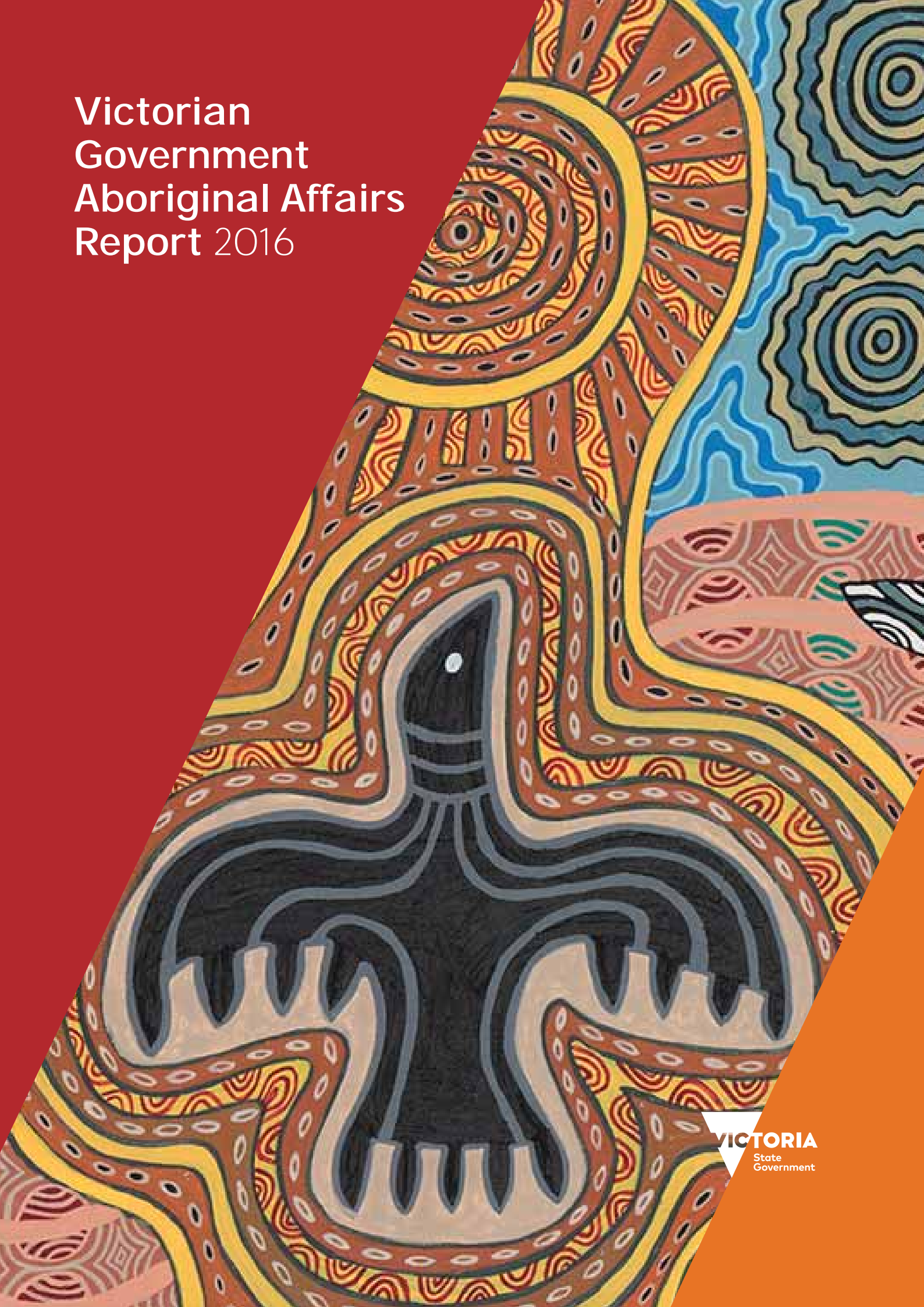


Victorian
Government
Aboriginal Affairs
Report 2016



COVER ARTWORK

“Wangi Withinu Ngawingi Walwa” © 2016.

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ARTIST STATEMENT

*Thalekatha wangi thiti paiki tirrilata ngakatha
withini kiyakaminhu kembatha matha paika kekatha
matha thematha paikatha ngawingi walwathin
withinu walwa ngawingi withinu wurkirrimatha
ngiwi ngiwi thangi.*

*Long ago the crow was a colourful bird. He would fly
high in the sky and show off his colourful feathers.
All the animals would tell him not to fly too high, but
he wouldn't listen. So he flew too close to the sun and
got his feathers burnt. And that is why his feathers
are black, and why he stays closer to the ground.*

Throughout this document, the term “Aboriginal” is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of terms “Koori”, “Koorie”, and “Indigenous” are retained in the names of programs and initiatives, and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Authorised and published by the Department of Premier and Cabinet,
Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne

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ISSN 2206-0154 (Online)

Available at aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au



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Message from the Premier



Governments have talked for a long time about the need to listen to Aboriginal people. But our listening has always been selective.

For decades, Aboriginal people have called for self-determination. What successive governments have chosen to hear

instead was mere “consultation” or “engagement”.

It’s an approach we can no longer afford to take: we must do more. This report makes that clear.

For hundreds of years, the impact of our failed policies has fallen upon Aboriginal children, families and communities. We need to acknowledge it, we need to learn from it – and we need to make sure we never repeat it.

It’s why in 2015 this Government committed to real self-determination. Put simply: ensuring Aboriginal people are the decision makers when it comes to Aboriginal affairs.

To make self-determination a reality, the way forward must be led by Aboriginal Victorians, and respected by governments.

Since we’ve begun, many Aboriginal people across Victoria have told us that you can’t have self-determination without a treaty.

We listened, and alongside Aboriginal Victorians, we’re working to make this enduring and just agreement a reality.

I know that Aboriginal people are putting a lot of faith in this process. I don’t take this trust for granted.

Working together with genuine commitment, we can make history.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Andrews'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent 'D' and 'A'.

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP

Premier of Victoria

Message from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



The strength, pride, and resilience of Victoria's Aboriginal community that I get to see in my role as Minister are an inspiration to me.

There are many things happening to improve the lives of the community and there are many people

who should be proud of the work they are doing to address social, economic and cultural disadvantage.

Our Government is committed to advancing self-determination and I am proud to be part of a change in the relationship between government and Aboriginal people.

Over the past year we have been working with the Aboriginal community, driving reforms and initiatives aimed at creating better living standards and greater prosperity in Victoria.

But our Government knows that it is not for us to decide what self-determination should look like. This action needs to come from Aboriginal Victorians. That that is how we are proceeding.

Since the Aboriginal Victoria Forum in May 2016, the newly established Aboriginal Treaty Interim Working Group has met to discuss the way forward and plan the next steps.

We will support Aboriginal Victorians to pursue self-determination and respond to the economic and social challenges they face.

We are also continuing to focus on building the profile of Victoria's Aboriginal culture and history as a shared source of pride for everyone in the state.

Providing greater protection for Victoria's rich and diverse Aboriginal culture is at the heart of amendments to the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* made this year. The changes create stronger protections, including for intangible Aboriginal heritage such as stories, song and language.

We have also strengthened the powers and functions of Victoria's Aboriginal Heritage Council, the first all Aboriginal council created under Victorian law.

I am proud to have established the state's first Aboriginal Economic Board to drive Aboriginal employment and business development in Victoria.

We have also enhanced support for Aboriginal Victorians at risk of family violence through a \$25.7 million commitment in the 2016/17 Victorian Budget. This funding, part of our response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, will support new prevention and early intervention programs for Aboriginal children and families.

This report shows that there are improvements for Aboriginal Victorians in some areas. We see significant gains in Aboriginal kindergarten participation. High school retention rates are also improving, and Year 12 attainment continues to improve. These have the potential for a long-lasting impact on young Aboriginal people, leading to better outcomes in other areas of their lives.

I am very aware that progress in other areas is slow, and much more work needs to be done. There is no doubt that it is not an easy task, but it is not one our Government will shy away from.

The disparity in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Victoria, and over-representation in the child protection and justice systems, remain major concerns. That is why we are strengthening our focus on co-designing responses for and with the Aboriginal community.

Improving outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians will always be a joint effort. If we are to achieve the long-term change we have committed to it is vital that every tier of government work in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

I am sure that together we will achieve real change and work towards a future in which the living culture of this country's First Peoples enriches all Victorians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Natalie Hutchins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Message from the Chair, Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs



The role of the Secretaries' Leadership Group (SLG) is to oversee and co-ordinate the implementation of Aboriginal affairs policy at the highest level across government. Over the past year the Government's commitment to self-determination

has shaped our work. We have seen significant developments in the way in which the Government works with Aboriginal people across the state.

The first Victorian Government Ministerial Forum on Aboriginal Affairs in July 2016 was an historic event, which brought together Ministers and representatives of Aboriginal peak bodies and state-wide service delivery agencies to consider how to embed Aboriginal self-determination in government service delivery. This forum, and others such as the Premier's Gathering with Aboriginal leaders in August, is vital to ensuring that efforts of government lead to positive outcomes. This is also central to SLG's agenda.

These forums have served as a reminder of the need to continue to find ways of improving the design and delivery of mainstream services across the Victorian Government. Partnering with Aboriginal Victorians in service design and delivery is critical to achieving this. We must do more to ensure that Aboriginal people in Victoria are able to access mainstream services that are culturally safe and culturally competent.

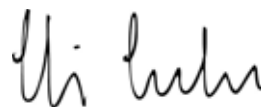
To complement mainstream services, we also need to continue to strengthen, and build recognition for, Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs) and Aboriginal community controlled health organisations (ACCHOs) to support the needs of Aboriginal people across Victoria.

SLG held a workshop on Aboriginal economic participation in June. I look forward to seeing the possibilities we covered – around business development, procurement, and employment – translate into outcomes over the year ahead.

We are making a difference, but as this Report shows, there is still much work to do.

Whilst there are ongoing challenges, I am confident that by working in partnership across government with the Aboriginal community, we will see improvements in outcomes over time. SLG will continue to coordinate and target government action at areas of greatest need, particularly where gaps in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians are large.

I look forward to continuing to support actions across government that improve the provision of services to, and quality of life for, Aboriginal people in Victoria and to implementing the Government's bold agenda for self-determination.



Chris Eccles

Chair, Secretaries' Leadership Group
on Aboriginal Affairs



Self-determination: A new relationship between Government and Aboriginal Victorians



This year marks a significant new chapter in the relationship between the Victorian Government and Aboriginal people in Victoria. For the first time in over 20 years, this year has seen the start of real conversations about Aboriginal self-determination and treaty. These conversations have taken place in forums held around the State, in Melbourne, Mildura, Horsham, Shepparton, and Bairnsdale, as well as a session at the Koorie Youth Council (KYC) forum.

A key outcome of the forums has been the establishment of a Treaty Interim Working Group comprising Aboriginal Victorians, including nominees from the Victorian Traditional Owners Land Justice Group, the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, and the KYC. The group will oversee the process and timing for future discussions and provide guidance on community engagement and options for a permanent Victorian Aboriginal representative body.

A new engagement framework further supports a commitment to recognising Aboriginal self-determination through a whole-of-government approach. Announced in December 2015, the framework will ensure that Aboriginal people have a stronger voice at the highest levels of government. The framework comprises:

- a Premier's Gathering with Aboriginal leaders, focusing on high level strategic issues
- a new Victorian Government Aboriginal Ministerial Forum held with Ministers across government and Aboriginal peak and state-wide service delivery agencies
- a new Aboriginal Victoria Forum with the Aboriginal community, including Traditional Owners, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), Aboriginal community organisations, peak bodies, state wide agencies, and other representative groups.

Self-determination is a bold new policy platform that has been missing from the centre of the Aboriginal affairs policy and program agenda. The Victorian Government will continue to urge the Commonwealth to be bolder and more open in the national reconciliation agenda as well as to improve its performance in those service system areas for which it is responsible.

The Victorian Government will not resile from its commitment to 'closing the gaps' - but merely meeting targets is not nearly ambitious enough an agenda. Evidence shows that self-determination is vital for improving Aboriginal people's health and well-being. The large body of research conducted on the pursuit of self-determination by first peoples in other countries shows that first peoples suffer greatly when the right to make their own decisions is taken away, and that the devastating impact of failed policies can only begin to be turned around when Aboriginal people are supported to make their own decisions on matters such as governance, natural resource management, economic development, health care, and social service provision.

Victoria's Aboriginal people and communities must be front and centre in shaping and informing policy responses and services. The Victorian Government will continue to ensure that the conversations that have started in 2016 around how to shape lasting representative structures and processes are supported. We are committed to a real and positive transformation of the relationship between the Government and Aboriginal Victoria.



Protecting cultural heritage and strong culture

The conversations around self-determination and treaty are a unique opportunity to continue the story of Aboriginal people in Victoria. There is much to celebrate. In 2015, 15 people were inducted into the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll, now totalling 79 recipients. The Honour Roll captures the individual stories of Aboriginal people, past and present, who have made a great contribution to the State. Such positive stories about Aboriginal individuals and their communities add to the richness of Victoria's heritage.

It's time that more of these positive stories are told and heard, about Aboriginal communities strengthened by their cultural identities and enriched by traditional customs and practices.

The 2016/17 Budget provided \$53.1 million over four years to work with Aboriginal Victorians. This includes funding to advance the UNESCO World Heritage listing of Budj Bim, better protection of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, and to progress the work around Aboriginal self-determination and treaty.

Aboriginal people have lived in Victoria for thousands of years. As a result, they have left lasting signs of their living culture and history: the rock art of Gariwerd; the complex aquaculture systems of Budj Bim; the unique stone arrangements of central Victoria; the vast stone quarries of Mount William and the highlands; the complex burial sites of north west Victoria; ancient shell middens along the coast and rivers; the ancient occupation sites of the Cranbourne Sands; the large canoe scars on trees along the Murray and throughout the State; stone artefacts across the landscape; and ancient stories, ceremonies, and knowledge of the natural environment. Victoria's Aboriginal cultural heritage is unique and precious, and the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (VAHC) has an important role in building the Victorian community's knowledge of this heritage.

Amendments to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (AH Act) this year provide new protections for intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage such as stories, song, and language. Alongside the VAHC, the Government laments that the passing on of cultural knowledge such as stories, song, and language has been interrupted by past policies. We recognise that cultural heritage is inseparable from health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people, and that Aboriginal values and understanding are of real value to all Victorians.

“ After years of advocacy by Elders and many other Aboriginal leaders, there is now a new frame of reference in Victoria. The changes to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* give recognition to Traditional Owners' unique rights and responsibilities in the management and protection of cultural heritage. This is an important step in a long struggle.

Cultural and community strengthening are inseparable aspirations for Victorian Aboriginal peoples. The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council will continue to advocate for, and work with, Registered Aboriginal Parties to achieve these aspirations. Registered Aboriginal Parties must be supported to become sustainable. Recognition and resources are needed for a viable and sustainable future. Partnerships and beneficial relationships can be achieved through Registered Aboriginal Parties working with their stakeholders. These relationships can support creative approaches and early engagement can be the foundation of such relationships. Mutual respect is required for all of us to do better and, to achieve better understandings and enjoyment of Victoria's Aboriginal cultural heritage. This is what Council and Traditional Owners strive for so that Victoria will have the protection of its first peoples cultural identity in history, now and for the future.”

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council

Self-determination: A new relationship between Government and Aboriginal Victorians

The amendments to the AH Act have strengthened the functions and powers of the VAHC. Since its foundation in 2007, the VAHC has made a strong contribution to the development of Aboriginal cultural heritage policy through its advisory functions and by promoting public awareness. It is now also the central coordinating body responsible for Aboriginal Ancestral Remains in Victoria. This will support strengthened protection of Aboriginal burial places and better support for Traditional Owners returning Ancestors to Country. Traditional Owners will now need only deal with the VAHC on the complex matters of returning Aboriginal Ancestral Remains to Country, rather than with many different state agencies. The VAHC will have the necessary cultural awareness and skills to help Traditional Owners navigate this sometimes complicated process. The amendments also give the VAHC responsibility for overseeing and supervising the operations of RAPs and management of the newly-created Aboriginal Heritage Fund. This will strengthen the capacity of the VAHC to work with key partners to influence policy and build a better understanding and appreciation of Victoria's rich Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage for Aboriginal people underpins all aspects of life – connections to family, community, and country; expression of values and beliefs; and traditional and contemporary cultural practices such as storytelling, art, songs, and language. A strong connection to culture builds individual resilience. In August 2016, the Minister for Families and Children announced a \$5.33 million funding package to develop cultural support plans for Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care. This will ensure that these children and young people remain connected with their rich and proud culture. Funding will also be provided that will support Aboriginal children to actively engage in cultural activities, including attending sports, camps, or return-to-country trips. This is part of a \$16.5 million investment in the 2016/17 Budget to support vulnerable Aboriginal children and their families.

Positive identity is linked to better outcomes in education, justice, health and wellbeing, employment, and economic development.

The Government is committed to supporting Aboriginal-led initiatives that protect and strengthen culture, and to promoting the value of Aboriginal culture to all Victorians.

Partnerships with Aboriginal Victorians

Aboriginal people in Victoria are the people best placed to know what works when it comes to achieving better outcomes for their own communities. That is why this Report includes the voices of Aboriginal Victorians reflecting on the past year.

The Victorian Government has, over successive years, worked with key Aboriginal stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to achieve better outcomes for individuals, families, and communities. Partnership structures include Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs), the VAHC, the Victorian Advisory Council for Koori Health (VACKH), the Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF), the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum (IFVPPF), and new structures to support the implementation of the newly released *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026 (Marrung)*.

This year, the Aboriginal Children's Forum (ACF) has been established to address the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care by delivering on the priorities of *Koorie Kids: Growing Strong in their Culture*. The establishment of the Forum reflects a strong commitment from the Victorian Government to working with Victoria's Aboriginal communities to enact the principle of Aboriginal self-determination. The Forum is convened by the Minister for Families and Children and co-chaired with a nominated Chief Executive Officer from an ACCO. It comprises representatives from Victorian ACCOs, the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, community sector representatives, and senior government executives.

Extensive and ongoing consultation has taken place since January 2016 between the Victorian Government and the Aboriginal community and research institutes to inform the development of an Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is working closely with an Expert Panel to combine community feedback with other available health and wellbeing data to inform the Plan. It will reflect all aspects of Aboriginal health and wellbeing, setting out an integrated approach to program and service delivery developed from and based on principles of self-determination and co-design.

Aboriginal voices must also be central to the implementation of mainstream reform agendas such as the *Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families; Safe Children* and the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence (RCFV). The Aboriginal community is leading the way in the reform agenda for family violence and social services in Victoria, including through the IFVPF and the Ministerial Forum on Aboriginal Affairs. The Aboriginal community will also be partners in the success of *Marrung* and the *Education State*.

“ *It's been our most successful year in working productively with government to elevate the voices and needs of Aboriginal young people. We've helped shape the government's new Youth Policy; we've given young people a platform to propose better prevention initiatives at the Aboriginal Justice Forum on youth; we relished the opportunity to present at the senior Aboriginal Affairs leadership group; hosted our third annual Koorie Youth Summit; and supported the initial establishment of the Aboriginal Youth Mentoring Program. The self-determination state-wide forum was the highlight because Aboriginal young people were heard by the whole community on the topics of self-determination and treaty and what this new direction means for us.”*

Indi Clarke, Koorie Youth Council

Supporting self-determination, the Director of Housing is transferring 1,448 properties designated for Aboriginal people to Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV), an Aboriginal-led not-for-profit registered Housing Provider and the largest Aboriginal housing organisation in Australia. Ownership of the government housing stock that AHV has been managing will enable AHV to make significant improvements. The transfer is occurring through a three-staged process with the first tranche of 511 properties transferred in July 2016.

“ *This is a landmark moment for Aboriginal people in Victoria. Ownership of the properties we manage has been a long held aspiration of AHV.”*

Aboriginal Housing Victoria

There are outcomes in this Report that clearly show the harmful impacts on Aboriginal children, families, and communities of the failures of successive governments. These include homelessness and over-representation in the justice and child protection systems. However, in all of these areas, the combined strength of Aboriginal community-led approaches and government service system reforms are starting to have an impact. In the longer term, self-determination is critical to closing the gap in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Targeted, coordinated, and joined up effort by all levels of government, delivered in partnership with Aboriginal communities, is central to achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal people in Victoria.

Economic participation as an enabler

Ensuring that Aboriginal voices are at the centre of Aboriginal affairs in Victoria is not just about representation and reconciliation. It is about working in partnership with Aboriginal Victorians to achieve better health, wellbeing, and economic development outcomes.

Aboriginal economic participation is vital to growing Victoria's wealth generally and to increasing overall economic productivity and competitive advantage. Aboriginal people, organisations, and businesses make valuable contributions to Victoria's diverse economy as employees, business owners,

Self-determination: A new relationship between Government and Aboriginal Victorians

managers, and volunteers. Economic participation and development have been identified as a high priority by Aboriginal communities around Victoria in recognition of the role economic participation has in building self-esteem, independence, and positive role models. The flow-on benefits of increased Aboriginal economic participation in terms of health and social wellbeing are also significant.

The *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020* (VAES), developed in partnership with Aboriginal Victorians, sets out a shared vision for a holistic approach to Aboriginal economic development.

Removing the structural barriers that stand in the way of Aboriginal people realising their aspirations, creating more job opportunities across the economy, building the capacity of employers to support and nurture Aboriginal talent and growing Aboriginal enterprise and investment are all integral to the VAES. The Victorian Government committed \$4.5 million over four years in the 2015/16 Budget for the implementation of the VAES.

This year the Victorian Government has established the Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board (VAEB), comprising high-level Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal business and community leaders who are working together to drive business development and employment opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians.

The VAEB will have oversight of the new Aboriginal Business Strategy, to be released shortly, which was allocated \$6.63 million in the 2016/17 Budget. The Strategy will focus on improving the accessibility of business support, improving the visibility and networks of Aboriginal businesses and strengthening the entrepreneurial culture and business experience of Aboriginal Victorians.

The Victorian Government also continues to push the Commonwealth to honour its Council of Australian Governments (COAG) commitment to Aboriginal economic development and ensure that the policies and universal services for which it is responsible support increased opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians.

Future Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Reports

As in previous years, this year's Report is both an outline of progress against key *Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018* (VAAF) and *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* (NIRA) 'Closing the Gap' targets and measures and an opportunity to look forward. Strengthening data production and improving the use of data in policymaking and implementation is central to improving outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

As 2018 and the end of the VAAF term draws near, there is an opportunity to reflect and build upon the experience of implementing and reporting against the VAAF. This will include looking at how outcomes are defined as well as how the Victorian Government can improve the availability, quality, timeliness, and disaggregation of data. Feedback from the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), for instance, who hold their own statewide health data around Aboriginal Victorians, is that the reliance on self-reported health status in the current VAAF indicators is unlikely to capture an adequate picture of the health of Aboriginal people in Victoria. The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) has questioned whether the VAAF provides a true 'whole of life' picture and noted its strong focus on institutional outcomes and mainstream benchmarks and insufficient focus on cultural and spiritual wellbeing, cultural activity, and Aboriginal rights. Likewise, the Koori Caucus of the AJF has noted that the measures do not adequately address 'quality of life'.

Our conversations with the Aboriginal community on self-determination are still in their early stages and a lot of work lies ahead. Self-determination will require a change in the way government identifies and reports outcomes in future. The Victorian Government is looking to strengthen the way it defines and reports on outcomes, and Aboriginal affairs will be a key part of this.

The VAAF recognises that change requires joined up and strategic action across government that supports whole of life cycle, whole of community approaches. This, and a genuine commitment to protecting the rights of Aboriginal people to self-determination, will remain the hallmark of the Victorian Government's approach.

About this report



Structure of this report

The Report begins with a set of infographic headlines, followed by VAAF Strategic Action Area theme pages, which provide analysis and strategic context. The theme pages look at some of the factors underlying performance against the targets and the strategic approach to maintaining or increasing progress. Where possible, the Report also looks at how Victoria compares nationally.

Measuring progress

The purpose of this Report is to outline Victoria's progress against key targets and measures under the VAAF. Key Aboriginal stakeholders have reflected on Victoria's progress, and their thoughts are included.

The NIRA 'Closing the Gap' targets and the VAAF articulate an aspiration to achieve equality (or parity) across social, educational, economic, and health outcomes for Aboriginal people. This Report looks at progress on each indicator in two ways:

- Has significant change occurred?
- Have changes been experienced equally across Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians?

1. Has significant change occurred?

To be confident that a genuine increase or decrease has occurred, in this Report a regression analysis was performed on rates since 2008 until the most recent available data at the time of reporting. 2008 is the baseline year as it was the year in which the NIRA was agreed. Sometimes the small number of events and the relatively small size of the Aboriginal population in Victoria can make it difficult to assess if real change has occurred across time. A significant decrease or increase in the rate of an outcome over time suggests that a robust change has occurred and is unlikely to be the result of fluctuations in rates that are seen year to year.

2. Have changes been experienced equally across Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians?

In addition to seeing improvement over time for Aboriginal Victorians, it is important to monitor whether improvements in outcomes are felt equally between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians. To determine the rate of over- or under-representation, this Report compares the rate of Aboriginal people who experience a certain outcome divided by the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians who experience that same outcome.

Data sources and limitation

The period covered by the Report is up to the most recently available data as at July 2016. In some cases, only 2013 or 2014 data is available. The data come from a number of different administrative data sets and surveys. More detailed advice around the major data sources used is provided at the end of this report.

The main limitation in most of these data sets is that Aboriginal status is under-reported. Changes in the levels of Aboriginal identification over time have an impact on the capacity to compare outcomes.

Wherever possible, this Report compares results for Aboriginal Victorians with those for non-Aboriginal Victorians – that is, people who identified as not being Aboriginal. This is not always possible, however, as some data sources do not allow for the separate identification of people who identified as not being Aboriginal, and people for whom no Aboriginal status information was available.

Detailed data tables are available separately on the Department of Premier and Cabinet's (DPC) website, www.dpc.vic.gov.au.



Headline outcomes



The Victorian Government continues to work in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal community to build on the gains that we have already made to improve living standards and access to opportunities. This section provides only a snapshot of progress against the Headline Indicators set out in the VAAF. It does not address the key factors underlying the outcomes or strategies to address them. The next section of the Report expands on these.

Headline Indicator 1: improve infant survival and health

Rate of low birth weight



1.8X HIGHER FOR BABIES BORN TO ABORIGINAL MOTHERS

The rate of low birth weight has been declining for babies of Aboriginal mothers since 2008, from 14.2 per cent in 2008 to 12.2 per cent in 2014, narrowing the gap by 2.7 percentage points. However, this rate of decline is not statistically significant. Almost twice as many babies of Aboriginal mothers as babies of non-Aboriginal mothers are born with a low birth weight (over-representation rate=1.8).

Low birth weight: more effort is required to close the gap.

Perinatal mortality rate

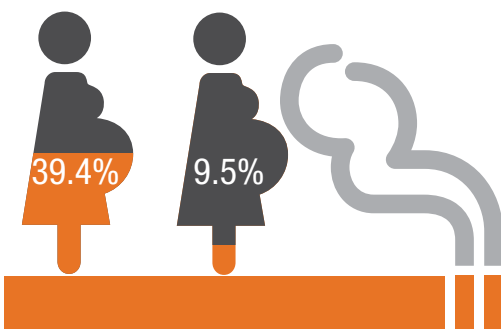


1.6X HIGHER FOR BABIES BORN TO ABORIGINAL MOTHERS

The relatively small size of the Aboriginal population in Victoria and small number of perinatal deaths can result in large fluctuations in the rate of perinatal death between years. Nationally, the rate of perinatal death has fallen since 2008. In 2014, the rate of perinatal mortality was more than one and a half times higher for babies of Aboriginal mothers compared to babies of non-Aboriginal mothers in Victoria.

Perinatal death: numbers are small and the gap fluctuates.

Smoking in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy



4X HIGHER AMONG ABORIGINAL MOTHERS

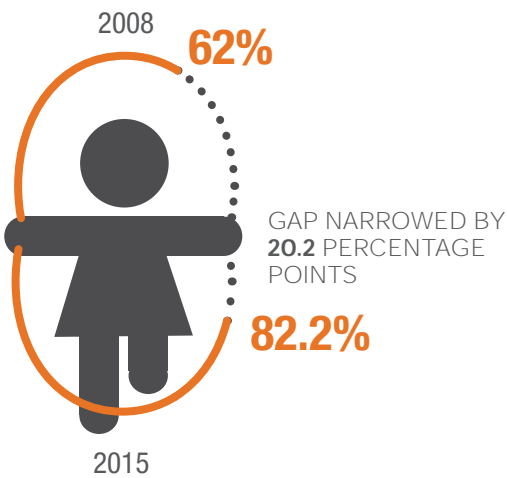
The rate of smoking during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy in 2014 was 39.4 per cent for Aboriginal mothers compared to 9.5 per cent for non-Aboriginal women. This rate has remained relatively stable since 2009 for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers. During the final month of pregnancy, the rate of smoking is lower. At one month prior to delivery, the rate of smoking is 34.2 per cent for Aboriginal mothers, seven times higher than non-Aboriginal mothers at 4.7 per cent.

Smoking during pregnancy: more effort is required to close the gap.

Headline outcomes

Headline Indicator 2: increase Aboriginal kindergarten participation

Kindergarten participation

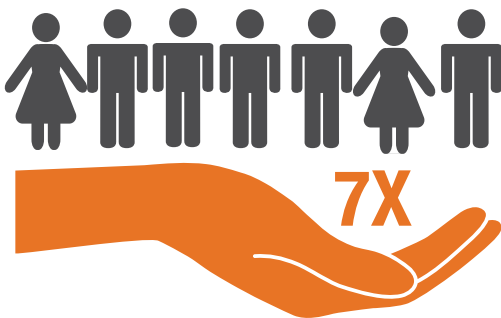


There are significant gains in Aboriginal kindergarten participation. In 2008, almost two thirds of Aboriginal four-year-olds attended kindergarten (62 per cent) compared to 92.4 per cent participation for all Victorian four-year-olds. In 2015, 82.2 per cent of Aboriginal children attended kindergarten, compared to 98.1 per cent participation for all Victorian four-year-olds. This represents a gain of 20.2 percentage points in kindergarten participation since 2008. If kindergarten participation continues to increase for Aboriginal Victorians, Victoria is on track to close the gap.

Kindergarten participation: on track to close the gap.

Headline Indicator 3: reduce the rate of Aboriginal child protection substantiations

Child protection substantiation



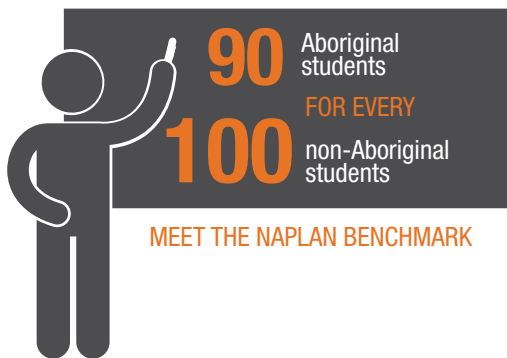
ABORIGINAL CHILDREN ARE **7X MORE LIKELY** TO BE THE SUBJECT OF A CHILD PROTECTION SUBSTANTIATION

Aboriginal children are over seven times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be the subject of a child protection substantiation. Despite longer-term increases in the number of child protection substantiations for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal children has remained stable since 2008.

Child protection: more effort is required to reduce the gap.

Headline Indicator 4: improve literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students

NAPLAN benchmark



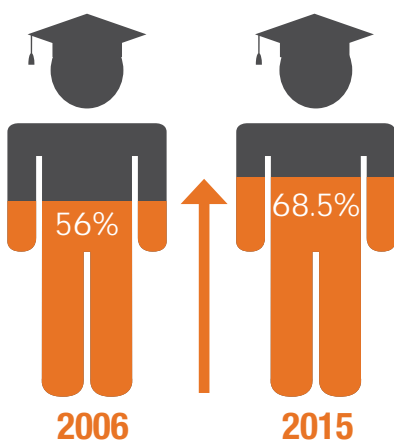
LESS THAN 90 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS
FOR EVERY 100 NON-ABORIGINAL
STUDENTS MEET NAPLAN BENCHMARKS

Despite significant gains in school retention, lower rates of attendance of Aboriginal students compared to non-Aboriginal students endure. Lower attendance rates may partly explain the lack of progress made in school performance since 2008. A smaller proportion (90 Aboriginal students for every 100 non-Aboriginal students) meets the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) benchmark for reading, writing and numeracy. There have been small but minor fluctuations in the rate of Aboriginal children achieving the numeracy benchmark for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, since 2008. The gap has widened since 2008 for reading at Year 3 and writing at Year 3 and Year 9.

NAPLAN performance: more effort is required to halve the gap.

Headline Indicator 5: increase proportion of Aboriginal people aged 20-24 who have completed Year 12 or equivalent

Year 12 attainment



Year 12 attainment continues to improve. The proportion of Aboriginal young people aged 20-24 who have completed Year 12 or equivalent has increased from 56 per cent in 2006 to 68.5 per cent in 2015, narrowing the gap in educational attainment by 10 per cent since 2006.

This is coupled with high rates of retention to year 10 of Aboriginal students (approaching 99 per cent). Student retention from Years 7 to 10 is similar to rates observed among non-Aboriginal students.

Year 12 attainment: the gap is closing.

Headline outcomes

Headline Indicator 6: increase Aboriginal labour force participation

Labour force participation



70 ABORIGINAL WORKERS FOR EVERY 100 NON-ABORIGINAL WORKERS

Workforce participation has shown signs of promise with a small but not statistically significant increase for Aboriginal Victorians from 58.6 per cent in 2008 to 63.9 per cent in 2015. However, progress has been slow and Aboriginal people remain under-represented in the workforce. Proportionately, there are 70 Aboriginal people in the workforce for every 100 non-Aboriginal people in the workforce.

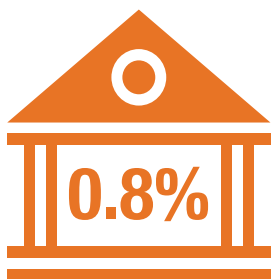
Labour force participation: small increase but still not on track to reach the target.

While the unemployment rate has stayed stable for Aboriginal people since 2008, the unemployment rate for non-Aboriginal Victorians has actually increased from 3.0 to 6.3 per cent during the same period. In 2008, the rate of unemployment among Aboriginal Victorians was 15.5 per cent and now sits around 16.4 per cent.

Unemployment rates: gap is narrowing but still not on track.

Headline Indicator 7: increase workforce participation by Aboriginal people in the public sector

Aboriginal people in the public sector



ABORIGINAL VPS STAFF

In 2010, the Victorian Government implemented *Karreeta Yirramboi*, an Aboriginal employment and career development action plan which set out to increase Aboriginal participation in the Victorian Public Service (VPS) to 1.0 per cent by 2018. As at 30 June 2015, 322 Aboriginal people were employed in the VPS (representing 0.8 per cent of the VPS workforce). Based on the current employee numbers of 37,942 employees, the VPS needs to employ an additional 57 Aboriginal staff to meet the target.

Public service workforce participation: on track to meet target.

Headline Indicator 8: improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians

Daily smoking



While rates of daily smoking have decreased by 16 per cent since 2008, smoking continues to be a health concern for Aboriginal Victorians (with almost three times the proportion of Aboriginal smokers as non-Aboriginal smokers).

High or very high rates of psychological distress



In 2015, 35.8 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians reported experiencing high or very high rates of psychological distress compared to 12.6 per cent of non-Aboriginal Victorians. This equates to Aboriginal people experiencing distress at almost three times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians.

Emergency presentations for self-harm have risen since 2007-08 from around 4 per 1,000 to around 6 per 1,000 in 2014-15. In 2014-15, the proportion of Aboriginal people presenting with self-harm related injuries is more than four times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians.

Aboriginal Victorians presenting at emergency departments



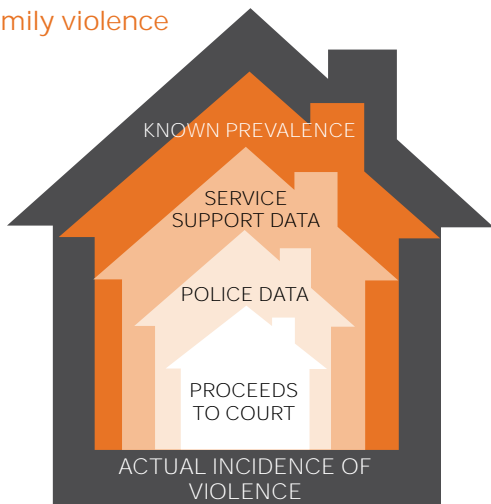
Aboriginal Victorians presented at emergency departments for alcohol-related causes at more than four times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians during 2014-15. While the rate of alcohol-related presentations among Aboriginal Victorians has fluctuated year to year, there has been no discernible improvement since 2007-08.

Improve health status: progress in reducing smoking but overall not on track to meet target.

Headline outcomes

Headline Indicator 9: reduce the incidence of Aboriginal family violence

Family violence



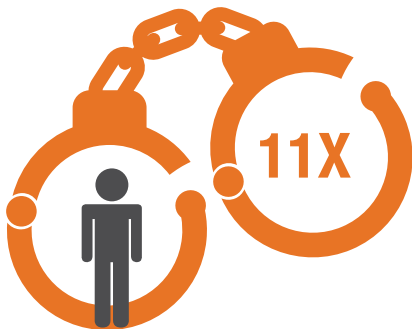
The extent of family violence in the different data collections is likely to be underestimated. This is true of all family violence data and particularly true of estimated prevalence of family violence experienced by Aboriginal people.

It is likely that only the most serious incidents are reported to the police.

Of those reported to the police only a proportion will proceed to court. At all levels depicted in the image to the left, there is the potential for under-reporting. The effect is exacerbated by the absence of consistent recording of Aboriginal status at all stages of data capture across government and service provider data. Improving family violence monitoring is a key reform agenda of the Victorian Government.

Headline Indicator 10: reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people under justice supervision

Incarceration



ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS ARE INCARCERATED AT **11X** THE RATE OF NON-ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS

There has been a significant reduction in the rate of Aboriginal adults serving a Community Based Service (CBS) Order since 2010-11 from 16 per 1,000 to 11.8 per 1,000 in 2015.

However, Aboriginal Victorians continue to be over-represented in justice supervision at almost 12 times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians.

In 2015, 261 Aboriginal young people (10-17 years) received a police caution, arrest or summons or other type of police processing.

In Victoria, Aboriginal adults are 11 times more likely to be incarcerated than Victoria's non-Aboriginal population (nationally 13 times more likely).

Aboriginal adults make up 0.7 per cent of Victoria's population but represent 8.0 per cent of the state's prisoners.

Adult justice supervision: not on track to meet target.

Headline Indicator 11: reduce the proportion of Aboriginal people who return to prison within two years of release

Recidivism



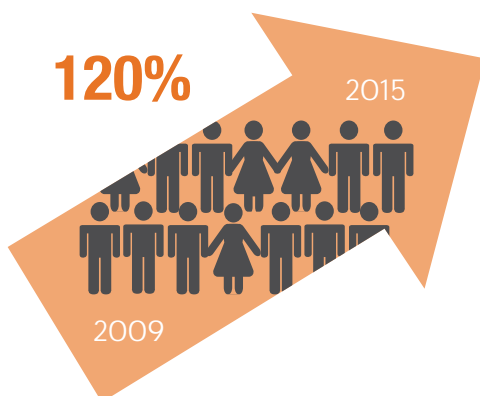
ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS RETURN TO PRISON WITHIN **2 YEARS** OF RELEASE AT **1.4X** THE RATE OF NON-ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS

Since 2014-15, the proportion of prisoners released who returned to prison within two years was 59.7 per cent for Aboriginal prison population and 42.6 per cent for non-Aboriginal prisoners. The proportion of Aboriginal people who return to prison (in 2014-15, this was around 1.4 times the rate of non-Aboriginal prisoners) has not changed significantly since 2007-08.

Recidivism: not on track to meet target.

Headline Indicator 12: strengthening Aboriginal culture and supporting Aboriginal people's engagement with community and society

Number of registered LAN participants



Membership of LANs has expanded by 120 per cent since 2009 from 959 to 2,440 members.

In 2015, 15 Aboriginal people were inducted into the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll.

Twelve new Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) have been registered under the *Native Title Act 1993* (NT Act) since the year 2012-13 – nine in the year 2013-14; one in the year 2014-15; and two in 2015-2016.

Progress against Key Indicators



Maternal health and early childhood



Headline Indicator 1: Improve infant survival and health

Close the gap in the perinatal mortality rate by 2023.

Close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal babies with a birth weight below 2,500 grams by 2023.

The proportion of Aboriginal children attending Maternal and Child Health service at key age milestones.

Key point

- Gains have been made in the rate of low birth weight.

Overview

The health of mothers and babies during early childhood has been shown to have far reaching impacts on wellbeing into the adult years. Early access to care leads to better identification and management of maternal and fetal risk factors. A mix of universal services and specialist Aboriginal services provide maternal and child health (MCH) services to Aboriginal Victorians.

Perinatal death rates

The perinatal death rate includes fetal deaths (stillbirths) and deaths of live-born babies within the first 28 days after birth. There has been a significant decline in perinatal deaths nationally for babies of non-Aboriginal mothers (around 18 per cent) since 2008, while the Victorian rate for non-Aboriginal mothers has remained relatively stable. For babies of Aboriginal mothers, this figure is highly volatile due to relatively small numbers, and has fluctuated considerably between 2008 and 2014.

Low birth weight

Low birth weight refers to babies born under 2,500 grams. The rate of low birth weight has declined for babies of Aboriginal mothers by two percentage points from 14.2 in 2008 to 12.2 per cent in 2014. This is a small and not statistically significant decrease. In 2014, almost twice as many babies of Aboriginal mothers as babies of non-Aboriginal mothers were born with a low birth weight (over-representation rate=1.8).

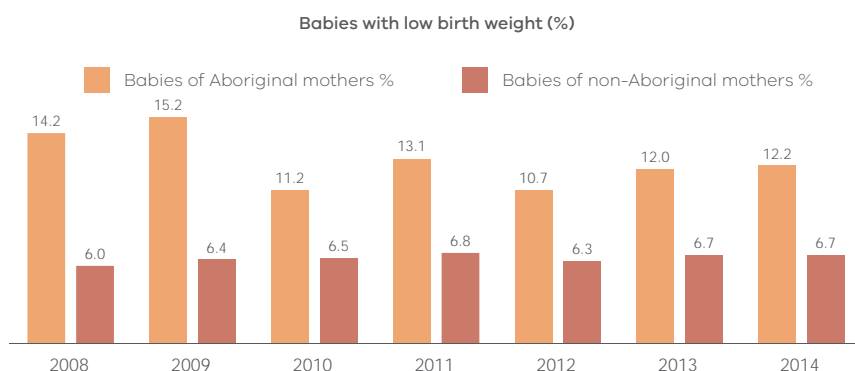
Key programs, services and initiatives

The role of **Koori Maternity Services (KMS)** is critical. In 2015, approximately 60 per cent of women who identified as Aboriginal and who gave birth in Victoria accessed antenatal care from a KMS. Nearly 50 per cent of women presented for antenatal care at less than 13 weeks gestation. The 14 KMS programs across Victoria continue to increase the participation of Aboriginal women in antenatal and postnatal care.

“Overall, we know that in Australia as a whole, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families continue to experience rates of stillbirth, pre-term birth, low birth weight and neonatal death that are 2-3 times higher than other Australian women.”

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Babies with low birth weight



Headline Indicator 1: Improve infant survival and health

Reduce the rate of reported smoking use in pregnancy by mothers of Aboriginal babies.

Key point

- Smoking in the final month of pregnancy has declined, but the gap in smoking during pregnancy has widened.

Smoking within first 20 weeks of pregnancy

The rate of smoking in mothers during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy has not changed significantly since 2009 for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers.

Smoking within one month of delivery

Overall, there has been a decline in smoking by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal mothers within one month prior to delivery. However, the rate of decline has been slower for Aboriginal women. The rate of smoking within one month prior to delivery decreased significantly by more than a third, from 8.0 per cent in 2008 to 5.0 per cent in 2015 for non-Aboriginal mothers. The rate of smoking also decreased for Aboriginal mothers from 40 per cent to 34.2 per cent although this decrease was not statistically significant.

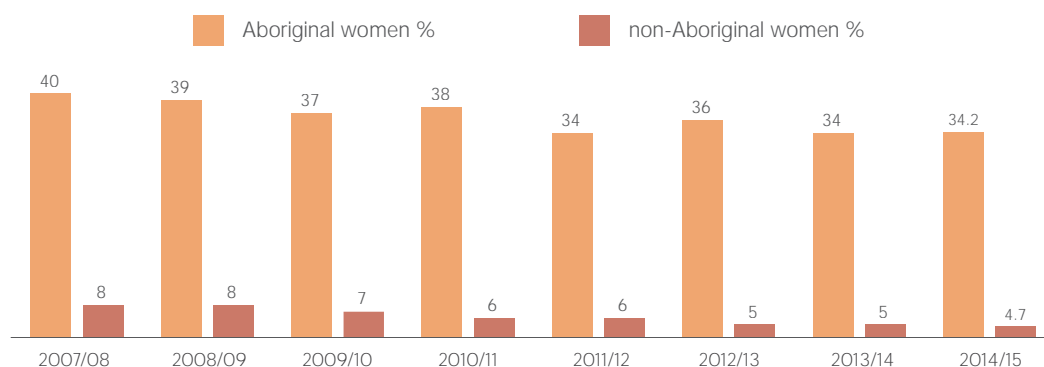
Importantly, the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal women who smoke during the final four weeks of pregnancy has widened between 2008 and 2015, from five times to more than seven times the rate of non-Aboriginal women.

It is important to recognise the unique cultural context and experiences of colonisation that have shaped the patterns of tobacco use among many Aboriginal people in Victoria. This includes higher rates of psychosocial stress.

“In a recent study by the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute¹, it was found that most Aboriginal women who participated had at least one stressful event (such as the death of a family member) or social health issue (eg. housing problems, family violence, or drug and alcohol problems) during pregnancy. Over half (56 per cent) experienced three or more stressful issues and one in five (20 per cent) experienced 5-12 stressful issues.”

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Smoking within one month of delivery



1 Brown SJ et al, 2016, Aboriginal Families Study Policy Brief No 4: Improving the health of Aboriginal babies, Melbourne

The proportion of Aboriginal children attending MCH services at key age milestones.

Key point

- The gap in access of Aboriginal children to the universal MCH service is decreasing.

Overview

The participation gap between Aboriginal and all children in MCH visits has decreased in all but one key age and stage visit since 2007-08. The gap has increased at the two-week visit by 2.1 percentage points. The largest participation gap decrease was at the 12-month visit, where the gap has decreased by 14.2 percentage points.

From 2013-14 to the 2014-15 reporting period, there was a decrease in the participation gap between Aboriginal and all children at the home visit, and consultations at four weeks, eight months, 12 months, 18 months, two years, and 3.5 years. The biggest decrease in the participation gap can be seen at the 18 month consultation, which decreased by 7.2 percentage points, and the 12-month consultation, which decreased by 6.1 percentage points. However, the gap has widened at the two-week, eight-week and four-month consultations, with the biggest increase at the four-month visit, where the gap widened by 3.6 percentage points since the 2013-14 figure.

Key programs, services and initiatives

The continued gap highlights the need to improve accessibility of services and ensure that they are culturally responsive to the needs of Aboriginal children and families. The Victorian Government provides a suite of professional development opportunities to MCH nurses to better support children and their families, including through a twice-yearly state-wide MCH Nurses Conference administered in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria and Bridges Out of Poverty training. Local councils delivering the MCH service provide a range of professional development

opportunities to support their workforce to meet the needs of their local communities. MCH nurses are also required to complete 40 hours of professional development to maintain their registration.

In addition to the universal MCH service, other programs that provide additional support for Aboriginal families include:

- **The In-Home Support program**, which is delivered through ACCOs in six locations across Victoria and works with Aboriginal families to increase the health, learning, and wellbeing of Aboriginal children through the sharing of best practice models for parenting zero to three year olds.
- **The Home-Based Learning program**, which is delivered through ACCOs in three locations across Victoria and aims to increase successful kindergarten and early school experiences by recognising parents as the primary educators for their children and working with Aboriginal families to build upon positive home-learning environments for children aged three to five years.
- **Best Start program**, which operates in 30 locations across Victoria, six of which are Aboriginal Best Start sites. These partnerships focus on Aboriginal children and children experiencing vulnerability. They ensure access to quality early childhood experiences through kindergarten, supported playgroups and MCH services.

Marrung outlines a number of key actions to increase participation in early years services through supporting services to be more inclusive and responsive. This includes working with Aboriginal communities to co-design an MCH service-delivery model to deliver more culturally responsive and high-quality services through both ACCOs and current service providers to promote stronger outcomes for Aboriginal children.

The Victorian Government has worked with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI), VACCA, and VACCHO to develop and implement *Marrung*, which sets out a 10-year vision for delivering the *Education State* to Aboriginal Victorians and is underpinned by the principle of self-determination.



Headline Indicator 2: Increase kindergarten participation

Close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal four-year-old children having access to a high-quality kindergarten program by 2014. (*NIRA target altered in December 2015 to 95 per cent of all Aboriginal four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025*).

The number of Aboriginal three year old children participating in a kindergarten program.

Key points

- The gap in four-year-old kindergarten participation is on track to be closed.
- *Marrung* includes actions to improve kindergarten participation and strengthen Aboriginal culture in the curriculum.
- The Victorian Government offers fee subsidies for three- and four-year-old kindergarten programs for Aboriginal children in Victoria.

Overview

Evidence indicates that children participating in high-quality kindergarten are better placed to transition to, and succeed in, primary school and subsequent education and training. The

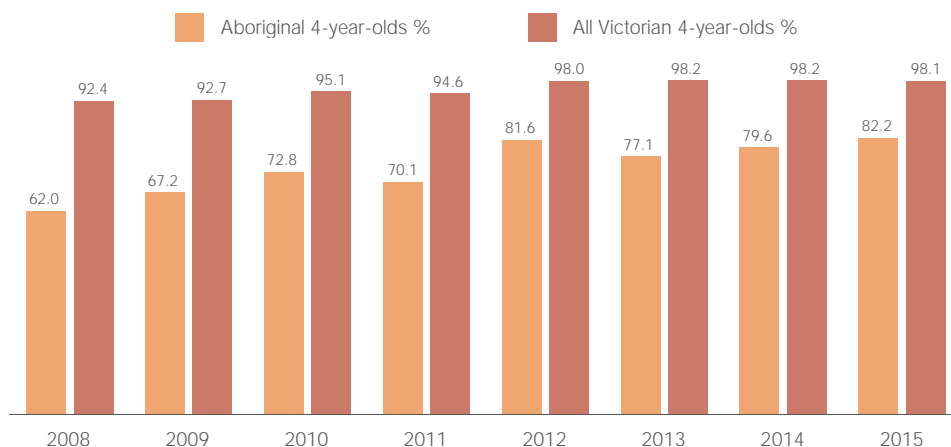
Victorian Government continues to support access of three- and four-year-old Aboriginal children to kindergarten through the provision of fee subsidies as well as funding a number of programs. *Marrung* includes actions to improve kindergarten participation and strengthen the focus on Aboriginal culture and language in the curriculum.

Although the VAAF target to close the gap by 2014 was not achieved, great progress has been made to close the gap in kindergarten attendance. The NIRA target is 95 per cent of all Aboriginal four-year olds to be enrolled in kindergarten by 2025 and Victoria is on track to meet this.

Kindergarten participation rates for Aboriginal children have increased from 62 per cent in 2008 to 82.2 per cent in 2015 and 92.4 to 98.1 per cent for non-Aboriginal children. This has resulted in a narrowing of the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participation in kindergarten from 30.4 per cent in 2008 to 15.9 per cent in 2015. In 2014, there needed to be around 222 more Aboriginal four-year-olds in kindergarten to achieve parity with the participation rate for non-Aboriginal children.

The number of Aboriginal three-year-old children enrolled in kindergarten continues to rise, with 507 (or 41.6 per cent of) Aboriginal three-year-olds enrolled in kindergarten in 2015. This is a steady increase on the 2014 figure of 462 enrolments (37.1 per cent) and a significant increase from 2009 (238 children, or 27.7 per cent).

Kindergarten participation (4-year-olds)



Headline Indicator 2: Increase kindergarten participation

Key programs, services and initiatives

In addition to the In-Home Support, Home-Based Learning, and Best Start programs, other Victorian Government programs supporting Aboriginal children in the early years include:

- The **Koorie Kids Shine campaign**, which focusses on encouraging more parents of Aboriginal children to enrol them in three- and four-year-old kindergarten. This includes direct engagement with support services and local government in areas with higher numbers of Aboriginal families.
- The **Koorie Education Workforce (KEW)** of more than 120 staff, who are working with early years services to support increased participation in early years programs and transition to school. The KEW supports systemic change and improved learning and development outcomes. This includes cultural inclusion initiatives and strengthening community partnerships. Cultural inclusion is important for Aboriginal children. Education centres play a vital role in helping children break down stereotypes and grow to understand and appreciate Victoria's Aboriginal heritage. For Aboriginal children, culturally relevant care that reflects a child's home culture and language builds positive self-identity and improves school readiness.

CASE STUDY: KOORIE KIDS SHINE AT KINDERGARTEN

Koorie Kids Shine at Kindergarten is a campaign focussing on encouraging more Koorie children to start three- and four-year-old kindergarten. Recognising the importance of early childhood education in a child's first years of life to their lifelong learning, wellbeing and success, Koorie children have access to two years of free kindergarten in the years before school.

The Koorie Kids Shine at Kindergarten campaign aims to raise the awareness of parents and carers of Koorie children of the benefits of an early childhood education, of the grants available to support their child's participation and that it is never too late to enrol their child in kindergarten. Koorie Kids Shine at Kindergarten includes a suite of promotional materials including posters, post cards, information sheets for kindergartens, families and referring agencies, and digital stories. These are available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/kindergarten/Pages/aboriginal.aspx> and were developed in consultation with Koorie Engagement Support Officers from across Victoria. The campaign includes direct engagement with kindergarten services, peak agencies, local government and support services, key referral agencies and ACCOs.

Headline Indicator 3: Reduce the rate of child protection substantiations

By 2023, the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal child protection substantiations will be reduced by 75 per cent.

Key point

- More Aboriginal children are placed in culturally appropriate care but over-representation is a concern.

Overview

Aboriginal organisations know best how to provide effective early intervention and support to Aboriginal families. The causal factors underpinning the over-representation of Aboriginal children in child protection are complex and include the impact of past policies and intergenerational trauma.

CASE STUDY: SECTION 18 OF THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES ACT 2005

As part of its commitment to self-determination, the Victorian Government has made significant legislative changes to empower Aboriginal communities and leaders to support vulnerable children. Section 18 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* allows the Secretary of DHHS to authorise the principal officer of an Aboriginal agency to assume responsibility for the welfare of a child subject to a Children's Court protection order. VACCA has been funded to continue delivery of section 18 services.

The proportion of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care who are placed with relatives, kin or in Aboriginal residential care increased from 60.4 per cent in 2013 to 68.8 per cent in 2015.

Rates of children on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care have continued to rise but the proportion of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care remains stable despite longer-term increases in numbers:

- The rate of child protection substantiations for Aboriginal children has increased from 37.8 per 1,000 in 2008 to 67.4 per 1,000 in 2015.
- The rate of child protection substantiations also increased during the same period for non-Aboriginal children from 5 per 1,000 to 9.4 per 1,000.
- The rate of over-representation of Aboriginal children remains unchanged since 2008 at around seven Aboriginal children for every one non-Aboriginal child.
- Victoria is well above the national rate for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children where notifications have been substantiated.
- The increase in the rate per 1,000 has been greater in Victoria (86 per cent) than the rate increase nationally (35 per cent).

Victorian Government reforms that support increased reporting of child neglect or abuse and family violence are likely to have contributed to the increases in these rates.

“The indicators reveal a mixed picture with a closure in the gap in some areas and not in others. Indicators at the coercive end of the service scale such as justice and child protection are good indicators of problems early on or ‘upstream’ not being adequately addressed. Research in NSW of the prison population shows that not accessing early support or therapeutic services leads to child protection intervention and incarceration.”

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Headline Indicator 3: Reduce the rate of child protection substantiations

Key programs, services and initiatives

The Victorian Government continues to work with the Aboriginal community to build positive, culturally appropriate responses. In June 2016, the Minister for Families and Children announced a \$2.82 million investment over the next two years to fund key initiatives under development by ACF, and to establish a transition team to develop and implement a plan to transfer Aboriginal children and young people back to the care of Aboriginal organisations and communities.

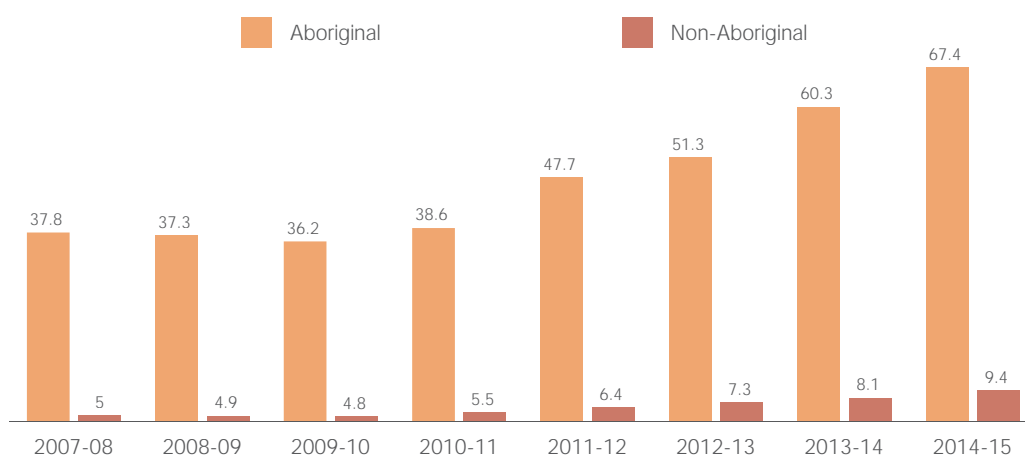
CASE STUDY: TASKFORCE 1000

Taskforce 1000 is a joint project between DHHS and the Commission for Children and Young People to review the circumstances of around 1,000 Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. It seeks to improve outcomes for children in out-of-home care and involves three elements:

- a Steering Committee including senior officers across government, ACCOs, and community service organisations
- desktop surveys to gather information
- the formation of area panels.

The Taskforce found the main factors causing Aboriginal children to enter out-of-home care are family violence, parental mental health, parental substance misuse, and neglect. There are now 17 area-based action plans being implemented collaboratively with the Aboriginal community.

Child protection substantiation (per 1,000)





Headline Indicator 4: Improve literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students

Headline Indicator 5: Increase the proportion of Aboriginal young people aged 20-24 who have completed at least Year 12 or equivalent

By 2018, halve the gap for Aboriginal students in reading, writing, and numeracy.

School attendance rates for Aboriginal students. (*NIRA target added in October 2014 to close the gap in school attendance within five years*).

Retention of Aboriginal students to Year 10.

Key points

- Progress in retention to Year 10 and Year 12 has been made but the percentage of Aboriginal students meeting NAPLAN benchmarks has not shown significant improvement since 2008.
- School absenteeism has improved but remains a concern.
- Through *Marrung*, the Victorian Government is embedding aspirations and outcomes of Aboriginal students as core business across all services.

Overview

Better education and training outcomes enable more Aboriginal people in Victoria to have increased choice and economic opportunity, and healthier and more prosperous lives. *Marrung's* strategies for improving Aboriginal engagement and learning include a focus on targeting literacy and numeracy. The emphasis in the Plan is on delivering an inclusive, culturally competent and responsive curriculum to all students through the active involvement of local Aboriginal communities.

School retention and absenteeism

There have been significant gains in school retention since 2008 however lower rates of school attendance compared to non-Aboriginal students remain a concern. Absenteeism contributes to lower academic achievement, making it more difficult for students to successfully complete school.

Apparent retention rates are calculated as the number of full-time school students in Year 10 or 12 as a percentage of their respective cohort at the start of Year 7. The Year 7 to 10 apparent retention rates for Aboriginal students increased from 98.5 per cent in 2014 to 103.9 per cent in 2015, continuing a general upward trend since 2005. There has been little change in attendance rates for Aboriginal students across all year levels since 2008 and absenteeism remains higher than among non-Aboriginal students. During 2014 and 2015, Aboriginal students on average missed between 10 per cent (Year 4) and 20 per cent (Year 10) of school compared to non-Aboriginal students who on average missed between 7.0 per cent and 10 per cent for the same year.

Headline Indicator 4: Improve literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students

Headline Indicator 5: Increase the proportion of Aboriginal young people aged 20-24 who have completed at least Year 12 or equivalent

NAPLAN attainment

A higher percentage of Victorian Aboriginal students meet the NAPLAN benchmarks in reading, numeracy and writing than the national average for Aboriginal students. However, performance against NAPLAN benchmarks for reading, writing and numeracy has not improved significantly for Aboriginal Victorian students compared to non-Aboriginal Victorian students since 2008.

Reading

The gap in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students meeting the minimum benchmark for reading since 2008 has widened significantly by 2.7 percentage points at Year 3 and narrowed significantly at Year 9 by 1.5 percentage points. In 2015:

- 86 per cent of Aboriginal Year 3 students achieved the reading benchmark compared with 96 per cent of non-Aboriginal students.
- 82 per cent of Aboriginal Year 5 students achieved the reading benchmark compared with 95 per cent of non-Aboriginal students.
- 88 per cent of Aboriginal Year 7 students achieved the reading benchmark compared with 96 per cent of non-Aboriginal students.
- 80 per cent of Aboriginal Year 9 students achieved the reading benchmark compared with 94 per cent of non-Aboriginal students.

Persuasive writing

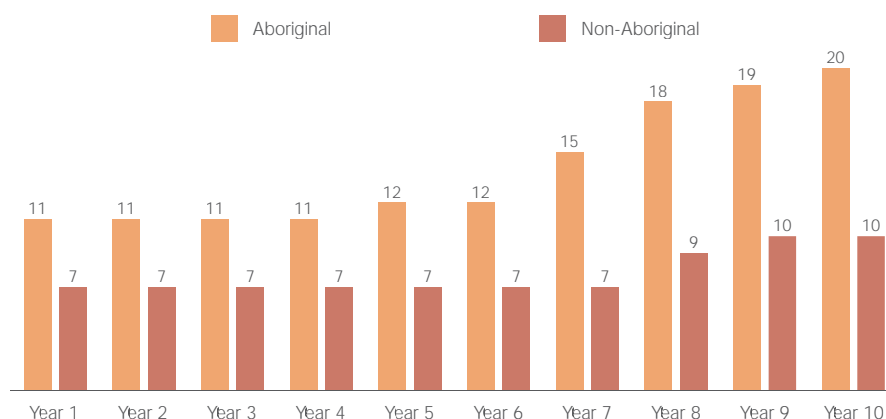
The gap has increased across all year levels for persuasive writing since 2011 (the first year of this test), by 2.2 percentage points at Year 3, 1.5 at Year 5, 1.5 at Year 7, and 6.1 percentage points at Year 9.

Numeracy

The gap in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students meeting the minimum benchmark for numeracy since 2008, has narrowed by 1.7 percentage points at Year 5, 0.6 percentage points at Year 7 and 6.3 percentage points at Year 9. The gap widened in numeracy since 2008 at Year 3 by 6.6 percentage points. These changes are not significant. The achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students have remained persistent with little change since 2008. In 2015:

- 85 per cent of Aboriginal Year 3 students achieved the numeracy benchmark compared with 96 per cent of non-Aboriginal students.
- 85 per cent of Aboriginal Year 5 students achieved the numeracy benchmark compared with 96 per cent of non-Aboriginal students.
- 88 per cent of Aboriginal Year 7 students achieved the numeracy benchmark compared with 97 per cent of non-Aboriginal students.
- 85 per cent of Aboriginal Year 9 students achieved the numeracy benchmark compared with 96 per cent of non-Aboriginal students.

School absenteeism, Victorian government schools (% of school year, 2014-2015)





Headline Indicator 4: Improve literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students

Headline Indicator 5: Increase the proportion of Aboriginal young people aged 20-24 who have completed at least Year 12 or equivalent

Key programs, services and initiatives

Marrung is a 10-year plan to improve learning and development outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians across early childhood, schools, and post compulsory education by leveraging both universal services and targeted initiatives. It will support schools and services to be more responsive to Aboriginal learners by building a system that values and respects Aboriginal people and cultures.


More inclusive and supportive educational settings will have an impact on school attendance and retention of Aboriginal students, which will positively affect student outcomes, including NAPLAN achievement.

In addition to the KEW, there are a number of targeted initiatives to support improved outcomes, including:

- The **Early Years Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program**, available for all Aboriginal students in Prep to Year 3 who require extra support to meet expected levels, and the **Early Years Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Extended Program**, which will provide an extra two years support to students not meeting minimum standards.
- *Education State* 'catch-up' funding, which provides additional extra funding to secondary schools to support students who did not meet NAPLAN minimum standards in Year 5.
- **Koorie Academy of Excellence**, which runs in northern metropolitan Melbourne, assists Aboriginal students to remain engaged in education and complete Year 12, and to excel and pursue their desired tertiary pathway.
- **LOOKOUT, Navigator, and Reconnect programs**, which will assist in identifying students who are at risk of disengaging, or who have already disengaged with schooling, and support them to continue or re-engage with education.

There are also a number of initiatives to support students to complete or continue their education in their chosen pathway, including:

- 21 **Koorie Liaison Officers** across the TAFE sector to provide support to Aboriginal learners to achieve improved education and training outcomes and strengthen the capacity of providers to ensure culturally inclusive resources and programs that respect the value of Aboriginal culture.
- *Wurreker* Implementation Plans, which are required at every TAFE and which outline strategies to support improved outcomes for Aboriginal students, improved Aboriginal employment with the TAFE, and a positive learning environment.
- Eight **Wurreker Brokers**, facilitating Aboriginal community engagement with training providers and industry.
- Education scholarships for high-achieving Aboriginal students studying Years 11 and 12 in a Victorian government school.
- Fee support available for Aboriginal learners in government-subsidised training and a 1.5 loading to VET providers enrolling Aboriginal learners through the Victorian Training Guarantee.



“ VAEAI has worked with unwavering commitment for many years to improve educational access, experiences, and outcomes for Koorie children, young people and families. We aspire for success for every Koorie child in education, achieving their developmental potential and their ambitions for life. The launch of *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026*, developed in partnership with VAEAI as the Department of Education and Training’s principal partner, is a significant milestone in achieving this aspiration.

VAEAI is looking forward to seeing strong results flowing in local Koorie communities from *Marrung* and seeing high levels of Koorie participation and confidence in early childhood, schooling, training and higher education. VAEAI also sees that *Marrung* will be integral for growing the knowledge and understanding of Koorie history and culture throughout the education system, for all children, and in the community more broadly.

*We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Victorian Government to implement *Marrung* and ensure it achieves its aspirational vision.”*

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated



Economic participation



Headline Indicator 6: Increase Aboriginal labour force participation

Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians.

The proportion of Aboriginal people in various income bands.

The representation of Aboriginal people on boards and committees.

Key points

- Aboriginal Victorians remain under-represented in the workforce.
- More Aboriginal people in the workforce means more vibrant industries.

Overview

Aboriginal Victorians hold unique knowledge as First Nations Peoples, have broad community networks and offer new approaches and perspectives across diverse industries. And yet they remain under-represented in the workforce. A key priority of the Victorian Government is to remove barriers to employment and increase the number and range of opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians to secure jobs, move into management positions and establish or expand businesses. The Commonwealth's policies and universal services also heavily influence outcomes in this space, including through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, Indigenous Procurement Policy, and employment services.

“ *The Commonwealth should be a stronger partner in addressing income support and employment issues.”*

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Workforce participation

For people between 15 and 64 years old actively looking for work, labour force participation has shown signs of promise. There has been a small but not statistically significant increase for Aboriginal Victorians from 59 per cent in 2008 to 64 per cent in 2015 (compared to 76.3 per cent of non-Aboriginal Victorians). However, progress has been slow and Aboriginal people remain under-represented in the workforce. The employment-to-population ratio for Aboriginal Victorians was 52.7 per cent relative to non-Aboriginal Australians at 71.5 per cent.

Unemployment rate

The unemployment percentage for people aged 16 to 64 increased from 15.5 per cent in 2008 to 16.4 per cent in 2015 for Aboriginal Victorians. The unemployment rate for non-Aboriginal Victorians also increased during the same period from 3.0 per cent to 6.3 per cent. While employment has not improved significantly for Aboriginal Victorians, the gap in employment has narrowed. In 2008, the proportion of Aboriginal people who were unemployed was five times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians. In 2015, that gap has narrowed to around two and a half times. This is largely because employment has decreased since 2008 for non-Aboriginal Victorians while remaining relatively stable for Aboriginal Victorians.

Headline Indicator 6: Increase Aboriginal labour force participation

Income

Average weekly income data shows that Aboriginal Victorians earn consistently less than non-Aboriginal Victorians. Only 2.1 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians are represented in the highest income bracket, compared with 6.8 per cent of non-Aboriginal Victorians (in 2011). However, it is also clear that there has been some improvement, with fewer Aboriginal Victorians represented in the lowest income bracket in 2011.

Professions and sectors

At present, data shows that Aboriginal Victorians are employed in high numbers in health care and social assistance. While strong Aboriginal representation in this area is vital, the low numbers employed in professional, scientific and technical services and other sectors suggest that these sectors may present barriers for Aboriginal people. This is problematic given that these are key growth areas. It is also vital that Aboriginal people are employed in all professions and sectors and not just in Aboriginal-specific areas. Ensuring that Aboriginal people are employed in larger numbers across all sectors is not just about pathways for unemployed people into employment. It is also about supporting already employed people to acquire skills to move into new growth areas where they can progress their career paths.

Representation on boards and committees

Aboriginal Victorians are strongly represented on boards and committees. At 0.7 per cent of the population, Aboriginal Victorians make up 1.2 per cent of board appointments. This shows that government is benefiting from specialist Aboriginal knowledge at senior decision-making levels.

“ *We need to advocate for business development into plans and strategies that target Aboriginal families – start to build family focused choice through family focused entrepreneurialism.”*

Kerry Arabena, Director, Kinaway – the Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board

The Victorian Government recognises that a strong economic base is vital to achieving self-determination and this year established the VAEB. The VAEB is co-chaired by Karen Milward, Chair of Kinaway, and Mark Stone, Chief Executive of the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The VAEB's role is to champion economic development initiatives and advise the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on projects that can address barriers to Aboriginal economic development.

“ *Aboriginal people in business still face discrimination across all different platforms (buyers, suppliers, clients, and contracts) as the stereotypes and perceptions of Aboriginal people are still out there in the mainstream business world making it much harder for us to be taken seriously to deliver a high-quality service or product.”*

Karen Milward, Chair, Kinaway, and Co-Chair Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board

The VAEB will oversee the Aboriginal Business Strategy, to be released shortly. The Strategy will contribute to improved employment outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians by helping to grow both the size of individual businesses as well as overall numbers of Aboriginal businesses in the sector.

“ Over 90 per cent of Victorian Aboriginal people experience discrimination in engaging with Institutions of any kind. Why would people want to work in racist institutions? The negative mainstream attitudes are still a major barrier for Aboriginal people in business successfully securing contracts and tenders at all tier levels.”

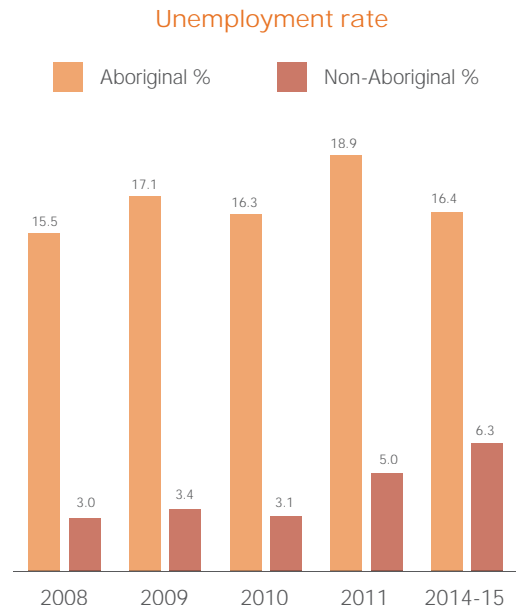
Kerry Arabena, Director, Kinaway – the Victorian Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce

Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN)

The 2016/17 Budget allocated \$53 million over four years for Jobs Victoria, the majority of which is allocated to the new JVEN. This will provide additional resources for work-ready programs, including targeted support for Aboriginal jobseekers, and will connect employers with prospective employees.

Major infrastructure Aboriginal employment targets

Major infrastructure projects, including the Caulfield-Dandenong Level Crossing Removal Project, and the Metro Tunnel Project, are being used to leverage Aboriginal employment outcomes by requiring tenderers to meet an Aboriginal employment target.



Headline Indicator 7: Increase workforce participation by Aboriginal people in the public sector

By 2018 employment of Aboriginal people in the Victorian Public Service (VPS) will increase to 1.0 per cent of total employees.

Key point

- The VPS is only 57 more Aboriginal employees away from meeting its 1.0 per cent employment target.

VPS staffing

Aboriginal staff are invaluable in redefining the relationship between government and Aboriginal communities.

As at 30 June 2015, 322 people employed in the VPS identified as Aboriginal. This was an increase of 34 staff members from 2010 when there were 288. Based on the current employee size of 37,942 employees, the VPS only needs to employ an additional 57 Aboriginal staff to meet the target.

The 322 staff members contribute specialist knowledge through professional and lived experiences and strengthen linkages with the Aboriginal community.

The VPS continues to employ the highest number of Aboriginal employees compared with other areas of the public sector. The next two largest areas of Aboriginal employment in the public sector are public health care (222 employees) and government schools (202 employees). Aboriginal staff employed in the public sector are split fairly evenly across professional (32 per cent), community and personal service (28 per

cent), and clerical and administrative (29 per cent) work classifications. The typical income for an Aboriginal person employed in the public sector is \$50,000-\$69,000 (35 per cent) followed by the next highest income band at \$70,000-\$89,000. Five per cent (53 Aboriginal people) earn above \$110,000. It is important to note concerns raised by VACCHO about the impacts of this on the ACCO sector, which struggles to compete with the VPS for talented Aboriginal staff due the difficulty of offering competitive wages within current funding constraints.

Aboriginal Employment Unit

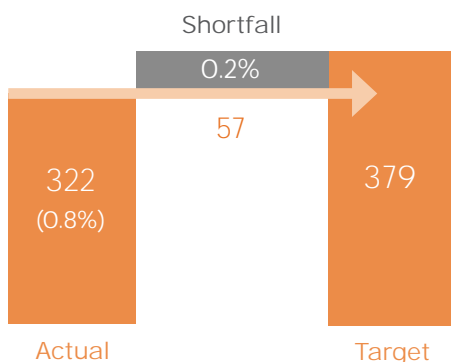
The Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) established the Aboriginal Employment Unit (AEU) in January 2016. In its first six months, the AEU has focused on: administration of the Aboriginal Pathway to the GRADS; development of models for the Aboriginal Undergraduate Cadetship and career development programs; and planning to develop an Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

The Aboriginal Pathway to GRADS has recruited 28 participants since it commenced in 2013. This year the AEU has placed seven Aboriginal graduates from a record 11 applications received. However, there has been a high attrition rate, with four graduates leaving the program. Upon successful completion of the 12-month program, graduates receive an ongoing VPS 3 role within their department. Some graduates have gone on to take up roles at higher levels or left the VPS to pursue roles in the private sector or study. A cadetship program targeting second- and third-year Aboriginal tertiary students is in development. An initial intake planned for early 2017 will comprise eight cadets.

All Victorian Government departments have Aboriginal employment and/or inclusion plans aimed at meeting the 1.0 percent target or, in some cases, exceeding it. The AEU is now developing the next Aboriginal Employment Strategy for the Victorian public sector, which will include a stronger focus on mid-career development and leadership of Aboriginal employees.

The past year saw the launch of *Bullarto-Buluk* (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan 2016-18); *Munganin-Gadhaba Achieve Together* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Aboriginal Inclusion Plan 2016-20); and the *Department of Health and Human Services, Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2016-2021*.

VPS staff 1% quota (actual and target)





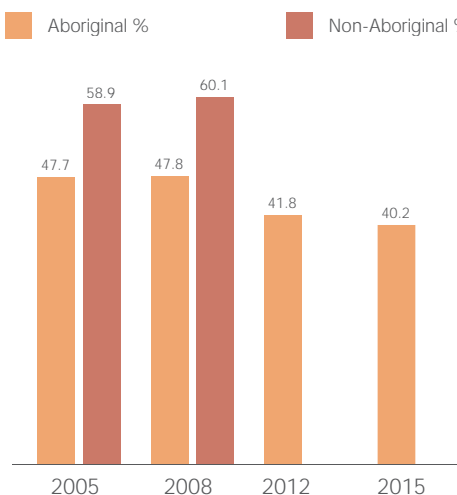
Headline Indicator 8: Improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians

Close the gap in the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians that report their health status as 'excellent or very good'.

Key point

- Fewer Aboriginal Victorians are self-rating their health as good.

Excellent or very good self-rated health status



Overview

There are strong links between health and wellbeing. Self-reported health status can provide an insight into the health status of groups who may be experiencing health problems or at risk in the future. It can also provide an indication of the proportion of the population in good health that would otherwise be absent from administrative health datasets. The percentage of Aboriginal Victorians aged 18 and over who rated their health as 'excellent' or 'very good' was 47.8 per cent in 2007-08 and 40.2 per cent in 2014-15 - a decline of eight percentage points. In 2012-13, Aboriginal Victorians rated their health at about the same level as other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, whereas in previous years they had reported a higher rating. This is a concerning trend; however, it is important to note the limitations on self-reported health status as a measure, as indicated in VACCHO's feedback on the next page.

Headline Indicator 8: Improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians

“ Health status – the downward trend in self-reported health status could be worrying but it is not necessarily reflective of Aboriginal Victorians experiencing poorer health. There are several factors to be considered in interpreting what is going on in relation to this goal.

First, there are inherent problems with the quality of self-reported health status. Two people experiencing the same health conditions may 'label' them differently depending on their own changes in and perceptions of their health over time.

There is also the problem that the data collected is not cohort-based so it does not measure changes in health status for a particular sample of people.

It is also possible that changes in health status is reflective of the increasing prevalence of age-related illnesses and conditions in a population.

It also needs to be acknowledged that through increasing community awareness about health and illness and improving access to culturally safe health services, members of the community may have changed the way they define good health for themselves over recent years. Whilst 10 years ago experiences of relatively poor health may have been considered 'normal', having a greater understanding of 'good health' and increasing access to good health care may have impacted how people define 'good health' for themselves. Their perceptions and rating of their health today may in fact be more realistic.”

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Key programs, services and initiatives

DHHS has actively embraced self-determination and collaborative working relationships with the Aboriginal community in the co-design of policies and programs. The Victorian Government comes together with VACCHO and the Commonwealth through VACKH to develop a coordinated approach on strategic and systemic issues.

Koolin Balit continues to provide the strategic direction for Aboriginal health outcomes and builds on the *Victorian Health Priorities Framework 2012-2022*. *Koolin Balit* is an integrated, whole-of-life framework with six key priorities and three enablers that support the priorities. It sets out what DHHS, together with Aboriginal communities, other parts of Government, and service providers, will do to achieve the government's commitment to improve Aboriginal health. More than half the funding to *Koolin Balit* is allocated to Regional Aboriginal Health Committees to implement locally developed and culturally informed initiatives.

CASE STUDY: CANCER PLAN

Through the *Improving Cancer Outcomes Act 2014*, the Government is committed to preparing a cancer plan for Victoria every four years. An Improving Cancer Outcomes for Aboriginal Communities Working Group has been established. The Working Group will support the implementation of the cancer plan through providing leadership and supporting collaboration to reduce the incidence, mortality, and morbidity associated with cancer.

Safety will be a key component of the new Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan, in particular the safety of Aboriginal children and families in their contact with all parts of the service system, including child protection, out-of-home care, and family violence. The Plan will adopt an outcomes-based framework that addresses the cultural and social determinants of Aboriginal health and wellbeing to achieve greater equity in health and wellbeing outcomes.

CASE STUDY: RESPONSE TO THE HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE INQUIRY

DHHS is working with the Aboriginal community in the Latrobe Valley to create mechanisms to ensure the Aboriginal community has a greater voice in shaping health programs and investments affecting the community and to recognise the need for culturally appropriate services and facilities. The Secretary of DHHS leads the Latrobe Aboriginal Community Partnership Project which will oversee the response to the Inquiry together with the Victorian Government implementation plan. With an emphasis on community-led decision making, the project's objectives are to strengthen families and communities with a focus on improving maternal and early childhood health, employment, education outcomes, and economic development, as identified by the community as priorities.

DHHS has commissioned the evaluation and development of an Aboriginal Community Engagement and Partnership Framework to establish a common understanding of the principles of Aboriginal self-determination and provide an innovative mechanism for improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians. It will articulate a model for engagement, partnership, and co-design between Aboriginal communities and DHHS to provide policy direction, program development, and advice for the transparent monitoring, implementation, and accountability of outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. The framework will also inform the governance arrangements for the Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan.

Headline Indicator 8: Improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians

Close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults reporting 'high or very high' levels of psychological distress.

Rate of self-harm among Aboriginal people.

Key point

- Rates of psychological distress and self-harm have increased.

Overview

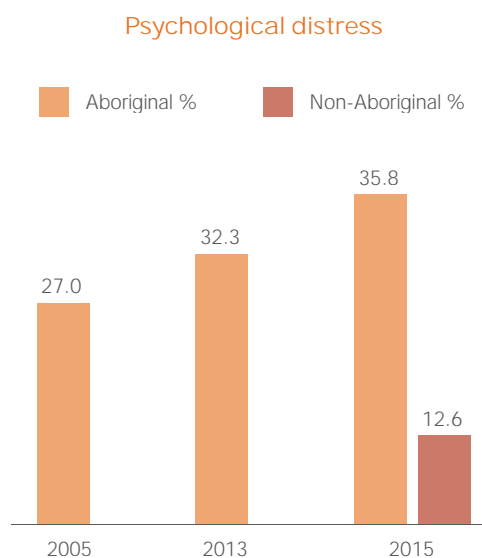
Emergency presentations for self-harm have increased from 4 per 1,000 (2008) to around 6 per 1,000 (2015). In 2014-15, 36 per cent of Aboriginal people in Victoria aged 18 years or older reported experiencing high or very high psychological distress. This is almost three times the proportion of non-Aboriginal Victorians (over-representation rate ~ 2.8).

Development of Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework

The Victorian Government's *10 Year Mental Health Plan*, released in November 2015, includes commitments to develop Aboriginal-specific initiatives. It includes a commitment to develop an Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework. This is being developed through a close partnership between government, ACCOs, and other members of Victorian Aboriginal communities. The framework will guide actions to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians, including those living with mental illness. It will support resilience, promote protective factors, and reduce the risk of poor mental health.

“The figures reported are of considerable concern. Unlike self-reported health status, there is adequate data to conclude that mental health and social and emotional wellbeing issues are increasing amongst Aboriginal Victorians. Reporting eight years into a 10-year framework that investment is now happening in Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing is almost like ‘shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted’. The investment is very welcome but has been a very long time coming and is unlikely to impact progress against this goal within the life of this version of the VAAF.”

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation



By 2023 the proportion of Aboriginal adults who are current smokers will reduce to 21 per cent.

Key point

- There has been a small decline in rates of smoking in recent years but long-standing challenges remain.

Overview

Rates of daily smoking have decreased by nearly 8.0 per cent since 2008; however, smoking remains a concern for Aboriginal Victorians (with three times the proportion of Aboriginal smokers as non-Aboriginal smokers). High smoking rates have been linked to the historical introduction of tobacco on Aboriginal missions and to current high stress indicators.

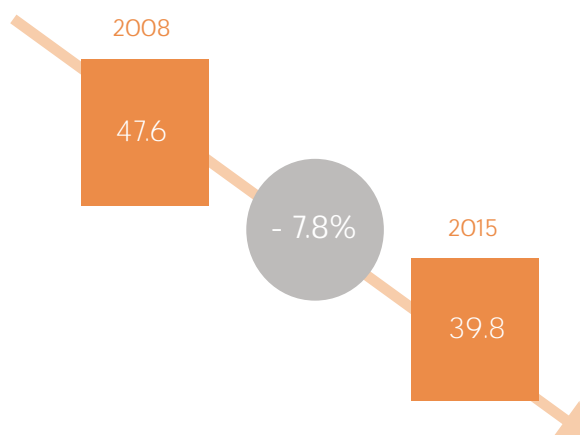
The Victorian smoking rate for Aboriginal people has been declining faster than the national rate. Victoria recorded a decline of eight percentage points while Australia recorded a decline of three percentage points between 2004-05 and 2012-13.

Key programs services and initiatives

The decline in smoking rates suggests that health initiatives that adopt culturally relevant tactics to address smoking are having a positive impact, including:

- The **Best Practice Forum for Aboriginal Tobacco Control** which, among other activities, provided workshops for health practitioners who work with Aboriginal clients to coordinate and encourage best practice in smoking cessation.
- **Victorian Quitline's** dedicated, culturally appropriate service.
- The **Working Together for Health project**, which aims to improve how prevention and early detection services are delivered to Aboriginal communities through ACCOs and mainstream health services to identify smokers, record smokers' status, and offer smoking cessation support and brief interventions.

Aboriginal smoking rates (%) have decreased since 2008



Headline Indicator 8: Improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians

The proportion of Aboriginal adults who are obese.

Key point

- Obesity is on the rise for all Victorians, including Aboriginal people.

Overview

Overweight and obesity are increasing in Australia for the population as a whole. The percentage of Aboriginal Victorians aged 18 and over who had a measured body mass index (BMI) score in the obese range has increased nine percentage points from 18.7 per cent in 2004-05 to 27.7 per cent in 2012-13.

Key programs, services and initiatives

DHHS is implementing a number of initiatives in prevention and population health in relation to Aboriginal people, led by or in partnership with ACCOs, including:

- Supporting VACCHO to implement actions from the *Victorian Aboriginal Nutrition and Physical Activity Strategy*.
- Supporting the implementation of the **Aboriginal Health Promotion and Chronic Care Partnership** health promotion programs focussing on exercise and nutrition.
- Strengthening workforce and program links in healthy eating and physical activity across government (including Commonwealth-funded Healthy Lifestyle Workers).
- Supporting ACCHOs to develop workplace nutrition and catering policies, including for community events.
- Engaging Aboriginal organisations and communities in the Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise and Personal Care Management to provide Aboriginal adults with information, skills and access to healthy food.
- Facilitating workforce mentoring partnerships through VACCHO.
- Promoting good nutrition for older Aboriginal people through one-off **Well for Life** funding.

The rate of harmful alcohol consumption among Aboriginal Victorians.

The proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who are homeless.

The proportion of Aboriginal people with a disability receiving disability services.

Key points

- Harmful alcohol consumption rates remain a challenge.
- Aboriginal Victorians continue to be over-represented in the Victorian homeless population.
- There has been a slight increase in Aboriginal Victorians accessing disability services.

Harmful alcohol consumption

Aboriginal Victorians presented at emergency departments for alcohol-related causes at more than four times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians during 2014-15. While the rate of alcohol-related presentations among Aboriginal Victorians has fluctuated year to year, there has been no discernable improvement since 2007-08.

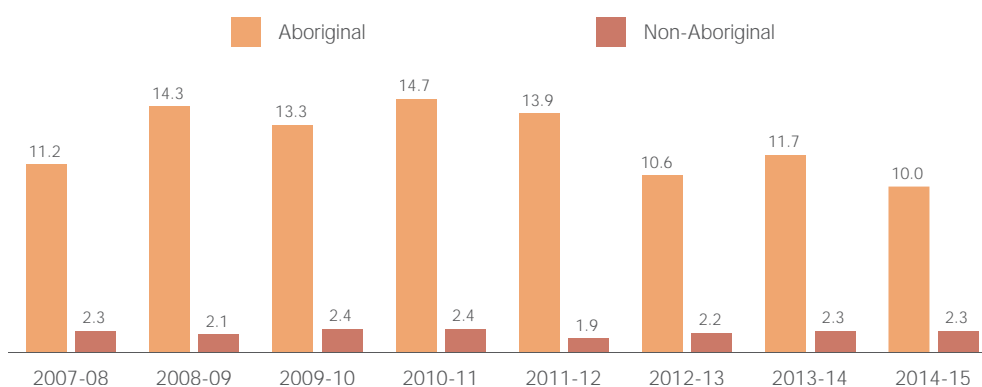
The Victorian Government developed the *Koori Alcohol Action Plan 2010-2020* in partnership with VACCHO. It recognises that for some Aboriginal Victorians the relationship with alcohol is complex and multi-layered, stemming from social and financial exclusion, intergenerational poverty, and trauma. Specific actions, developed and led by Aboriginal people, are required to prevent and reduce the harms associated with alcohol misuse in Victorian Aboriginal communities.

Homelessness

Nationally, Victoria has the lowest rate of homelessness experienced by Aboriginal people. The Victorian rate at the 2011 Census was 3.7 per cent, well below the national rate of 4.8 per cent. The rate of Aboriginal people accessing homelessness services in Victoria is at 9.0 per cent. This is a marginal increase since 2011-12 but less than the national increase (1.0 per cent in Victoria compared to 1.8 per cent nationally). The long-term trend has seen a slight increase in Aboriginal Victorians accessing homelessness services from 8.0 per cent in 2011-12 to 9.0 per cent in 2014-15. The increase over the last year has been marginal; from 8.8 per cent in 2013-14 to 9.0 per cent in 2014-15.

In 2014-15, Aboriginal Victorians were almost 2.5 times more likely than non-Aboriginal Victorians to live in households that are overcrowded (defined as requiring one or more extra bedrooms) – 6.7 per cent compared to 2.7 per cent. This is down from 9.1 per cent versus 3.1 per cent in Victoria in 2005.

Alcohol-related emergency department presentations rate (per 1,000)



Headline Indicator 8: Improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians

The Government is committed to working through Aboriginal partnership mechanisms, such as that with AHV, to increase its focus on Aboriginal tenants with complex needs in order to promote co-design and delivery of more coordinated 'wrap-around' services. A pilot will be conducted in the Whittlesea area. This is in addition to the important work that ACCOs managing housing programs outside of AHV already deliver in relation to providing wrap-around services for their clients.

Disability

There has been a small increase between 2012-13 and 2014-15 for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people with a disability receiving disability services. The Victorian Government is implementing a number of Aboriginal specific activities as part of the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in partnership with the Aborigines Advancement League and Balit Narrum, starting with the recruitment of an Aboriginal Community NDIS Support Officer and development of a work plan.

The Government will monitor NDIS implementation in Victoria to make sure that Aboriginal people with disability have equitable access to the NDIS. It will work with the National Disability Insurance Agency and other jurisdictions to address any barriers that emerge that reduce access for Aboriginal people to the NDIS. The NDIS is underpinned by the principle of choice and control for people with a disability, meaning Aboriginal NDIS participants can choose the supports that best meet their needs, including culturally appropriate supports.



Safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes



Headline Indicator 9: Reduce the incidence of Aboriginal family violence

Key points

- The number of family incident reports (FIRs) is likely to underestimate the problem.
- The Victorian Government is committed to supporting the Aboriginal community in the reduction of family violence.
- Widespread reform promises to build on community-led responses.

Overview

Across all available indicators, Aboriginal people are more likely to have experienced family violence than non-Aboriginal people in Victoria.

It is important to note that family violence incidence data is not thought sufficiently reliable for general use because of the significant proportion of records where Indigenous status is recorded as 'unknown'. Because of the low reliability of the data, changes from year to year may be related to a change in the quality of recording of Indigenous status.

Family Incident Reports

In recent years, reporting of family violence incidents in Aboriginal communities has increased due to the efforts of various government and community agencies. The number of Aboriginal people reporting family violence incidents continues to increase year-to-year. Since 2007-08, the number of FIRs where the affected family member is Aboriginal has more than tripled from 854 reports to 2,439 in 2015-16. It is unclear to what extent this upswing in FIRs affecting Aboriginal family members is driven by increased rates of family violence, variability in Aboriginal identification, or an increase in the rate of reporting of family violence to police. The Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) reported that Victoria Police attended 76,531 family violence incidents from Apr 2015 to Mar 2016. The majority (around 75 per cent) of affected family members in family incidents are female.

Estimating the prevalence of family violence

It is very difficult to measure the true extent of family violence as many incidences of family violence go unreported. Available police data sets are likely to significantly underestimate the true prevalence of family violence. Of those reported to the police only a proportion will proceed to court. At all levels of reporting, there is the potential for under-reporting. The effect is exacerbated by the absence of consistent recording of Aboriginal status at all stages of data capture. It is also vital to recognise the unique barriers experienced by Aboriginal people in accessing services and seeking help. There is understandable reluctance on the part of many Aboriginal people in seeking help from government agencies (particularly child protection) given the racism and lack of understanding Aboriginal people can experience when doing so.

This makes estimating and monitoring the prevalence of family violence difficult. Furthermore, it makes assessing changes in rates of reporting or setting targets difficult and bi-directional. Improving family violence monitoring is a key reform agenda of the Victorian Government.

Improving data

Family violence is a complex problem that requires a coordinated, integrated response from multiple agencies. Effective and appropriate information sharing optimises responses to family violence – it improves risk assessment and risk management and service co-ordination, collaboration and innovation.

The CSA has started redeveloping the Victorian Family Violence Database in line with recommendations made by the RCFV. The CSA is looking to increase the breadth and depth of data collated relating to family violence. This will include seeking to improve access to data about Aboriginal Victorians' family violence-related contact with



relevant agencies and institutions. The CSA is also working to improve the availability of recorded crime statistics (including family incidents) relating to Aboriginal Victorians. The CSA ran a consultation seeking views on the most appropriate methodology to use to present these data and will release the new statistics later in 2016.

Reporting of family violence in Victoria is increasing, driving rising demand across all agencies engaged in family violence responses.

Key programs, services and initiatives

Victoria has a strong reputation both nationally and internationally for leading the way in reforming its response to family violence. This includes ensuring that the Aboriginal community is at the centre of the co-design of culturally appropriate responses to family violence experienced by Aboriginal people.

“ *Too many paradigms of ‘responses’ and or ‘solutions’ are built around conventional models and not driven by the Aboriginal world-view and concepts.”*

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

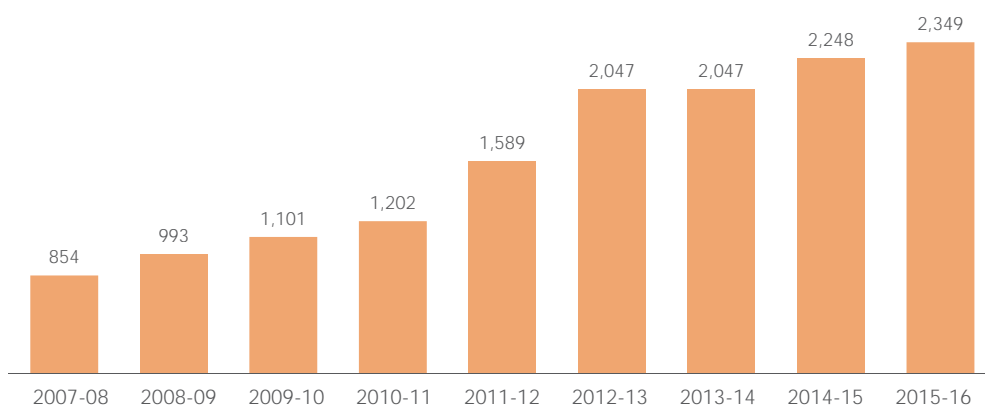
The **IFVFPF** is the platform for government and Aboriginal communities to address family violence. It was established in 2005 to enable the Government and Aboriginal communities to address family violence together. It continues to provide a vehicle for connecting Aboriginal community members to key decision makers across Government. Membership of the IFVFPF is drawn from the most senior representatives of the Aboriginal community, relevant Victorian Government departments and related organisations.

By linking Aboriginal community members to key decision makers across government, the IFVFPF is driving collaborative implementation of the *Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* (10 Year Plan). In 2008, the 10 Year Plan was signed by Aboriginal leaders, key Victorian Aboriginal agencies, Victorian Government ministers. It ‘explicitly frames the understanding and response to family violence through an Aboriginal lens ... by acknowledging the influence of dispossession on Aboriginal people that occurred from European colonisation, and its intergenerational impacts’.

“ *Many families are still living below acceptable standards of living.”*

Koori Caucus of the Aboriginal Justice Forum

Family incident reports by Aboriginal status of affected family member



Headline Indicator 9: Reduce the incidence of Aboriginal family violence

The 10 Year Plan provides an approach for addressing family violence experienced by Aboriginal people in the short, medium and long term. A mid-term evaluation of the 10 Year Plan undertaken in 2015 confirmed the continued relevance of the existing structures in the current policy context. It emphasised that the community-led, family centred, holistic approach in the 10 Year Plan is an example of leading practice in reducing family violence and should inform broader system reforms. The importance of the 10 Year Plan's whole-of-family approach to healing trauma was also noted by the RCFV.

The evaluation identified opportunities to:

- strengthen governance and accountability
- strengthen strategic outcomes and specific project outputs
- identify barriers to implementation of the community-led model
- incorporate learnings from implementation going forward.

The **RCFV** report was tabled in Parliament on 30 March 2016 outlining key reform agendas to improve outcomes for women and families experiencing family violence. The historic RCFV was a 13-month inquiry into how Victoria can effectively:

- prevent family violence
- improve early intervention
- support victims
- make perpetrators accountable
- better coordinate community and government responses, including recommendations to provide adequate funding to support the vital works of Aboriginal community organisations that provide key prevention and response services.

The **Aboriginal Family Violence Steering Group** provides strategic direction to the Government and relevant governance structures on the recommendations of the RCFV to reflect the diverse experiences of Aboriginal people and ensure a comprehensive, coordinated and culturally responsive reform agenda to address family violence experienced by Aboriginal Victorians.

The **Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group (RIMAG)** has been established to guide and oversee the implementation of the *Roadmap for Reform*. This forms part of the implementation of the recommendations of the RCFV, as well as other streams of the Government's reform agenda, including the *Education State* reforms, both in the areas of early childhood and schools, and Victoria's 10-Year Mental Health Plan.

CASE STUDY: ROADMAP FOR REFORM

In April 2016, the Government launched the *Roadmap for Reform* to deliver a system focused on: strengthening communities to better prevent neglect and abuse; delivering early support to children and families at risk; keeping more families together through crisis; and securing a better future for children who cannot live at home. The package includes increased in-home support services for vulnerable families, extra child protection workers, more culturally sensitive support for Aboriginal children, improved maternal and child health services for Aboriginal families, and a boost to the number of foster and kinship carers. The *Roadmap for Reform* also recognises the importance of taking action to ensure self-determination for Aboriginal communities in the care of their children and families, and supports families and children to be involved in decision making about the services and supports they need.

“ Family violence has significant and far-reaching consequences, creating a cycle of disadvantage that further embeds the ongoing trauma and injustice faced by Aboriginal people.

FVPLS Victoria has worked with Aboriginal victims/survivors for over 14 years. While we are not gender exclusive, 93% of our clients are women and we have witnessed firsthand the structural inequalities that exist for Aboriginal women and children.

2015-16 has been a momentous year for FVPLS Victoria with the conclusion of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the beginning of its implementation phase.

The release of the Commission's report in March this year was a watershed moment. It put Aboriginal women front and centre. It marked a critical step forward in recognising the disproportionate experiences of Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence – experiences that for too long had been largely invisible to policy and decision makers. FVPLS Victoria commends the strong leadership of the Victorian Government that led to the establishment of the Royal Commission, vitally changing the landscape and public perception.

FVPLS Victoria was pleased to see the Commission denounce the dire consequences of silence around Aboriginal women's experiences of family violence and recognise the leadership role FVPLS Victoria plays in prevention, early intervention, specialist service delivery to victims/survivors, and in policy development and systems reform.

We now have an unprecedented opportunity to implement meaningful change and vastly improve the lives of Aboriginal women and children, in turn building strong families and communities. The Victorian Government's commitment to the implementation of each of the Commission's 227 recommendations indicates that family violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women and their children will not be tolerated and systemic failure no excuse for compromising their safety.

FVPLS Victoria looks forward to continuing to work with Aboriginal Victoria and the whole of Government to ensure the Commission's promises come to fruition so that, together, we can break down the many barriers Aboriginal women face in accessing justice for their safety and equality.

Antoinette Braybrook, CEO, Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria)

Headline Indicator 10: Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people under justice supervision (youth)

Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people under justice supervision (adults)

By 2031, close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under youth justice supervision.

The proportion of Aboriginal young people (aged 10-17 years) cautioned when processed by police.

By 2031, close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under adult justice supervision.

The proportion of Aboriginal adults receiving a prison sentence compared with those receiving a community corrections order.

Key point

- Victoria has a strong focus on diversion and community partnerships in its justice system; however, challenges remain.

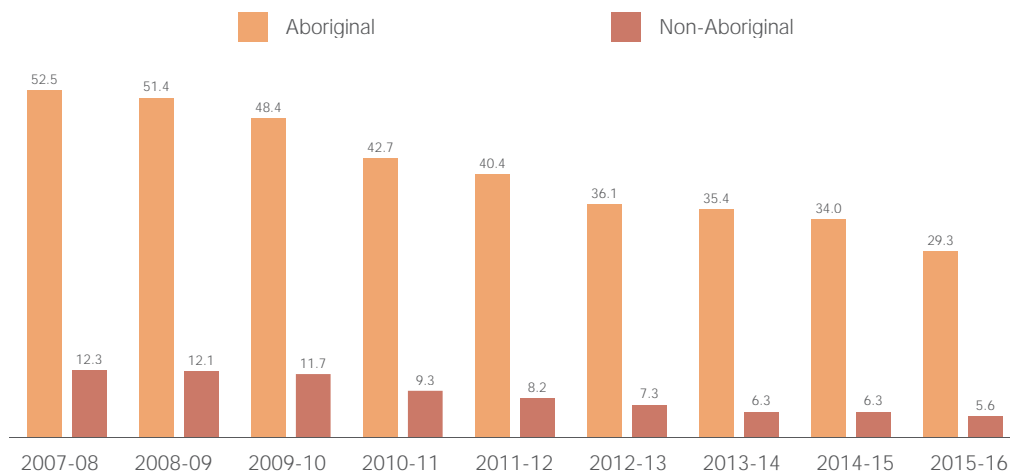
Overview

Victoria is well below the national rate for both community service orders (28.5 per 1,000 nationally compared to 11.8 per 1,000 in Victoria) and detention (6.8 per 1,000 nationally compared to 1.5 in Victoria) for Aboriginal youth. However, Aboriginal over-representation in the youth justice system is a significant challenge.

Young people & police cautioning

Police cautioning is typically available to first-time and non-serious offenders. In 2015-16, Aboriginal young people were about a third as likely to receive only a caution or warning as non-Aboriginal youth offenders. In 2007-08, Aboriginal young people were about two-fifths (40 per cent) as likely to receive a caution or warning only. It should be noted, however, that overall cautioning rates between 2007-08 and 2015-16 have not changed significantly and are subject to change as Victoria Police continues to implement improvements to the collection and processing of Aboriginal identification data.

Unique youth offenders (10-17 years) processed by police (per 1,000)



Young people & police processing

The number of youth offenders (10-17 years) processed by police who receive a caution, arrest, summons or other has fallen significantly in Victoria since 2008. However, the rate of decrease has not been felt equally. The number of non-Aboriginal youth offenders processed by police has fallen by 50 per cent while the number of Aboriginal youth offenders processed by police has fallen by 30 per cent. This has resulted in a widening of the gap in youth processing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people. In 2015-16, Aboriginal young people were more than five times as likely to be processed by police as non-Aboriginal young people.

Young people serving community based service orders versus detention sentences

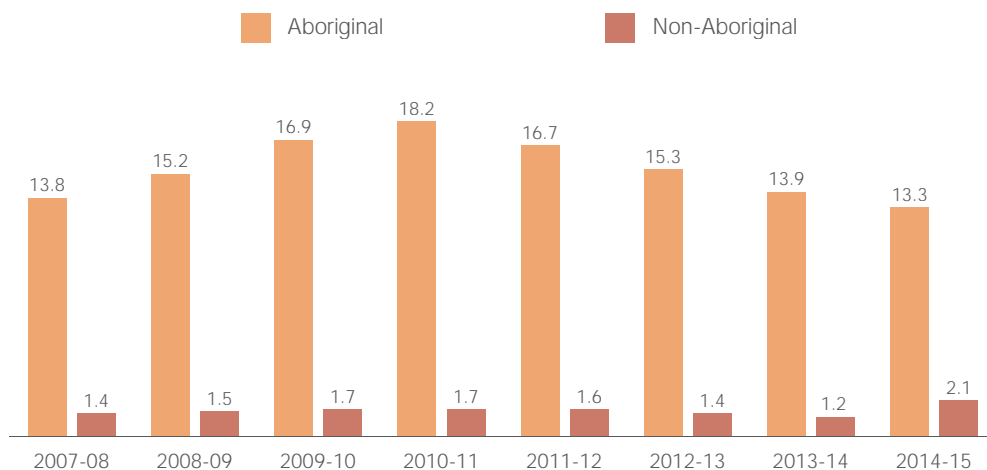
The rate of youth detentions overall has fallen since 2010 from 2.1 per 1,000 in 2010-11 to 1.5 per 1,000 in 2014-15. Aboriginal youth offenders are more likely to be serving a detention sentence than non-Aboriginal youth offenders. Inversely, Aboriginal youth offenders are less likely to be serving a CBS order; however, this disparity has improved somewhat. In 2007-08, Aboriginal youth offenders were almost two times more likely than non-Aboriginal young people to be serving a detention sentence than to be serving

a community-based service order. By 2015-16, this disparity had reduced to one and a half times more likely than non-Aboriginal young people to be in detention compared to serving a community-based order.

Youth under justice supervision

In 2014-15, the average daily rate of Aboriginal young people under a supervision order (community based service order or detention) was 13.3 per 1,000 Aboriginal young people. The rates of Aboriginal youth supervision peaked in 2010-11 at 18.2 per 1,000 and has returned to a rate similar to that observed in 2007-08. In 2014-15, young Aboriginal offenders were over-represented at a rate of 6.3 times that of non-Aboriginal youth offenders.

Youth justice supervision (average daily rate per 1,000)



Headline Indicator 10: Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people under justice supervision (youth)

Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people under justice supervision (adults)

Key programs, services and initiatives

Over the past year, the Victorian Government has worked in partnership with the Aboriginal community to improve outcomes for Aboriginal young people in youth justice through the support of 346 Aboriginal young people who either were at risk of involvement, or involved, with youth justice. This support includes: community based Koori Youth Justice Program workers; the development and delivery of the Parkville College Koorie Cultural Education program in partnership with Uncle Jim Berg, former CEO of a number of Aboriginal organisations and founder of the Koorie Heritage Trust; and the Tree of Life training, delivered by Aunty Nellie Flagg, for all Koori Youth Justice Program workers, as a way of engaging young people to strengthen cultural identity and build resilience. Other key programs include:

- the **Koori Early School Leavers Program**, designed to divert young people from the youth justice system by focusing on the key risk factors for young offenders, particularly lack of engagement with school or other learning and employment opportunities.
- the **Koori Intensive Support Program**, which provides court advice and support to young Aboriginal people and in the court system, intensive outreach support to assist young people to comply with bail conditions or on conditions placed on deferred sentences, and assistance to help Aboriginal young offenders reintegrate into their communities.
- the **Koori Court Advice worker**, who assists in the provision of a culturally based court advice and support.

In addition to these culturally specific programs, improvements to the youth justice system more broadly can improve outcomes for Aboriginal young people. These include a **Youth Justice Best Interest Case Practice Model** which embeds a trauma-informed approach to youth justice case practice and includes a focus on strengthening cultural connections, and improved access to health services, including the introduction of a 24-hour nursing model for custodial services and the delivery of programs to young people in remand such as the **“Know Your Stuff”** and **“Cool Heads”** programs.

Headline Indicator 11: Reduce the proportion of Aboriginal people who return to prison within two years of release

By 2031, close the gap in the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who are convicted within two years of their previous conviction.

Key points

- The Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) is a community-led approach that is driving better justice outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.
- The Victorian Government is investing in community-led approaches and a range of culturally specific initiatives are funded through the AJA.

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement

The AJA is a partnership between the Victorian Government and the Aboriginal community aimed at improving Aboriginal justice outcomes, with an emphasis on self-determination. Since the first agreement in 2000, Victoria has made gains by focusing on stronger families and safer communities. The Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3 (AJA3) focusses on prevention, early intervention, diversion and rehabilitation, and transition support through a place-based approach to strengthen communities to respond at its local level. Evaluation of the AJA3 will occur during 2016-2017 and is a formal commitment to transparency and accountability under the AJA which all AJA partners agreed to. The key aim of the evaluation is to examine how effectively and efficiently the AJA3 has met its stated aims and objectives and contributed to improved justice outcomes for Aboriginal people in Victoria. It will inform the development of Phase 4 of the AJA to be launched in 2018.

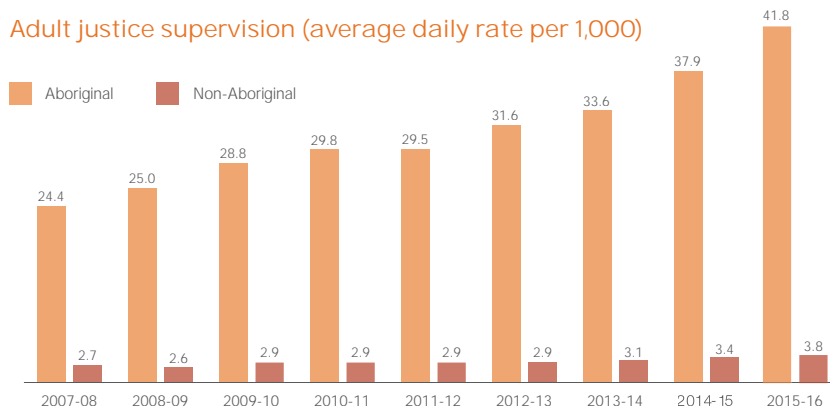
Over 200 actions under AJA3 have been, or are in the process of being, implemented across more than 30 government and community agencies. Implementation is supported through:

- AJA Action Plans developed and kept relevant by departments and agencies across the Victorian Government in conjunction with Koori Reference Groups, which include AJF members.
- Regional Justice Plans overseen by Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) and Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committees. During 2015-2016, these AJA Action Plans and RAJAC plans have been updated in light of strategic priorities identified.

Adults and justice supervision

Victoria has one of the lowest rates of imprisonment of Aboriginal people and supervision by community corrections in Australia.

However, rates of Aboriginal representation have grown more rapidly in the adult justice system in Victoria over the past four years than most other jurisdictions. The number of Aboriginal adults under justice supervision has increased steadily from an average of 24.4 per 1,000 adults per day in 2007-08 under justice supervision to 41.8 per 1,000 adults in 2015-16. The average daily number of non-Aboriginal adults under justice supervision experienced a modest increase during the same time, from 2.7 per 1,000 in 2007-08 to 3.8 per 1,000 in 2015-16. At 2015-16, Aboriginal adults were over-represented in the justice supervision daily average at a rate of 11 times non-Aboriginal adults (nationally, 13 times). Given that Aboriginal adults make up only 0.7 per cent of Victoria's adult population, the fact that they make up 8.0 per cent of the state's prisoners and 6.0 per cent of community corrections is a significant concern.



Headline Indicator 11: Reduce the proportion of Aboriginal people who return to prison within two years of release

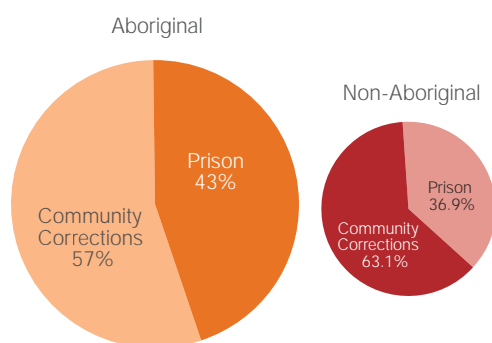
“ *Whilst many law and legislative practices have changed or improved, we might not be seeing the positive outcomes on the ground, in community, or in our homes.”*

Koori Caucus of the Aboriginal Justice Forum

Prison sentence compared with community corrections order

Aboriginal adult offenders are more likely than non-Aboriginal offenders to receive a prison sentence. In 2014-15, 45 per cent of Aboriginal offenders versus 38 per cent of non-Aboriginal offenders received a prison sentence. Aboriginal offenders are less likely to receive a community corrections order; 55 per cent of Aboriginal offenders received a community corrections order compared to 62 per cent of non-Aboriginal offenders. This imbalance in the proportion of community corrections versus prison sentencing has remained relatively stable since 2007-08.

Adult prison sentences vs community corrections
(Most recent data 2014–15)



High levels of recidivism persist with over half (59.7 per cent) of Aboriginal prisoners returning to prison within two years compared to 42.6 per cent of non-Aboriginal prisoners.

Although rates of recidivism have fluctuated between 2007-08 and 2014-15, Victoria's recidivism rate for Aboriginal adult offenders has remained relatively stable.

Key programs, services and initiatives

Koori Courts are one of many successful initiatives of the AJA and were first implemented across two pilot sites in 2002, ensuring offenders are sentenced in a more culturally appropriate manner and are able to discuss the underlying life issues that contribute to their behaviour. Since then, they have expanded across the state. In March this year a Koori Court was launched in Geelong, making it the 11th adult Koori Court and the 12th Children's Koori Court.

The **Aboriginal Prisoners Transition Housing Project** has been allocated \$2.6 million for the development of two purpose-built facilities, one for males and one for females that will function as a short-term transitional facility. The transition from prison back into the community is the time of highest re-offending risk, with the great majority of re-offending occurring within one year of release. A lack of stable housing can quickly produce circumstances likely to lead to re-offending.

Frontline Youth Initiatives (FYI) and Community Initiatives Programs (CIP) – \$3.2 million has been allocated for communities to engage with Koori youth at risk of contact with the criminal justice system through social and physical healthy activities (FYI), and for pilot initiatives to reduce negative contact between the Koori Community and the criminal justice system (CIP).

Child Protection and Family Violence Solicitors – located at the FVPLS.

Local Justice Workers – located in Aboriginal community organisations to assist Aboriginal offenders complete their community corrections and fine default orders.

“ *Our mob are driving our own social and emotional wellbeing programs – self-determining communities.*”

Koori Caucus of the Aboriginal Justice Forum

New initiatives developed and/or implemented by Department of Justice and Regulation (DJR) in the last year have included:

- **Koori Women’s Diversion Program** pilots (Mildura and Morwell) and new funding of \$1.55 million over two years to continue providing beds for Aboriginal women in Odyssey House until 30 June 2018.
- The introduction by Corrections Victoria of a new support service for Aboriginal prisoners transitioning from custody into the community.
- The implementation of the *Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Plan*, including cultural training for prison health staff, and inaugural Justice Health Koori Tertiary scholarships.
- The *Koori Sheriff’s Officer Recruitment, Training and Retention Strategy* and four new Sheriff’s Aboriginal Liaison Officer roles, bringing the total to five.

The Government has also provided \$2.7 million over two years to increase programs that intervene early to reduce violence in Aboriginal communities through mediation, lateral violence and dispute resolution training and services. This initiative will be delivered through the Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria and with the leadership of Aboriginal people. It will develop new culturally specific approaches to early dispute resolution and aims to build a greater capacity in Aboriginal communities for early dispute resolution.

An additional \$4 million was announced in the 2016/17 Budget for a pilot project to respond to Ice in Aboriginal communities. This will be a community-led project and developed in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal community through three organisations: Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Ngwala Willumbong, and VACCA.



Strong culture, engaged people and confident communities



Headline Indicator 12: Strengthening Aboriginal culture and supporting Aboriginal people's engagement with community and society

The rate of access by Aboriginal Victorians to their traditional lands.

Participation by Aboriginal people in community related arrangements and events.

Key points

- Traditional Owners are leading agreement-making and building relationships with community and government.
- Government and Traditional Owners are reflecting on the implementation of existing agreements.

Overview

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of strong cultural identity and community connectedness for Aboriginal people in Victoria. Victorian Traditional Owners are the State's First Peoples, with rich, diverse, and unique cultures. Increasing access to land and shifting decision-making powers to Traditional Owners is a key way in which the Government can support the strengthening of Aboriginal culture, as is supporting LANs.

Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)

Twelve ILUAs have been registered under the NT Act since 2012-13, including two in 2015-16 covering an additional 1,372km². The land area over which native title has been found to exist or over which settlements have been reached under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (TOS Act) remains unchanged since 2012-13.

Native title

Settlements reached under the TOS Act are vehicles for self-determination as they recognise specific Victorian Traditional Owner groups and reset the relationship with government. The TOS Act continues to be the Government's approach to the resolution of native title claims and to increase access to traditional lands for Victoria's Traditional Owners. Although focused on arrangements regarding land and access to natural resources, settlements are also stepping stones for a wide range of social, cultural and economic benefits.

Negotiation of new settlements

No new settlements under the TOS Act were reached in 2015-16 but there has been an unprecedented amount of new activity. Three new Traditional Owner groups have come forward to seek settlement negotiations. These include the First Peoples of the Millewa Mallee, the Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung People and the Gariwerd Native Title Claim Group, a combined claim by Gunditjmarra, Eastern Maar and Wotjobaluk Peoples. Hence, there are now five Traditional Owner groups seeking the negotiation of new settlements. Wotjobaluk Peoples are also preparing to negotiate their own 2005 native title settlement by way of the TOS Act. Settlement negotiations with the Taungurung People have continued to make progress. These high levels of activity are a sign that Victorian Traditional Owners see the Victorian framework as a means to progress their aspirations. The Government continues to encourage Traditional Owner groups to build constructive relationships with each other, including making boundary agreements.

Headline Indicator 12: Strengthening Aboriginal culture and supporting Aboriginal people's engagement with community and society

“ For the last few years, NTSV has been pursuing an ambitious agenda of seeing native title fully resolved in Victoria by 2017-18. This year, new claims were lodged over Greater Melbourne for the Wurundjeri people, Gariwerd on behalf of Traditional Owners represented by the Barenji Gadjin Aboriginal Land Council, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and a claim on behalf of the First Peoples of the Millewa Mallee. There are now a total of five claims awaiting to be assessed by the State as having met the threshold requirements for negotiations under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic). The pace of assessing claims for entry into negotiations has been slower than Traditional Owners would like. The State Government must adequately resource key government departments involved in implementing the Settlement Act if we are to increase the rate of native title settlements in Victoria.

Reaching a native title settlement is cause for celebration, but it is only the beginning of a new relationship between Traditional Owners and the State Government. Whole-of-government performance in maintaining the contractual commitments made in settlement agreements and leveraging the agreements for social and economic development outcomes can be improved. As more settlements are reached, the State Government must establish effective co-ordination arrangements and work with Traditional Owners to develop a forward policy agenda to optimise the benefits arising from settlement. The Settlement Act is innovative public policy, but there is more work to be done to realise its benefits.”

Native Title Services Victoria

Implementation of settlements

Progress has also been made in implementing current settlements, particularly with the Dja Dja Wurrung. Four additional Aboriginal title grants were made to the Dja Dja Wurrung, and two unused roads near Mount Barker have also been prepared for freehold grant to the Dja Dja Wurrung. State agencies and Dja Dja Wurrung participated in a 'joint reflections workshop' in October 2015 to consider how their relationships have evolved since the 2013 settlement. This has refocused the State's attention to matters including what 'partnership' means, local government engagement and procurement.

Evaluation of Gunaikurnai settlement

Discussions about the five-year evaluation of the Gunaikurnai settlement have progressed, and workshops are scheduled to develop an evaluation framework. The review will be independently undertaken, and is an opportunity to test whether the expectations of wide-ranging benefits from Victoria's unique approach to native title have been met.

DJR has also been consulting with the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations and Native Title Services Victoria about ways to improve the operation of the TOS Act.

Right People for Country

In May last year, the Victorian Government announced \$2 million over four years for the Right People for Country (RPfC) Program as part of the *Victorian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Strategy*. RPfC supports Traditional Owners to build their skills and confidence to negotiate agreements and to manage disputes, to design and implement their own agreement-making processes and to reach agreements that support formal recognition with Government as well as stronger relationships within and between groups. These agreements assist Traditional Owner groups gain formal recognition under the TOS Act and AH Act

Local Aboriginal Networks – Strong culture, engaged people, confident communities

LANs exist within local Aboriginal communities as a vibrant part of the whole community. Their purpose is to connect, prioritise, implement, and evaluate with other local community partners. They work to strengthen the physical, social, cultural, mental, and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people, their families, and the whole community.

“ I believe that it is so important to build positive empowering relationships and networks within your community. The LAN gives community a platform to do this. It allows community and community organisations to work together in a more humanistic and collaborative way. Being at the first state-wide gathering of LANs was an empowering and educational experience. Poor health, climate justice, and social justice outcomes are issues that our community are unfairly subjected to. As a young person I see this as an opportunity to build strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to make the change we want in our future and our children's future. Connecting with and sharing young people's ideas and solutions on both climate and social justice is just one of the practical ways I utilise the LAN.”

Corina Ritchie, Yorta Yorta, Inner East LAN

There are now 39 LANs across Victoria, with over 2,440 Aboriginal Victorians participating. The *Local Aboriginal Networks Five Year Plan 2016-2020* was launched on 17 March 2016. The Five Year Plan identifies six priority areas which have been developed in partnership with the LANs, to help inform and guide government action to ensure their future success and sustainability. They are: Strengthening Culture; Economic Participation; Support for Young People; Building a Stronger LAN; Community Planning and Partnerships; and Working with Local Government.

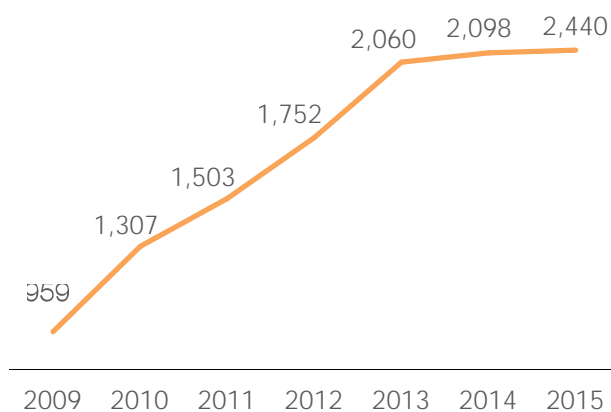
“ We have been talking with Deakin University about harvesting seaweed for the Asian market. They are interested in the knowledge that has been with us for thousands of years as Traditional Owners. It is great to see that our cultural knowledge of the land and waters has the potential to give us an economic advantage in this competitive, contemporary market. It is also going to lead to education pathways for those interested in tertiary qualifications, which is exciting as they have first class aquaculture facilities. This project is important recognition for all Aboriginal people. It is great to see the LAN delivering these types of successes.”

Tyson Lovett-Murray, Gunditjmarra, Heywood LAN

Headline Indicator 12: Strengthening Aboriginal culture and supporting Aboriginal people's engagement with community and society

The LANs bring Aboriginal people together at a local level to set priorities, develop community plans, improve social cohesion, and empower Aboriginal Victorians to participate in civic and community life. These voluntary community networks provide a safe and welcoming space for the Aboriginal community to share, learn, and lead. LANs provide a critical and effective channel to engage and celebrate the diversity within the Aboriginal community.

Number of registered LAN participants



Roll out of Welcome to Country signage across Victoria

On 9 April 2015, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety launched the *Wadawurrung Welcome to Country Signage*, an initiative developed by the DEDJTR, VicRoads and the Wadawurrung people, through the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation.

The Wadawurrung Welcome to Country signs project involved the design and installation of 22 signs which recognise the Wadawurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which they are placed. The signs demonstrate recognition and respect for the Wadawurrung people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land.

First Peoples exhibition

The *First Peoples* exhibition at the Melbourne Museum is a shared endeavour to showcase the knowledge, stories, culture, objects and images of Aboriginal Victoria. Under the guidance of key Aboriginal staff members of the Melbourne Museum the Yulendj Elder's Reference Group was established. ('Yulendj' is a Kulin word for 'knowledge and intelligence'). The collaboration between the Yulendj and curatorial staff has provided many long-term benefits including: improved community access to collections; improved research and identification of collections; and knowledge and skills exchange between staff and community. The Yulendj comprises a group of 16 respected community members and Elders from across Victoria.

Data sources



This report focuses on the social, economic, health and justice outcomes of Aboriginal people and how they are faring compared to non-Aboriginal Victorians. Data in this report come from a number of different administrative data sets and surveys. A brief description of the major data sources used in this report is provided below. All of these tables are available on the DPC website.

Data	Source
Perinatal mortality	Victorian Perinatal Data Collection
Babies (%) with birth weight below 2,500 grams (Victoria)	Victorian Perinatal Data Collection
Percentage of women smoking in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy (Victoria)	Victorian Perinatal Data Collection
Percentage of women admitted to hospital from one month prior to delivery who were current smokers (Victoria)	Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset; based on recorded Aboriginal status of mother and use of tobacco
Aboriginal children 4 year old kindergarten (Victoria)	Department of Education and Training (DET) data
Count of Aboriginal children at Key Age Consultations (Victoria)	Maternal and Child Health Services Annual Report and Data Collection
% Aboriginal children at Key Age Consultations (Victoria)	Maternal and Child Health Services Annual Report and Data Collection
Rate per 1,000 children where notifications have been substantiated (Victoria)	Report on Government Services (RoGS)
Aboriginal children in out-of-home care (Victoria)	RoGS
Number of school enrolments (Victoria)	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Schools, Australia 2014 (Cat. No. 4221.0)
Percentage of students at or above the minimum standard for NAPLAN reading (Victoria)	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA): NAPLAN Achievement in Reading; Persuasive Writing; Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Reports - ACARA
Percentage of students at or above the minimum standard for NAPLAN persuasive writing (Victoria)	ACARA: NAPLAN Achievement in Reading; Persuasive Writing; Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Reports - ACARA
Percentage of students at or above the minimum standard for NAPLAN numeracy (Victoria)	ACARA: NAPLAN Achievement in Reading; Persuasive Writing; Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Reports - ACARA

Data sources

Data	Source
Student attendance rates (%), Government schools	Table NIRA.13.4 Refer to the ACARA National Standards for School Attendance Data Reporting 2015 for additional detail on the key components of the national standards on which school attendance data in Australia are requested. This document is available electronically via the ACARA website.
Apparent retention rates for students in Years 7 to 10 (Victoria)	ABS Schools; Australia 2014 (Cat. No.4221.0)
Proportion of 20–24-year-olds with year 12 or equivalent (Victoria)	DET and National Education Agreement Report to COAG Reform Council 2008 and 2011
Number of Aboriginal students who completed year 12 or equivalent in the school and VET sectors (Victoria)	National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) VOCSTATS table
Destinations of Aboriginal Year 12 or equivalent completers (%): 2006 to 2015 (Victoria)	DET On Track Survey
Destinations of Aboriginal Year 12 or equivalent completers (%): 2010 to 2015; Deferred allocated (Victoria)	DET On Track Survey
Number of Aboriginal students 20-64 years who undertook or completed a Certificate III or above qualification in the VET sector (Victoria)	RoGS
Labour force rates for people aged 15 to 64 years (Victoria): ABS Labour Force Survey	ABS Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Estimates from the Labour Force Survey (2011)
Proportion of Aboriginal people on Government boards and committees (Victoria)	Annual Workforce Data Collection; VPSC
Proportion of people who reported their health status as 'excellent or very good' (Victoria)	ABS. Note: non-Aboriginal data from National Health Survey; Aboriginal data 2005, 2012 & 2015 from NATSIHS
Psychological distress reported as 'high or very high'	ABS: non-Aboriginal data from National Health Survey; Aboriginal data 2005, 2012 & 2015 from NATSIHS

Data	Source
Aboriginal smoking rates (%) for people aged 15 years and older (Victoria)	ABS: National Health Survey
Proportion of Aboriginal Victorians (15 years and older) overweight and obese (%)	ABS: National Health Survey
Self-harm related emergency department presentations: rate per 1,000 population (Victoria)	Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD). Population based on projection from Census 2006
Alcohol-related emergency department presentations	Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD). Population based on projection from Census 2006
People receiving disability services (Victoria)	Returned National Minimum Data Set
Proportion of Aboriginal clients accessing homelessness services (Victoria)	RoGS
Family Incident Reports (FIRs) by Aboriginal status of affected family member (Victoria)	CSA data extracted from Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) database on 30 June 2016 and subject to variation
Family Incident Reports (FIRs) by Aboriginal status of the other party/parties (Victoria)	CSA; data extracted from LEAP database on 30 June 2016 and subject to variation
Affected family members incidents recorded by Indigenous status and charges laid - April 2011 to March 2016	CSA; data extracted from LEAP database on 30 June 2016 and subject to variation
Affected family members incidents recorded by Indigenous status and repeat attendance - April 2011 to March 2016	CSA; data extracted from LEAP database on 30 June 2016 and subject to variation
Young people (10-17 years) under youth justice supervision, daily average rate per 1,000 population (Victoria)	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) published data: Table S45a as at 2013-14 and Table S83a as at 2013-14
Young people (10-17 years) under youth justice supervision, daily average numbers (Victoria)	AIHW published data: Table S45a as at 2013-14 and Table S83a as at 2013-14
Young people (10-17 years) under youth justice supervision, total Community Based Service Orders and In detention (Australia)	Calculations based on AIHW data

Data sources

Data	Source
Adults under justice supervision, daily average rate per 1,000 population (Victoria)	Corrections Victoria, rates calculated by the Koori Justice Unit based on ABS population estimates
Unique youth offenders (10-17 years) processed by police who receive a caution, arrest, summons or other (Victoria)	Data extracted from LEAP and subject to variation
Proportion of youth offenders incidents (10-17 years) receiving a caution or warning by police (Victoria)	Data extracted from LEAP on March 2016 and subject to variation
Proportion of offenders that are Aboriginal	Corrections Victoria
Proportion of adults under adult justice supervision by type of supervision	Corrections Victoria
Proportion of prisoners released who returned to prison under sentence within two years, Victoria	Corrections Victoria
Access by Aboriginal Victorians to their traditional lands	National Native Title Tribunal (Geospatial Services)
LAN participation (Victoria)	LAN registrations

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	LEAP	Law Enforcement Assistance Program
ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority	Marrung	Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026
ACF	Aboriginal Children's Forum	MCH	Maternal and Child Health
ACCOs	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations	NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
ACCHOs	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations	NATSIHS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey
AEU	Aboriginal Employment Unit	NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
AH Act	<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>	NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
AHV	Aboriginal Housing Victoria	NIRA	National Indigenous Reform Agreement
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	NT Act	<i>Native Title Act 1993</i>
AJA	Aboriginal Justice Agreement	RAJACs	Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees
AJA3	Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3	RAPs	Registered Aboriginal Parties
AJF	Aboriginal Justice Forum	ROGS	Report on Government Services
BMI	Body Mass Index	RPfC	Right People for Country
CBS	Community Based Service	RIMAG	Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group
CIP	Community Initiatives Program	RCFV	Royal Commission into Family Violence
COAG	Council of Australian Governments	SLG	Secretaries' Leadership Group
CSA	Crime Statistics Agency	TAFE	Technical and Further Education
DEDJTR	Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources	TOS Act	<i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i>
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
DET	Department of Education and Training	VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services	VACCHO	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
DJR	Department of Justice and Regulation	VAEB	Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board
DPC	Department of Premier and Cabinet	VAES	Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020
FIR	Family Incident Reports	VAEAI	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated
FVPLS	Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service	VAHC	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
FYI	Frontline Youth Initiatives	VACKH	Victorian Advisory Council for Koori Health
10 Year Plan	Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan, Strong Culture, Strong Peoples and Strong Families	VAAF	Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018
IFVFP	Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum	VET	Vocational Education and Training
ILUAs	Indigenous Land Use Agreements	VPS	Victorian Public Service
JVEN	Jobs Victoria Employment Network	VPSC	Victorian Public Sector Commission
KMS	Koori Maternity Service		
KEW	Koorie Education Workforce		
KYC	Koorie Youth Council		
LANs	Local Aboriginal Networks		





