school

Objective 6.1 Increase Year 12 or equivalent attainment

Remaining engaged in school and completing and excelling at Year 12 or equivalent can provide Aboriginal learners with greater opportunities and choice for their future pathways.

Completing Year 12 or equivalent can support Aboriginal learners to pursue further education and training or to gain employment.

The more educated they are, the more Aboriginal people can self-determine their own future.

Community forum participant, Horsham



Goal 7: Aboriginal learners achieve their full potential after school

Objective 7.1 Increase the proportion of Aboriginal young people in work or further education and training

The opportunities and pathways made available to students immediately after high school can help set up a strong foundation for a successful, healthy and prosperous future.

Aboriginal learners must be supported to pursue their pathway of choice, whether that be further education, training or formal employment. This

means making these opportunities more accessible for Aboriginal young people, as well as ensuring young people feel supported to follow their ambitions. Lifelong learning must also be accessible and encouraged for adult Aboriginal Victorians, particularly those facing additional challenges to social and economic participation.

Year 12 attainment is a good target and measure, but we need to go further – for example, measure and track from Year 12 to tertiary education or employment.

Community forum participant, Bendigo



Opportunity & prosperity



Our shared commitment: 'Building opportunity and economic prosperity for all Aboriginal Victorians.'⁴



Goal 8: Aboriginal workers achieve wealth equality

Objective 8.1 Increase Aboriginal household income in line with the Victorian median

Objective 8.2 Increase Aboriginal home ownership in line with the Victorian average

Objective 8.3 Increase Aboriginal business ownership and support Aboriginal entrepreneurs

Aboriginal Victorians have a long history of enterprise. Today, successful Aboriginal entrepreneurs are role models for young Aboriginal people. As businesses grow and develop, they allow the next generation of entrepreneurs to step forward. Over time, this strengthens the economic position of Aboriginal communities.⁵

Raising Aboriginal household income supports personal and collective agency and enables Aboriginal Victorians to have equal access to opportunities. Home ownership is an aspiration held by many Aboriginal Victorians. Among other benefits, home ownership enables Aboriginal Victorians to obtain financial gain from the intergenerational transfer of wealth.

“We need Aboriginal business in Aboriginal hands.”

Community forum participant, Robinvale



Goal 9: Strong Aboriginal workforce participation, in all sectors and at all levels

Objective 9.1 Increase Aboriginal workforce participation

Objective 9.2 Increase workforce participation for Aboriginal women

Objective 9.3 Increase workforce participation for Aboriginal young people, people with a disability and people living in regional areas

Objective 9.4 Increase Aboriginal leadership and representation across all sectors and levels

Fully participating in the economy provides Aboriginal Victorians with the resources they need to determine the future they want. Economic participation is therefore key to Aboriginal self-determination.⁵

Building work opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal young people, women, people living with a disability and those in regional areas is key to inclusive economic growth. Greater effort is needed to ensure that all Aboriginal Victorians – in all levels, across all sectors – are better represented.

Aboriginal staff bring unique knowledge, skills and expertise to the workforce and understand the needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal community. Further work is required to improve the representation of Aboriginal people in the Victorian Public Service (VPS) as well as other sectors, and to enhance the quality of the workplace and career experiences of Aboriginal staff.

[There] needs to be a localised focus on employment.

Community forum participant, Bendigo



Goal 10: Aboriginal income potential is realised

Objective 10.1 Increase Victoria's Aboriginal gross income and decrease the opportunity cost of Aboriginal income inequality

Aboriginal people, organisations and businesses already make valuable contributions to Victoria's diverse economy. Aboriginal economic development is vital to growing Victoria's wealth generally and to increasing overall economic productivity

and competitive advantage. If the talent and aspiration of Aboriginal Victorians is given full expression in the Victorian economy, there is significant opportunity for Aboriginal income growth.

[We need to] increase Aboriginal employment at executive levels.

Community forum participant, Horsham



Domain 4:
**Health &
wellbeing**



Our shared commitment: 'Self-determining, healthy and safe Aboriginal people and communities.'⁶



Goal 11: Aboriginal Victorians enjoy health and longevity

Objective 11.1 Improve Aboriginal health status, quality of life and life expectancy

Enjoying good health and wellbeing is fundamental. While many Aboriginal Victorians report good health and there have been areas of improvement, government, services and communities need to take significant steps to improve

health outcomes and quality of life for all Aboriginal Victorians. Improving health outcomes and having a good quality of life will ensure all Victorian Aboriginal communities can thrive.

“We need more end-to-end and holistic support.”

Community forum participant, Sale

“Prevention is better than cure.”

Community forum participant, Geelong



Goal 12: Aboriginal Victorians access the services they need

Objective 12.1 Improve access to health and community services for all Aboriginal Victorians

Access to primary health care is essential for supporting equitable health outcomes. Primary health care also plays an important role in prevention and early detection.

The provision of services alone does not ensure equity of access. Ensuring all Aboriginal Victorians can access the services they need means responding to the diversity of clients' needs. This includes promoting the voice of and providing support services to older people, people with a disability and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, and intersex (LGBTI).

Aboriginal Elders hold a highly valued position in Aboriginal communities. Supporting Elders and older people to access health and community services can promote greater independence, cultural and social inclusion and quality of life.⁶

Aboriginal Victorians with a disability may face additional barriers to achieving health and wellbeing. Further work is required to transform the disability service system, including through the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, so that it is culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people with a disability and their families.

It's very difficult to find housing with suitable disability access.

Community forum participant, Seymour

Aged and palliative care need looking after.

Community forum participant, Mildura



Goal 13: Health and community services are culturally safe and responsive

Objective 13.1 Increase the cultural safety and responsiveness of services

It is important that Aboriginal Victorians can access culturally safe and culturally responsive health services when they need it – whether this is from an Aboriginal organisation or a mainstream service.

A culturally safe and racism-free health and community service system is one in which people feel safe, where they can freely affirm their identity and where their needs are met.⁶

A skilled and supported Aboriginal workforce plays a key role in supporting positive outcomes for Aboriginal patients, clients and communities.

Mainstream organisations and service providers need cultural change, and a broader support of Aboriginal culture throughout the organisation, from top-down and bottom-up.

It is not enough to simply employ an Aboriginal person - they need to be valued and supported as an Aboriginal person.

Community forum participant, Seymour



Goal 14: Aboriginal Victorians enjoy social and emotional wellbeing

Objective 14.1 Improve Aboriginal mental health and social and emotional wellbeing

Most Victorian Aboriginal people and communities enjoy excellent social and emotional wellbeing and mental health. However, many Aboriginal people report experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress.

Connection to family, kinship and community has a strong influence on social and emotional wellbeing.⁷ It is vital that all Aboriginal Victorians, including people living with a disability, have social networks they can draw upon for everyday practical and emotional support, as well as during times of need.

It is important that Aboriginal Victorians have access to Aboriginal-led services that are appropriately resourced and trained to respond to mental-health care needs, as well as culturally informed mainstream services that understand Aboriginal concepts of social and emotional wellbeing.

Health and wellbeing need to be considered holistically, with greater mental health focus.

Community forum participant, Bendigo



Domain 5:
**Justice
& safety**



Our shared commitment: 'Aboriginal people have access to an equitable justice system that is shaped by self-determination, and protects and upholds their human, civil and legal rights.'⁸



Goal 15: Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system is eliminated

Objective 15.1 Decrease the number and eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the justice system

Objective 15.2 Decrease the number and eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal women in the justice system

Objective 15.3 Decrease the number and eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal men in the justice system

Most Aboriginal people will never become involved in the Victorian criminal justice system. However, those who do are more likely to experience ongoing involvement with the system.⁸ Systemic and structural barriers that Aboriginal people experience,

such as racism, social and economic disadvantage and involvement in the child protection system, can lead to over-representation in the justice system and entrenched cycles of disadvantage.



Goal 16: Aboriginal Victorians have access to safe and effective justice services

Objective 16.1 Increase Aboriginal participation in culturally safe and effective justice prevention, early intervention, diversion and support programs

Prevention and early intervention can keep Aboriginal young people, women and men out of the criminal justice system. Community-based diversion programs and community-led services that connect people to culture can also help break cycles of offending and promote positive outcomes. This also requires intersectional services in health, child protection, homelessness and family violence, to deliver effective prevention and early intervention support.

There needs to be a focus on community-based prevention for diverting people away from the justice system.

Community forum participant, Sale



Goal 17: Aboriginal Victorians feel safe and connected

Objective 17.1 Increase community safety and trust in police and the justice system

Historic injustices have contributed to mistrust of police and the justice system amongst some Aboriginal communities. Community-led justice responses are working to address local issues and build greater trust between Elders, community and police.

Prevention requires places to be culturally safe and trauma informed... This includes non-Aboriginal systems and places too.

Community forum participant, Morwell



Domain 6:
**Culture
& Country**



Our shared commitment is the promotion of the rights and responsibilities under section 19(2) of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006: 'Aboriginal persons hold distinct cultural rights and must not be denied the right, with other members of their community –

- a. to enjoy their identity and culture;
- b. to maintain and use their language;
- c. to maintain their kinship ties; and
- d. to maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.'⁹



Goal 18: Aboriginal land, water and cultural rights are realised

Objective 18.1 Increase the recognition and enjoyment of Aboriginal land, water and cultural heritage rights

We recognise that Aboriginal Victorians hold distinct cultural rights, including the right to maintain their spiritual, material and economic relationship with their traditional lands and waters. The connection to land, water and resources on Country is important to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians, particularly Traditional Owners. Reconnecting Traditional Owners to Country can help revive culture and contribute to an improved sense of identity.¹⁰ We recognise that only Traditional Owners can speak for Country.

The *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* is Australia's first-ever treaty law.¹¹ The Act reflects the intent to help improve the lives of Aboriginal Victorians, and the lives of future generations. The Act also recognises Traditional Owners as key stakeholders in the treaty process, in recognition of their distinct cultural authority as Victoria's First Peoples. As we continue on the path to treaty, it is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the unique status, rights, cultures and histories of Aboriginal Victorians.

“We are the custodians of this land, so it’s our right to look after Country. Healthy Country, healthy people.”

Online survey respondent

“Government needs to support treaty as negotiated by community, in support of self-determination.”

Community forum participant, Bendigo



Goal 19: Aboriginal culture and language are supported and celebrated

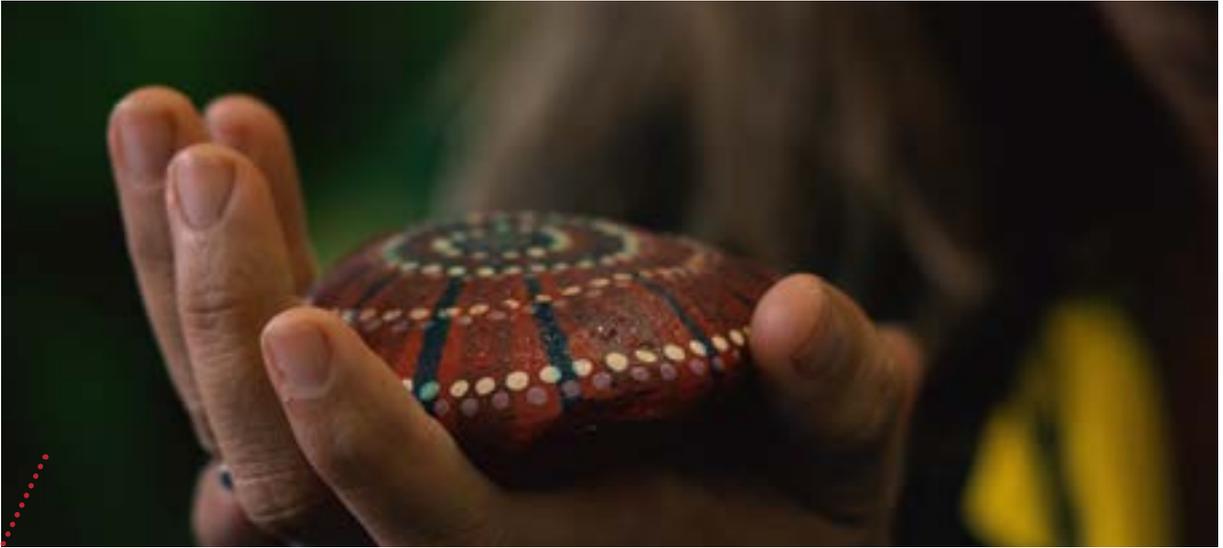
Objective 19.1 Support the preservation, promotion and practice of culture and languages

Past government policies of dispossession and assimilation led to loss of Aboriginal cultural practice and languages. Despite this, the strength and resilience of Aboriginal Victorians has helped to preserve cultural practices and languages, which continue to be practised and passed onto future generations.

Connectedness to culture and community strengthens individual and collective identities, and promotes self-esteem, resilience and improved outcomes for Aboriginal people.⁶ While cultural identity is central to the lives of Aboriginal Victorians, all Victorians should celebrate and take pride in Aboriginal culture and language.

Language reclamation is important. It gives power back to the community and makes it a safe place.

Community forum participant, Ballarat



Goal 20: Racism is eliminated

Objective 20.1 Address and eliminate racism

Racism can have a harmful impact on the cultural identity and confidence of Aboriginal Victorians. Research shows that experiences of racism can also have detrimental long-term health effects, both mentally and physically.⁶

Racism manifests in many forms: stereotyping and name calling, as well as systemically through structures that exclude the participation of Aboriginal Victorians in everyday life. Eliminating racism – in all forms, at all levels – should not be the responsibility of Aboriginal Victorians. It is everyone's duty to work towards a fair and equitable Victoria.

Government needs to educate themselves on why community feel the way they do.

Community forum participant, Swan Hill