

Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2013



Throughout this document the term "Aboriginal" is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the 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.

Message from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs	2
Message from the Chair, Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs	4
A commitment to delivery and continued reporting, transparency and accountability	5
An enduring commitment	5
About this Report	5
Every Aboriginal person counts – the data imperative	5
The Year in Review	7
Key achievements in 2013	7
Progress towards closing the gaps	9
Departmental Aboriginal inclusion and employment action plans	11
Engagement with the Commonwealth	12
Achievements on the ground	14
Cutting red tape to progress equitable contracts with Aboriginal organisations	14
Place based partnerships with the Aboriginal community	15
Monitoring and evaluation	18
Progress against Strategic Action Areas (SAAs)	21
SAA 1: Maternal health and early childhood health and development	22
SAA 2: Education and training	31
SAA 3: Economic participation	38
SAA 4: Health, housing and wellbeing	41
SAA 5: Safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes	47
SAA 6: Strong culture, engaged people and confident communities	55
Appendix	59



I am delighted to be presenting the latest Aboriginal Affairs Report, as the new Minister responsible for this important portfolio.

In reviewing the commitments and recent achievements, it is clear that this government has a well-developed and strong reform agenda for Aboriginal affairs. It is also clear that fundamental to the agenda's delivery are strong partnerships with the Aboriginal community, the private sector, community organisations and a commitment to cross-government action by all Victorian Government ministers.

The level of activity by the Aboriginal community and across all ministerial portfolios in 2013 is highly noteworthy. Building on the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018* (VAAF), strategic action agendas were advanced in the crucial areas of economic development, justice and community services. These will focus and galvanise coordinated action to support the delivery of the government's COAG and VAAF priorities.

The *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy*, which was launched by my predecessor the Hon Jeanette Powell on 6 December 2013, was a first for Victoria. It puts in place action to further enable Aboriginal Victorians to access opportunities across the economy as employers, employees and business people. It provides a solid platform for building economic participation by bringing together government, community and private sector efforts.

I look forward to establishing the Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board during 2014 to guide the delivery of the strategy. The Board will play an important role in engaging the private, finance and philanthropic sectors to build Aboriginal employment and enterprise across growing areas of Victoria's economy.

Victoria's Aboriginal Tourism Development Strategy 2013-2023 is a concrete example of how the government, working with the Aboriginal community, is encouraging Aboriginal economic participation in an area that is significant at a state-wide and regional level. With the leadership of the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, the strategy provides the foundation for leveraging the strengths of Aboriginal Victorians to develop and market world class tourism experiences to local and global audiences.

During 2013, the Victorian Government also partnered with the Aboriginal community to release the third phase of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA3). The AJA3 builds on the achievements of previous agreements, while acknowledging the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. The need for focussed action is a clear priority, as evidenced by the significant gaps in justice outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians which are detailed in this report. I look forward to supporting the leadership of the Attorney-General in working with the Signatories to this important agreement.

Another key strategy released during 2013 was the *Human Services Aboriginal Strategic Framework 2013-2015*. This gives focus to reducing the number of Aboriginal children and young people in the child protection and youth justice systems, which the most recent data reaffirms will require concerted effort to achieve the government's closing the gap commitments. The framework also acknowledges the importance of culturally responsive human services, including in the areas of disability and housing. I commend the Minister for Community Services and the Minister for Housing for progressing such a challenging and important framework.

Significantly, the Victorian Government is progressing action to support healthy outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians through a record \$61.7 million investment announced in the 2013-14 Budget. This is the largest investment Victoria has made in Aboriginal health. This report identifies areas where improvement is needed, such as the high smoking rates among Aboriginal Victorians. Central to this is the national commitment for Aboriginal people to enjoy the same health outcomes as all Australians.

I also acknowledge the landmark Native Title settlement agreement reached in 2013 between the Victorian Government and the Dja Dja Wurrung people. This settlement covers approximately 266,532 hectares of Crown land and includes a financial settlement that will support the economic and cultural aspirations of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. It demonstrates that Victoria's frameworks can reach settlement in a way that avoids costly litigation, while assisting the Traditional Owners to develop a sustainable future.

I applaud my colleagues in supporting the whole-of-government effort to deliver Victoria's Aboriginal affairs reform agenda together with the Aboriginal community – be that in health, education, justice, community services or economic development. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs in progressing this agenda across departments and with their colleagues at the Commonwealth and local government level.

I look forward to progressing the Hon Jeanette Powell's legacy and working closely with Aboriginal Victorians.

I note that three Ministerial Roundtables were held during 2013 with groups of prominent Aboriginal Victorians. The Roundtables enabled discussion of a range of issues

including priorities and necessary action to deliver improved economic outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians, as well as the Victorian Government responses to the Review of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Establishment and Effectiveness of Registered Aboriginal Parties.

In May 2013, Nayuka Gorrie and Bronwyn Mongta were presented the Ricci Marks Award, joining a growing list of exceptional young Aboriginal people who have received the award since it began as the Aboriginal Young Achievers Award in 1997.

In December 2013, a further 14 outstanding Aboriginal Victorians were inducted into the Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll, bringing the total number of inductees to 49. After three short years the event is firmly ingrained in the Victorian calendar and is a joyous celebration of accomplishment, dedication and community.

I look forward to working with the many people and organisations across the Victorian Aboriginal community. It is only through continued strengthening of this partnership that we will achieve our shared goal.



The Hon Tim Bull MLA

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



In the first full year of the implementation of the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018* (VAAF) departments have worked in partnership with Aboriginal communities across a number of priority areas to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

The Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs continues to play a central role in ensuring high level engagement across the Victorian public sector to drive the government's Aboriginal affairs reform agenda and to cut through silos that may emerge. The addition of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria to the Department of Premier and Cabinet further enables the Aboriginal affairs reform agenda to be progressed as a priority for whole-of-government action.

Specific areas of focus for the Secretaries' Leadership Group in 2013 included setting the direction and implementation structures to build Aboriginal employment, business and tourism outcomes and the development of solid frameworks to improve outcomes across the justice and human service systems. Important strategies were released by the Victorian Government in these areas as highlighted in this year's Report, such as the *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020* which the VAAF highlighted as a key initial focus for the Secretaries' Leadership Group.

Consistent with the government's commitment to all departments delivering Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans, the Secretaries' Leadership Group considered progress to date and steps that can be taken to ensure services are accessible to and inclusive of Aboriginal people. A key priority for 2014 is for all departments to progress their plans, and in some cases, revise plans to reflect the most recent departmental structures.

The Secretaries' Leadership Group also supported opportunities for joined up action. As indicated in the VAAF, cross-government approaches at the statewide, regional and local level are often critical to delivery of positive outcomes. This year's Report provides selected case studies of departments working in partnership with the Aboriginal community and other organisations in areas such as early childhood health and development and public sector employment.

The Report also highlights two well established place based community partnerships operating in the Mildura and Latrobe regions. These projects provide important learnings of the change that can be achieved with strong leadership, clear directions and effective and genuine partnerships. I look forward to similar commitments led by Secretaries in 2014.

The Victorian Aboriginal community is our essential partner. The commitment, insight and drive of the community to improve outcomes are a source of inspiration to all Secretaries and the departments we lead. Working with our partners, we will continue to deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Tongue', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Tongue

Chair, Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs

An enduring commitment

Delivery of the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013 – 2018* (VAAF) is a high priority for the Victorian Government. The VAAF is founded on a generational change approach and focuses on improved early years, education, health, employment, economic and justice outcomes over the life course.

Fundamental to the VAAF's success is the need for concerted effort, coordinated action across government activity and strong partnerships with the Aboriginal community, the private sector and community organisations to achieve

positive and enduring change for Aboriginal Victorians.

To further strengthen and drive delivery of the Victorian Government's commitments in Aboriginal affairs, machinery of government changes were introduced during 2013, locating the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Importantly this change reinforces the strong leadership within government and the Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs to direct the implementation of the VAAF.

About this Report

This report outlines the progress achieved and actions progressed during 2013 against the Victorian Government's commitments in the VAAF. It is the second annual Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs report to provide an account of progress since the adoption of the VAAF in November 2012. Annual reporting of progress delivers on the Victorian Government's commitment to accountability and transparency in Aboriginal affairs and closing the gap.

There are no easy solutions and the progress that is reported reflects achievements and contributions of Aboriginal families, communities and organisations, as well as

many State and Commonwealth agencies and funded organisations.

The content of the 2013 Report continues the emphasis on evaluation and reporting against the identified targets and measures in the six VAAF Strategic Action Areas. In addition, it also provides insights into recent changes to simplify contracting arrangements between Victorian Government departments and Aboriginal organisations to enable better service delivery. The report also provides two powerful examples of local projects in the Mildura and Latrobe areas that are delivering incremental improvements in partnership with Aboriginal communities.

Every Aboriginal person counts – the data imperative

The Victorian Government places a high priority on delivering measurable results for Aboriginal Victorians. Fundamental to this is ensuring there is accurate and reliable data.

In committing to targets and measures in the VAAF, the most consistently reliable

sources of data were identified for measuring and reporting progress. Throughout this report data sources are indicated, typically representing state-based data gathered, held and compiled by Victorian Government departments as well as nationally collected

data, such as that collected and released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Consistent with the government's effort to build a robust evidence base for action and improved service delivery and measurement of outcomes, work is underway in many areas to improve data collection and quality, and where possible, address data gaps.

This includes work to encourage Aboriginal Victorians to identify. The 2011 ABS census reaffirmed that Victoria's Aboriginal population is young and growing at a faster rate than the non-Aboriginal population. The 2011 census showed that Victoria's Aboriginal population rose from 33,517 in 2006 to 47,333 people in 2011. Further analysis by the ABS suggests that 70 per cent of the Aboriginal population increase can be explained by demographic factors, and the majority of the balance due to an increase in the preparedness of Aboriginal people to identify. This is a very positive change.

As Aboriginal population change reported through the 2011 census is much higher than forecasts suggested, the ABS will be releasing updated population estimates in April 2014. These will include backcast estimates for intercensal years and forward projections. Once these are available, improved data representations will be developed for inclusion in the next Aboriginal Affairs Report regarding progress towards VAAF commitments.

State and Commonwealth agencies are also continuing to explore ways to improve data collection and reporting practices. For example, a partnership project involving the ABS and the Department of Justice expects to improve the identification of Aboriginal status in justice related data collections.

Separately, the ABS is leading work to explore the development of a life expectancy measure relating to Aboriginal people living in South Eastern Australia. The Victorian Government welcomes this development. The level of disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal Australians is not confined to communities living in remote parts of Australia. Aboriginal Australians experience unacceptably lower rates of life expectancy in all states and territories, in cities, regional centres and rural and remote areas. Victoria is no exception.

Victoria currently relies on national level data for this key measure. Recent updates to the national life expectancy measure, suggest the gap has lessened over the five years to 2010-12 for Aboriginal men. No significant change in life expectancy for Aboriginal women has been reported. As shown in Table 1 below, unacceptably high gaps remain. Bridging these gaps in life expectancy continues to be a central expectation for the Victorian Government.

Table 1: National life expectancy at birth estimates, 2010-2012

	Aboriginal	non-Aboriginal	Gap
Men	69.1	79.7	10.6 years
Women	73.7	83.1	9.6 years

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) cat. no: 3302.0.55.003, *Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, November 2013

Key achievements in 2013

2013 was a significant year for Aboriginal affairs in Victoria, culminating in the release of a new strategy specifically focussed on driving Aboriginal economic outcomes, the signing of the third phase of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, the commitment to the Human Services Aboriginal Strategic Framework, the release of Victoria's

Aboriginal Tourism Development Strategy, and a new agreement recognising the Dja Dja Wurrung people as Traditional Owners.

The many achievements during 2013 respond to the Victorian Government's reform agenda for Aboriginal affairs and Aboriginal community priorities to deliver positive outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

Engagement

- Three Ministerial Roundtables with groups of prominent Aboriginal Victorians
- Extensive consultation with Aboriginal organisations to inform the development of the *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy*
- Signing of the *Human Services Aboriginal Signatory Organisations and Department of Human Services Protocol 2013-2015*
- Continuing engagement across VAAF action areas, including the Aboriginal Justice Forum, the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum, Human Services Aboriginal Roundtable, Closing the Health Gap Committees and the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council and specific purpose structures and community partnership arrangements
- Continuing support for Reconciliation Victoria and the Koorie Youth Council
- Establishment of a cross-government, cross-sectoral Human Services Aboriginal Roundtable Young People's Working Group
- Continuing support for and increased participation by Aboriginal Victorians in Local Indigenous Networks
- Targeted consultation to inform the development of *Victoria's Aboriginal Tourism Development Strategy 2013-2023* and the development of an integrated Aboriginal Education Strategy

Recognition and Respect

- Signing of a Recognition and Settlement Agreement to formally recognise the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners for part of Central Victoria
- Opening of the Children's Koorie Court in the Shepparton Magistrates Court in October 2013
- Launch of the Koorie Family Violence Police Protocols in Ballarat and Darebin
- Hosting the 2013 Ricci Marks Award recognising young Aboriginal achievers
- A further 14 inspirational Aboriginal Victorians inducted into the Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll
- Celebrating Aboriginal achievement through the Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll roadshow tour of 35 inductees to five communities across Victoria
- Held the 8th annual Victorian Indigenous Remembrance Service in May 2013 honouring Victorian Aboriginal service men and women
- Held the 2013 Victorian Indigenous Art Awards at the Art Gallery of Ballarat, featuring 45 works by 31 Aboriginal artists
- Supported events across Victoria during Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, providing important opportunities for all Victorians to connect with and celebrate Aboriginal culture

Strategic Reform

- Release of the *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020*
- Launch of the *Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 3*
- Release of the *Human Services Aboriginal Strategic Framework 2013-2015*
- Release of *Victoria's Aboriginal Tourism Development Strategy 2013-2023*
- A record \$61.7 million boost was committed in the 2013-14 State Budget to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians
- Appointment of the first Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People
- Release of the Victorian Government responses to the *Review of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Establishment and Effectiveness of Registered Aboriginal Parties*
- Commenced use of Victorian Government Common Funding Agreement to replace the Victorian Indigenous Funding Agreement for service delivery or community projects
- Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria transferred to the Department of Premier and Cabinet

Reports

- *Unfinished business: Koori women and the justice system* (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission)
- *Comparing Sentencing Outcomes for Koori and Non-Koori Adult Offenders in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria* (Sentencing Advisory Council)
- *Closing the Gap – Koolin Balit Aboriginal health: 2011 update Regional data and Koori Health Counts! Victorian Aboriginal hospital data 2011-12* (Department of Health)
- *Aboriginal Graduate Recruitment Framework: a pathway to increase the participation of Aboriginal graduates in the Victorian Graduate Recruitment and Development Scheme* (State Services Authority)

Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy

On 6 December 2013 the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs the Hon Jeanette Powell launched Victoria's first ever Aboriginal Economic Strategy.

The strategy leverages the strengths of Aboriginal Victorians and the State economy to build opportunity and economic prosperity for Aboriginal Victorians.

Economic participation and development are central to the Victorian Government's reform agenda for Aboriginal Affairs.

The strategy connects achievements in education and training, to job opportunities with career pathways, and Aboriginal business enterprise and investment.

A Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board will be established in 2014 to support delivery of the strategy, cut through red tape, and build strategic networks with Victoria's growing industries and the finance sector.

Victoria's Aboriginal Tourism Development Strategy

On 29 November 2013 the Minister for Tourism and Major Events launched *Victoria's Aboriginal Tourism Development Strategy 2013-2023*. The strategy is designed to grow Victoria's share of Australia's Aboriginal tourism market as part of the Victorian Government's commitment to growing the State's \$19.1 billion tourism industry.

The strategy promotes Aboriginal tourism experiences in Melbourne and regional locations, underpinned by strong Aboriginal tourism businesses.

The strategy outlines a plan to grow Victoria's Aboriginal tourism industry by showcasing the quality and diversity of the state's Aboriginal tourism product to a global audience, with a strong focus on enabling Aboriginal tourism to grow as a contemporary and accessible experience.

Progress towards closing the gaps

A key aspect of this annual report is to provide an account of progress against the targets and measures set out under the VAAF. While it can be difficult to gauge year-on-year progress due to variability in the data, this Report finds progress in some areas, notably retention of Aboriginal students in secondary school, enrolments in university following completion of year 12, completion of tertiary qualifications and access to traditional lands.

The data for all VAAF Headline Indicators and supporting measures is provided in the Progress against the Strategic Action Areas section of this Report.

Table 2: Areas of recent and/or continued positive improvement

Indicator or Measure	Result
Perinatal mortality rate	The perinatal mortality for babies of Aboriginal mothers continued to improve, reaching the lowest rate since 2004, at 10.7 babies per 1000 in 2011.
Retention of Aboriginal students to year 10	The apparent retention rate for students in years 7 to 10 continues to improve, increasing from 95 per cent in 2011 to 100 per cent in 2012.
Completion of year 12 or equivalent	The number of Aboriginal students completing year 12 or equivalent has grown substantially, with 380 students completing in the school sector in 2013 and 328 in the VET sector in 2012 – the highest numbers on record.
University enrolments by Aboriginal youth that complete year 12 or equivalent	Aboriginal youth completing Year 12 or equivalent who transition to university increased to 38.6 per cent in 2013. This consolidates the significant increase in the number of Aboriginal young people successfully choosing to attend university over the last few years.
Aboriginal adults who completed a post school qualifications in Certificate III or above	The number of students who completed Certificate III or above in the VET sector rose from 572 in 2011 to 743 in 2012. This is nearly a 300 per cent increase since 2007 and the highest level in a decade.
Aboriginal young people under justice supervision	There was a substantial decrease in the rate of Aboriginal young people in justice supervision in 2012-13. This included a fall in the average daily rate of people on community based supervision orders and almost halving of the rate of Aboriginal young people in detention.
Access to traditional lands	The number of Indigenous Land Use Agreements increased from 33 in 2008-09 to 45 in 2012-13. The area over which native title has been determined to exist has increased from 71,438 to 83,762 square kilometres over the same period.

Despite positive progress in some areas, there remain several ingrained areas of disadvantage that are proving difficult to improve. Outcomes in child protection substantiations, criminal justice supervision and prison recidivism rates remain significantly higher than rates for non-Aboriginal people and require continued concerted effort to reverse this trend. Areas of concern are set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Areas of recent and/or continued concern

Indicator or Measure	Result
Aboriginal child protection substantiations	The number of child protection substantiations for Aboriginal children continues to increase. In 2012-13, 67.4 Aboriginal children per 1000 had a substantiated child protection notification, up from 62.5 per 1000 in 2011-12.
Aboriginal smoking rates, including pregnant women	The rate of smoking by Aboriginal Victorians aged 15 years and over, including Aboriginal women that are pregnant, remains very high at almost 40 per cent, compared to 15.6 per cent of all Victorians.
Aboriginal adults under justice supervision	The rate of over-representation of Aboriginal adults under justice supervision compared with non-Aboriginal people continues to rise. In 2012-13, 38.6 Aboriginal people per 1000 were under adult justice supervision compared with 35.9 in 2011-12. The supervision rate for non-Aboriginal people continues to hold steady at 2.9 per 1000. The over-representation rate is now 13.2, up from 12.5 per thousand.
Released prisoners who returned to prison within two years	Half of all Aboriginal people released from jail return to prison within two years (50.3 per cent) compared with a little over a third of all non-Aboriginal people.

Departmental Aboriginal inclusion and employment action plans

The Victorian Government requires all departments to have Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans demonstrating how access to and the inclusion of Aboriginal people to services and economic (employment and procurement) opportunities will be improved. Building inclusion is essential to closing the gap in outcomes, by contributing to short, medium and long term gains for Aboriginal Victorians.

Guided by the *Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework*, policy makers, program managers and service providers can review their practice and reform the way they engage with and address the needs of Aboriginal Victorians.

As detailed in the Appendix to this Report, most departments have released Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans.

Following internal structural changes and/or machinery of government changes during 2013, a number of departments will be revising, refreshing or renewing their plans during 2014. This will build on the strengths of previous approaches, while ensuring their overall commitment to Aboriginal inclusion remains strong.

Changes to plans will be informed by the findings of an internal review of early progress by departments to Aboriginal

inclusion planning. The review was commissioned during 2013 to inform the Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs about opportunities to strengthen the delivery of the Victorian Government's commitment to Aboriginal inclusion, drawing on examples of good practice that are already occurring and opportunities for improvement.

Since the review, Secretaries have recommitted to finalising or releasing new plans during 2014, where required, and have endorsed internal structures to further the implementation of committed actions. Strategies will also be pursued from 2014 to strengthen engagement and communication within departments and with external stakeholders to better deliver each department's commitments to Aboriginal inclusion and implementation priorities.

A further evaluation of progress and achievements with Aboriginal inclusion action planning across Victorian departments will be conducted in 2015-16. This is an important step in maintaining the momentum and progressing the aims of the *Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework*.

Engagement with the Commonwealth

The Victorian and Commonwealth Governments, through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), are committed to implementing the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA). The VAAF is consistent with the NIRA and documents how Victoria delivers on efforts to close the gaps in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians.

The NIRA is a generation long commitment. Better outcomes under the NIRA, as with the VAAF, cannot be achieved by a handful of short term initiatives. Closing the gaps requires sustained effort to strengthen engagement with Aboriginal people and to ensure universal and targeted platforms delivered and/or funded by government are effectively accessed.

This means all governments must interrogate their programs to ensure these support improved outcomes. This includes assessing the level of access to Commonwealth and Victorian Government universal services, as well as the delivery of any tailored initiatives to improve access.

The 2011 census showed remarkable demographic change for Aboriginal people. Victoria, experienced a sharp increase in the reported Aboriginal population. More than 75 per cent of Aboriginal Australians now live in urban and regional communities. All Aboriginal Australians continue to experience significant gaps in social and economic outcomes.

The first meeting of COAG chaired by the new Prime Minister the Hon Tony Abbott was held in December 2013. First Ministers agreed on measures to improve school attendance by Aboriginal students. Significantly First Ministers agreed with the

Prime Minister's proposal that Indigenous reform be a standing item to be considered at every COAG meeting and that all Standing Councils incorporate consideration of Indigenous reform. These are welcome initiatives that can be built on.

Two examples of clear opportunities for the new Commonwealth Government to reform delivery of its responsibilities are primary health and employment services.

Primary Health

Improving the health status of Aboriginal Victorians and closing the gaps in life expectancy requires multi-pronged efforts by community and governments. While health status is influenced by a large range of factors, it is also directly influenced by the level of access to health services.

The 2014 *Report on Government Services* shows that hospital separations for Aboriginal Victorians are almost three times the rate for other Victorians (and the highest rate since 2006-07). Rates for both chronic and acute conditions increased. This highlights the imperative of strengthening health promotion and early intervention.

The *Report on Government Services* data suggests concerns about the level of access Aboriginal Victorians have to some Commonwealth funded primary health care. Access to Medicare funded annual or bi-annual health checks for Victorian Aboriginal children, adults and seniors are at critical low levels and significantly below national Aboriginal access rates.

These health checks are vital to strengthen health and early intervention before health issues deteriorate and contribute to higher rates of chronic disease at early ages, higher

hospital admission rates and ultimately earlier onset of acquired disabilities and deaths.

Victoria looks forward to working with the Commonwealth to improve access to health services.

Employment and Training

A major and timely priority of the new Commonwealth Government is obtaining better training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal Australians. It has established a national review of Indigenous training and employment programs led by Mr Andrew Forrest, which should provide important perspectives on measures to improve the performance of industry sectors, employers, training providers and Job Services Australia and to encourage and place Aboriginal job seekers.

Improved performance is vital. The 2014 *Report on Government Services* showed there are significant increases in the numbers of Aboriginal Victorians enrolled in vocational education and training (VET)

and successfully completing their courses at or above diploma level. However, data also shows that only a quarter of successful VET Aboriginal graduates had improved employment outcomes following training. This represented a sharp drop on the levels experienced in previous years.

Victoria in particular is concerned that Commonwealth funding programs, such as those offered by Job Services Australia, rise to the challenge of improving sustainable employment outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians who have recently completed or are currently studying.

Victoria's new *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020* emphasises improving economic participation and employment levels and recognises the importance of working closely with the Commonwealth Government as a key partner. Victoria will pursue opportunities to collaborate with the Commonwealth as well as the private sector in securing better employment outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

Cutting red tape to progress equitable contracts with Aboriginal organisations

The VAAF recognises that government and funded service providers are accountable for delivering services and ensuring that investments are well placed and deliver the desired outcomes.

This is why the Victorian Government introduced the Victorian Government Common Funding Agreement (VGCFA) to replace the myriad of funding agreements that departments have used in the past, streamlining funding paperwork and reducing red tape on the not for profit sector, including Aboriginal organisations and service providers.

As part of the priority to meeting the Victorian Government's commitments in the VAAF, the Victorian Indigenous Funding Agreement (VIFA) is no longer being

used in new agreements with Aboriginal organisations. This is an important milestone.

Since 2007, the VIFA was the standard agreement for funding Aboriginal community organisations in Victoria. While the VIFA was underpinned by positive intentions, it was clear during the VAAF development process that the Aboriginal community was seeking contracting arrangements similar to all other Victorian Government funded organisations. Underlying this are the principles of equality, mutual respect and trust.

All departments entering into agreements with Aboriginal organisations from 2013-14 will be using the VGCFA as the basis for the arrangement, with all contracts expected to be based on the VGCFA by 2015 as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Shift from the Victorian Indigenous Funding Agreement (VIFA) to the Victorian Government Common Funding Agreement (VGCFA)

Department	Commenced use of VGCFA instead of VIFA	All contracts based on VGCFA
Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet	Commenced 2013	All service agreements to be consistent with the VGCFA by July 2014.
Arts Victoria, Department of Premier and Cabinet	Commenced 1 January 2014	All service agreements to be consistent with VGCFA by the end of 2014.
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	Commenced 2013	All service agreements to be consistent with the VGCFA by July 2014.
Department of Health	Commenced 2013	All service agreements to be consistent with VGCFA by July 2015.
Department of Human Services	Commenced 2013	Aboriginal organisations with current contracts have been given an early option to move to a VGCFA, with a view to all service agreements being consistent with VGCFA by July 2015.
Department of Justice	Commenced 2013	All service agreements to be consistent with VGCFA by July 2015.



Place based partnerships with the Aboriginal community

Victorian departmental Secretaries lead specific projects to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities in priority locations identified in the VAAF.

The projects enable collaboration and partnership between governments and other organisations with local communities.

They build on a number of existing place-based approaches currently in operation such as the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups, Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees, Local Learning and Employment Networks, Best Start sites, Student Support Service Networks and Youth Partnership sites.

The VAAF emphasises the role of place based approaches in locations where greater numbers of Aboriginal people live, where the community is seeking joined up action and where data suggest that concerted action may be warranted.

Since 2007, Victorian departmental Secretaries have championed place based Aboriginal community partnership projects in a range of locations, including Whittlesea, Casey-Dandenong and Lakes Entrance. These projects have supported the implementation of practical, evidence based initiatives, in a coherent and strategic way.

Two long running projects continue to operate in Mildura and Morwell, and this report provides an overview of the key achievements for each.

Box 1: Latrobe Local Aboriginal Community Partnership Project

In October 2010, the Secretary of the Department of Human Services established the Morwell Local Indigenous Community Partnership Project (recently renamed the Latrobe Local Aboriginal Community Partnership Project) taking in the Latrobe City towns of Moe, Morwell, Churchill and Traralgon. The area has high concentrations of Aboriginal people, some of which face significant disadvantage, including high levels of unemployment and involvement with child protection.

The project aspires to support the Latrobe Aboriginal community to build on its strengths to further nurture a vibrant and empowered community where culture is celebrated, families are strong and connected; children are happy and healthy and where young people are supported to create futures of their choice.

The project focuses on areas identified by the local Aboriginal community and key stakeholders as priorities for improved effort. Initial priorities for the project were developed out of a number of community information sessions and workshops. Under the overarching theme of 'Strengthening Families and Communities' the project has focused on improving maternal health and early childhood health and development, education outcomes and economic development.

A Steering Committee, chaired by the Secretary and including Aboriginal community members, service providers, and Commonwealth, state and local government representatives, meets regularly throughout the year to progress the partnership.

Work has progressed to identify opportunities for greater engagement in education and training, school retention, increased participation in vocational guidance and identifies strategies to reduce barriers to youth transitioning from education and training to employment. Working groups have also been established to specifically focus on youth, families and cross government facilitation.

Key achievements of the project include work undertaken to strengthen families and connection to place. Initiatives have included a family fun and feed day, family camp, soup nights, bike traffic schools, NAIDOC Week activities, a National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day event, a regional sports carnival, and child protection week events. Also supported is the annual Nerran Ngaroon youth forum to focus on the aspirations and contributions of Aboriginal young people. The first forum, focussing on the theme 'dare to dream', was held in November 2012 and was attended by around 50 students, 30 service provider staff and 80 community members. A second forum was held in 2013.

The project has also informed strategic planning and program development at the national, state and local government levels, promoting strengthened partnerships that support Aboriginal families in the region.

Box 2: Mildura Aboriginal Community Partnership Project

The Mildura Aboriginal Community Partnership Project is a place-based response to improve outcomes for the Aboriginal community across the greater Mildura area. The project provides a coordinated response across departments, local government, community based organisations and community members to achieving the VAAF targets. In 2012, Aboriginal people comprised 4.4 per cent of the Mildura population.

The project is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Justice and includes involvement of Aboriginal community representatives, as well as officers from all key government agencies in the region and selected state-wide representatives.

The project provides an opportunity to address key community priorities and improve service responses and participation by Aboriginal people, particularly where gaps are identified.

Through the *Education Working Group* a number of initiatives have progressed, including:

- The introduction of an Indigenous Girls Academy model, which provides support for Aboriginal girls at two secondary school sites in Mildura. This model has been operating for 12 months and has contributed to a higher number of girls graduating from Year 12 at Mildura Senior College in 2013.
- The Mildura Early Childhood Network has been established to provide information and support to all families and services in the Mildura region, for example, actions to increase kindergarten participation, noting that Mildura has had the highest number of Aboriginal children not enrolled in kindergarten in Victoria.
- The Mildura Primary School Canoeing Program was established as a partnership with the YMCA, Victoria Police, Mildura Rural City Council and the Active After Schools Program. The program targets Grade 5 children and supports them through to Grade 6 as they transition to secondary school. The program promotes high levels of attendance at school. Victoria Police is the lead agency for this program and is seeking to develop a state-wide model as a successful youth and community engagement program.
- The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning Driving Program is a partnership between SuniTAFE, the Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) and the Department of Justice and is aimed at learner and probationary licence holders. Following a review in March 2013 the program is available to all Aboriginal students undertaking various study pathways at SuniTAFE.

The *Koori Emerging Leaders Program* was initiated together with the Department of Justice in 2010. During the first two years of the program, group membership included 15 youth aged between 13 and 18 years. Group members have participated in a variety of activities designed to support the youth to develop personal skills such as decision making and community development.

Many of the youth involved have experienced success in terms of remaining engaged at school, developing public speaking skills and leadership qualities. One member received the Ricci Marks Encouragement Award in 2013. A second group member received the state-wide Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning Award for excellence in Indigenous Education.

The program and youth involved have delivered Leadership Workshops to more than 100 youth from Mildura and surrounding districts. Topics covered at these workshops include values, building resilience and turning conflict into cooperation.

An agreement has been reached between the YMCA, Department of Justice and MDAS to enable the YMCA to become the lead agency for the Mildura Koori Emerging Leaders program. Other projects have included the Kinder For All and Mallee District Aboriginal Services Family Violence projects, delivered by MDAS.

A review of the project is underway to inform the structure and options for the resourcing of future initiatives.

The Aboriginal affairs reform agenda includes a focus on evaluations to ensure programs and service systems respond to the evidence of what is being achieved, and what else is needed to deliver desired outcomes. While monitoring outcomes through data collection, analysis and reporting is one way to check progress, an important component of an evidence-based approach is undertaking evaluations of strategies, plans, initiatives and programs.

The VAAF commits to the development of a 10 year Evaluation Framework, which will sequence evaluations to ensure a focus on the effectiveness of those strategies, plans and programs that are essential to the delivery of VAAF outcomes.

Table 5 provides an overview of some of the key evaluations that were undertaken during 2013 specifically relevant to Aboriginal affairs.

Table 5: Key evaluations relating to Aboriginal Victorians, 2013

Title	Key findings
Victoria's approach to the National Partnership on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes 2009-2013	<p>The Department of Health engaged Urbis to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of Victoria's approach to the implementation of the <i>National Partnership on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes 2009-2013</i>, to examine the performance of the initiative, and to inform future planning. An interim report was released in March 2013, providing valuable insights to inform planning for the implementation of <i>Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012-2022</i>.</p> <p>The evaluation focused on the effectiveness of Victoria's initiative and the extent to which closing the gap health targets have been achieved. Some of the report's key findings are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building relationships between Aboriginal organisations and universal service providers has been the most significant achievement in addressing gaps and improving the patient journey. • Changes to approaches in tackling the high rates of Aboriginal smoking. • There has been a positive uptake in Aboriginal health workforce training grants and cadetships. • Greater focus by universal services on culturally responsive practice has positively influenced service delivery outcomes. • The combination of a population-health level focus for the state-wide projects, and a place-based approach through the regions has improved service level activity and organisation level partnerships. <p>The report made a number of recommendations in relation to strengthening evaluation, communication and legacy planning. The evaluation also found that progressing the initiative will require strengthened partnerships and leadership at the local level.</p> <p>Further information is available at: www.health.vic.gov.au/aboriginalhealth/victoria/evaluation</p>
State-wide Evaluation of Best Start, including Aboriginal Best Start	<p>A State-wide evaluation of the Best Start projects, including Aboriginal Best Start, found that Aboriginal Best Start had contributed to better outcomes for Aboriginal children and their families. These included helping families access health assessments prior to children commencing kindergarten and increasing children's participation in sporting activities. Aboriginal Best Start also supports non-Aboriginal services to be more culturally inclusive of Aboriginal children and families.</p>

Title	Key findings
<p>Review of Departmental Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans</p>	<p>During 2013, the Department of Premier and Cabinet commissioned a review of all departmental Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans and associated processes, with reference to the <i>Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework 2011</i>.</p> <p>The review sought advice on achievements to date and potential areas for improvement. The key findings of the review were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While there are numerous examples of good practice across departments, particularly those with a long history of working with Aboriginal Victorians, there is still scope for improvement. • Departments that embraced an inclusive approach to policy development and service delivery and procurement were able to identify how inclusion is adding value to their operations. • The implementation of Aboriginal inclusion plan commitments would, in many cases, benefit from clearer engagement structures and communication within departments and with external stakeholders. • Strong executive leadership and advocacy was found to be essential to the successful development and delivery of actions to improve Aboriginal inclusion within departments. • Collaboration across departments could be strengthened to further reinforce and drive the Aboriginal inclusion action agenda. <p>A series of actions have been progressed by the Secretaries' Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs to ensure all Action Plans in 2014 and internal structures are in place to strengthen responses to Aboriginal inclusion action planning consistent with the <i>Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework</i>.</p>
<p>Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place Final Evaluation Report</p>	<p>An evaluation of the Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place was conducted by the Department of Justice consistent with the requirements of the <i>Aboriginal Justice Agreement</i>. Wulgunggo Ngalu is a culturally appropriate live-in facility and program for Koori male offenders on supervised community corrections orders. The evaluation found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at Wulgunggo Ngalu improved completion rates of community corrections orders, particularly among those with the highest risk of reoffending • Key aspects of the model that enable the achievement of the desired participant outcomes, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - holistic responses and cultural strengthening processes are embedded in the program - a highly individualised approach is taken to each participant and his needs - the physical environment is culturally safe - extensive Koori input into the design, oversight and governance of the service - all core staff are Koori men, who act as strong role models, with support from Elders and Respected Persons - voluntary attendance means that participants tend to be more committed to the Wulgunggo Ngalu experience. <p>The evaluation was considered by the Aboriginal Justice Forum during 2013 and has informed future practice in this area. A copy of the report is available at:</p> <p>www.corrections.vic.gov.au/utility/publications+manuals+and+statistics/wulgunggo+ngalu+learning+place+final+evaluation+report</p>

Title	Key findings
<p>Evaluation of the Wannik Education Strategy for Koorie Students</p>	<p>The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development commissioned an independent evaluation of key actions within schools, including those identified in the <i>Wannik Education Strategy for Koorie students</i>.</p> <p>Key findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria's education system is becoming more inclusive of Aboriginal students, however there is significant variation at a school level. • Aboriginal students are more engaged and likely to achieve better education outcomes where there are strong relationships between school staff, parents, Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) and the wider community. • There is a need for strong and clear accountability for Aboriginal education across the system. • Feedback around the support provided by KESOs was generally positive, with some opportunities to strengthening the role identified. • The use of Individual Education Plans was variable across schools and there needs to be a greater focus on discussions with Aboriginal students. • There was overwhelming positive feedback on the Clontarf and Dance Academies. <p>Findings from the evaluation will inform the development of a new integrated Aboriginal Education Strategy.</p>
<p>Evaluation of the Wurreker Strategy</p>	<p>The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development commissioned an independent review of the <i>Wurreker Strategy</i>. The strategy aims to improve education and training delivery in the vocational system to achieve quality education, training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal learners.</p> <p>Key findings of the review were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal participation in vocational training is improving, including due to the introduction of the Victorian Training Guarantee. • Completion rates have improved but still lag behind those for non-Aboriginal students. • The growth in training provision has created demand in non-TAFE providers for Wurreker related service and programs. • There was widespread support for a holistic approach to Aboriginal education, covering education pathways from early childhood development to higher education. <p>Findings from the evaluation will inform the development of a new integrated Aboriginal Education Strategy.</p>
<p>Unfinished business: Koorie women and the justice system</p>	<p>The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission undertook a review of the interaction between Aboriginal women and the criminal justice system.</p> <p>The resulting report highlighted the need for prevention and diversion options for Aboriginal women as an alternative setting to prisons for women on remand. The report reaffirmed previous findings that Aboriginal women continue to be over-represented in the criminal justice system and cites the harmful impacts on children, families and communities resulting from this.</p> <p>A number of recommendations were made promoting diversion and rehabilitation of Aboriginal female offenders.</p> <p>A copy of the report is available at: www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/our-projects-a-initiatives/koori-women-and-prisons</p>

Strong and achievable targets and measures for closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians are set out in the six Strategic Action Areas contained in the VAAF:

1. Maternal health and early childhood health and development
2. Education and training
3. Economic participation
4. Health, housing and wellbeing
5. Safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes
6. Strong culture, engaged people and confident communities

A holistic life course approach underpins these Strategic Action Areas. This approach recognises the factors that influence a person's experiences, shape their life course and hence life outcomes. This approach also recognises the importance of cultural influences and of having effective and inclusive policies, programs and services in place that can meet a person's needs at particular points in their life so they can better achieve their potential.

Progress towards outcomes

The targets and measures reported in this Strategic Action Area focus on whether outcomes are improving for Aboriginal mothers and babies, compared with those experienced by other Victorians. Effort in the early years can make a profound difference across all future life stages.

- Positive outcomes were reported in relation to the **perinatal mortality rate**, which in 2011 fell to the lowest level since 2004. The data on the rate of **low birth weight babies** suggests that sustained effort is needed to consolidate gains to date.
- A contributing factor to infant survival and health is the rate of **smoking by pregnant mothers**. The most recent data confirms there has been little improvement in relation to Aboriginal women, and raise issues about whether more effective strategies involving the State and Commonwealth Government and Aboriginal communities are needed to achieve change in this key area.
- There has been a continued increase in **four year old kindergarten participation** by Aboriginal children, with 986 four year old Aboriginal children participating in kindergarten in 2013. However, there was a slight fall in the three year old kindergarten participation by Aboriginal children.



- In 2012-13 the number of **Aboriginal child protection substantiations** increased, with 1048 children substantiated in Victoria. At a rate of 67.4 per 1000 Aboriginal children, this continues to be more than 9 times the rate for non-Aboriginal children in Victoria (7.2 per 1000 children) and is significantly higher than the national Aboriginal rate.
- Gaps remain in participation in **Maternal and Child Health services** among Aboriginal Victorians, with participation rates in 2012-13 decreasing at all consultation stages, with the exception of the two year old consultation visit.

H1. Improve Aboriginal infant survival and health

Targets:

By 2023, close the gap in the perinatal mortality rate

By 2023, close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal babies with a birth weight below 2500 grams

Other measure:

The rate of reported smoking use in pregnancy by mothers of Aboriginal babies

Perinatal mortality rate and babies with a low birth rate

In 2011 the perinatal mortality rate for babies of Aboriginal mothers was 10.7 per 1000 births, which is significantly lower than in 2010 (19.5 per 1000) and the lowest rate since 2004. However, approximately twice as many Aboriginal babies continue to be born with a lower birth weight than non-Aboriginal babies. While there are significant annual variations in this data due to fluctuations in birth rates, overall the results for 2011 are moving in the right direction.

Figure 1: Perinatal mortality rate per 1000 births, Victoria

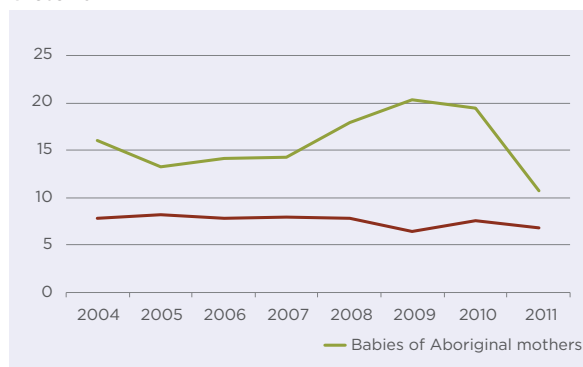
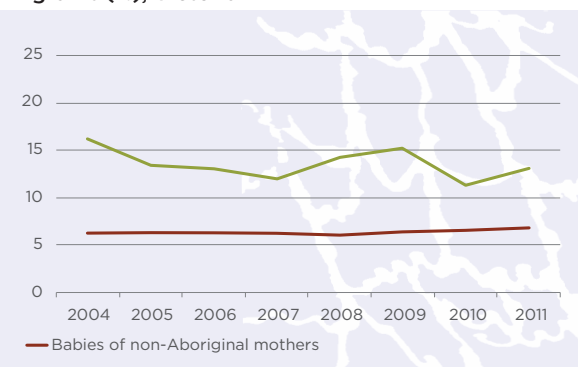


Figure 2: Babies with birth weight below 2500 grams (%), Victoria



Source: Victorian Perinatal Data Collection, Department of Health

Table 6: Perinatal mortality rate per 1000 births, Victoria

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Babies of Aboriginal mothers	16.1	13.3	14.1	14.3	17.9	20.4	19.5	10.7
Babies of non-Aboriginal mothers	7.9	8.2	7.9	8.0	7.9	6.5	7.6	6.8

Source: Victorian Perinatal Data Collection, Department of Health

Table 7: Babies with birth weight below 2500 grams, Victoria (%)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Babies of Aboriginal mothers	16.2	13.4	13.1	12.0	14.2	15.2	11.2	13.1
Babies of non-Aboriginal mothers	6.2	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.0	6.4	6.5	6.8
All Aboriginal babies						11.5	10.6	12.1
All non-Aboriginal babies						4.5	6.5	6.8

Source: Victorian Perinatal Data Collection, Department of Health

A contributing factor to low birth weight is the rate of smoking by mothers. The rate of smoking by expectant Aboriginal mothers remains very high, at approximately 40 per cent of mothers in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy (new data for the 2013 Report),

and marginally less in the month prior to delivery. Evidence shows that women who smoke while pregnant are more likely to have babies with low birth weight and an increased risk of other health issues.

Table 8: Percentage of women smoking in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy, Victoria

	2009	2010	2011
Aboriginal women	40.2	41.1	39.5

Source: Victorian Perinatal Data Collection, Department of Health

Table 9: Percentage of women admitted to hospital from one month prior to delivery who were current smokers, Victoria

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Aboriginal women	39	31	38	40	39	37	38	34	36

Source: Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset, based on recorded Aboriginal status of mother, use of tobacco

The Koori Maternity Services (KMS) program continues to be a key program aimed at increasing access and participation of Aboriginal women in antenatal and postnatal support. This initiative is sponsored under the Indigenous National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Development. Following

the introduction of new services during 2012-13 at Northern Health and Frankston Hospital (Peninsula Health), the KMS now operates in 11 Aboriginal community controlled health organisations and three public health services.

Case Study: Bumps to Babes and Beyond

A new and unique initiative is being delivered by the Mildura District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) to ensure that all necessary supports are accessed by expectant Aboriginal mothers assessed as being at risk and their babies, to improve their health and broader life outcomes.

Many Aboriginal women and children experience multiple factors that place their health and wellbeing at risk. In Mildura, Aboriginal women receive less than a third of the recommended antenatal care, 76 per cent are still smoking at the third trimester of their pregnancy and only 15 per cent of babies are breastfed at three months of age. Other stresses can also be seen, such as risk taking behaviours, early contact with the child protection system and poor participation in early childhood services.

MDAS' Bumps to Babes and Beyond initiative is focused on supporting expectant mothers and their families from conception to school. This fully integrated, strengths based model gives focus to developing the relationship between women and their babies right from conception. It builds physical and emotional wellbeing, life skills and strengthens the connection between mothers and babies. An intensive client-driven case management model is applied, supported by specialists, to achieve defined milestones over a five year period for Aboriginal parents and babies.

After operating for just over a year, the early results are very promising:

- 60 per cent of women have had antenatal care and 30 per cent some care
- 80 per cent of women carried their babies to full term
- 80 per cent of women were breast feeding upon discharge; 50 per cent after six months and 20 per cent over 12 months
- 100 per cent of women were up to date with the maternal and child health visits
- 100 per cent of babies are fully immunised according to the schedule
- there have been no child protection removals.

H2. Increase Aboriginal kindergarten participation

Target:

By 2014, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 4 year old children having access to a high quality kindergarten program will be closed

Other measure:

The number of Aboriginal 3 year old children participating in a kindergarten program

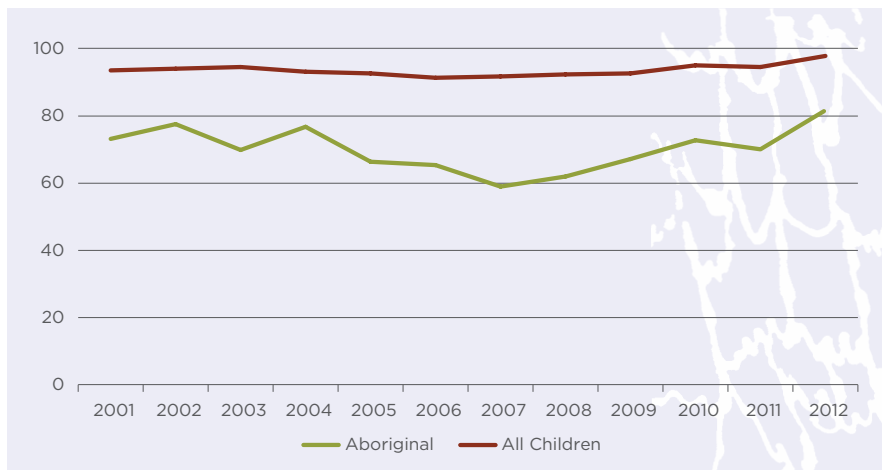
A key priority for the Victorian Government is to support access to universal early childhood education, particularly aimed at reducing financial and geographic barriers to participation.

There are a range of programs to support access to universal early childhood education, particularly aimed at reducing financial and geographic barriers to participation. For example, through the Early Start Kindergarten program and the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy, Aboriginal children are provided free access to universal three year old and four year old kindergarten

programs, with an opportunity to access up to 15 hours a week of a funded early childhood program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher.

Other programs include the Koorie Preschool Assistants Program, the In-Home Support and Home Based Learning Programs for Aboriginal children and Aboriginal Best Start programs. In addition, the Rural and Small Rural Grants initiatives support access to affordable kindergarten programs in rural communities which may have relatively large populations of Aboriginal people.

Figure 3: Rate of participation in four year old kindergarten, Victoria



Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) data

There has been strong growth in the number of Aboriginal children enrolled in four year old kindergarten, with the gap in the participation rate compared to non-Aboriginal children significantly reduced. This is the first year since the introduction of the Early Start Kindergarten initiative

where both the number and participation rate of Aboriginal children in three year old kindergarten has declined. Strategies to improve this, include greater local promotion and support for uptake by eligible Aboriginal children.

Table 10: Aboriginal children in 3 and 4 year old kindergarten, Victoria

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number									
4 year old kindergarten	465	529	504	525	579	731	742	911	986
3 year old kindergarten				109	238	262	343	350	329
Participation rate (%)									
4 year old kindergarten	66.4%	65.4%	59.0%	62.0%	67.2%	72.8%	70.1%	81.6%	n/a
3 year old kindergarten					27.7%	30.9%	39.2%	39.0%	35.5%
Gap in Participation (%)									
4 year old kindergarten	26.3%	26.0%	32.8%	30.4%	25.5%	22.3%	24.5%	16.3%	n/a

Source: DEECD data

Note: The 3 year old Aboriginal kindergarten enrolment figure is sourced from the Early Start Kindergarten Funding data, which commenced in 2008-09, so data is only available from this point. 2013 participation data for 4 year old kindergarten will be available in early 2015.

Note: Comparative data is not available for general participation therefore a participation gap cannot be determined.

Case study – Aboriginal Children and Family Centre – Dala Yooro, Bairnsdale

Under the National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development, two new Aboriginal Children and Family Centres have been established in Thomastown and Bairnsdale. The centres provide a mix of early childhood and family support services.

Dala Yooro opened in Bairnsdale in April 2013. Dala Yooro provides a range of early childhood and family support services, including three and four year old kindergarten, allied health services, antenatal and postnatal care, maternal and child health, counselling, playgroups, young mums' groups, Koorie Maternity Services, In Home Support and Home Based Learning and mental health support.

Despite Dala Yooro's short history, the centre has made considerable progress. In 2013, Dala Yooro had 34 Aboriginal children access services at or through the centre, and 94 per cent of these children were both fully immunised and received the latest age-appropriate health check.

H3. Reduce the rate of Aboriginal child protection substantiations

Target:

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

The government has given priority to improving outcomes for vulnerable Aboriginal children and young people in the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018*. Underpinning this is a clear recognition of the unacceptably high rate of Aboriginal children in Victoria's child protection system

and out of home care. Data for 2012-13 shows a further significant increase in the rate of child protection substantiations among Aboriginal children and a continuing high gap in outcomes compared with non-Aboriginal children.

Figure 4: Rate per 1000 children aged 0-17 years where child protection notifications have been substantiated, Victoria



Source: Report on Government Services 2014

In 2012-13, 1048 Aboriginal children and young people experienced substantiated neglect and/or abuse – this is 67.4 per 1000 children and represents the highest level since 2005-06. The rate was significantly higher than the national Aboriginal substantiation rate of 41.9 per 1000 and 9.4 times the rate for non-Aboriginal Victorian children.

Factors contributing to the increase in the substantiation rate include family violence, alcohol and drug misuse, mental health issues and intellectual disability. Victorian Government reforms that support increased reporting of child neglect or abuse and family violence are also likely to have contributed to the increase.

Table 11: Rate per 1000 children aged 0-17 years where notifications have been substantiated, Victoria

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Aboriginal children	57.7	63.0	67.7	56.6	55.0	48.3	46.9	50.4	62.5	67.4
non-Aboriginal children	5.9	5.8	6.0	5.3	4.9	4.8	4.7	5.4	6.4	7.2
All children	6.4	6.4	6.7	5.9	5.5	5.4	5.2	5.9	7.1	7.9

Source: Report on Government Services 2014

Note: Prior to 2009-10, rates were calculated as the number of children aged 0-16 years. From 2009-10 onwards, rates are calculated as the number of children aged 0-17 years. During 2006-07, Victoria introduced a major new data system, which may mean that the Victorian child protection data may not be fully comparable with previous years' data

A number of initiatives, including those stemming from the *Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry*, *Victoria's Vulnerable Children – Our Shared Responsibility Directions Paper* and the *Victoria's Vulnerable Children Strategy* released in May 2013, will directly benefit Aboriginal children and families.

In 2013, the Victorian Government appointed the inaugural Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People. This is the first such position in Australia. The Commissioner will provide advice to the government and service providers about policies and practices that promote the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children. This includes contributing to and ultimately monitoring implementation of the five year plan for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. This plan is currently under development and will be informed by an extensive engagement process with Aboriginal community organisations and service providers.

The Victorian Government invests significant effort in improving the effectiveness of child protection and related services. A number of services are specifically aimed at Aboriginal families, including, Integrated family services – Indigenous, Aboriginal Family Preservation and Restoration, Aboriginal Stronger Families and Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder.

Culturally appropriate child protection and out-of-home care responses to Aboriginal children and their families are provided for through legislated provisions contained in the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* and also through investment in the following initiatives:

- Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Services, provided by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Mallee District Aboriginal Service
- Aboriginal Family-led Decision Making
- Cultural Support Plan Program
- Aboriginal Permanent Care Program
- A range of Aboriginal out-of-home care programs
- Aboriginal Leaving Care program.

A pilot program is currently being conducted by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Limited (VACCA) and the Department of Human Services to explore specific policy and practice arrangements, organisational capacity and resource requirements related to implementation of section 18 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*. This section allows for the Secretary of the Department of Human Services to authorise the principal officer of an Aboriginal organisation to perform functions and powers in relation to a protection order in respect of an Aboriginal child.

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

In 2012-13, overall the number of Aboriginal children participating in Maternal and Child Health services increased, however, participation rates for Aboriginal children and families decreased in 9 out of the 10 key age consultations. As such, there has been a slight increase in the gap in participation rates compared to non-Aboriginal children, with the exception of the two year consultation point.

Table 12: Aboriginal children at Key Age Consultations, Victoria

	2006-07 Number	2007-08 Number	2008-09 Number	2009-10 Number	2010-11 Number	2011-12 Number	2012-13 Number	2012-13 Participation Rate	2012-13 Gap
Home visit	685	801	795	868	949	1024	1069	96.3	4.3
2 weeks	620	761	735	797	903	906	956	86.1	10.8
4 weeks	597	701	694	754	831	859	918	82.7	13.8
8 weeks	597	682	684	760	791	863	875	78.8	16.7
4 months	537	635	621	730	757	808	836	75.3	18.3
8 months	457	523	548	579	604	704	703	64.3	21.3
12 months	426	429	556	530	596	644	671	61.4	20.6
18 months	346	316	451	454	495	524	537	50.7	23.0
2 years	352	347	397	435	447	450	555	53.3	17.3
3.5 years	255	281	308	346	388	488	507	52.2	14.3

Source: DEECD Annual Report and Data Collection

Maternal and child health checks are crucial for enabling the early identification of developmental issues as well as being an important source of advice and support for mothers. Access continues to be problematic in some localised areas. The Victorian Government will work with local government to achieve higher rates of participation by Aboriginal children.

A project in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health

Organisation (VACCHO) has been initiated to explore and address barriers experienced by Aboriginal families and support better engagement with Maternal and Child Health services.

Strategies to increase the participation of Aboriginal children and families to use the service will be considered in the development of the new integrated Aboriginal Education Strategy.

Progress towards outcomes

The Victorian Government believes that strong foundations in education are essential for enabling Aboriginal young people and other young Victorians to gain a job, secure financial independence and build wealth and economic security.

In 2013, 12,139 Aboriginal children and young people were enrolled in Victorian primary and secondary schools, an increase of approximately 43 per cent since 2007. These students were dispersed across more than 1200 schools in Victoria, with almost 90 per cent of students attending state government schools.

Recent data under the key indicators and measures for this Strategic Action Area indicates that:

- **NAPLAN results** show some improvements among Aboriginal students in reading across a number of year levels, and steady results in writing, however, there was a significant decline in year 9 results which warrants further investigation.
- **The apparent retention of Aboriginal students to Year 10** has increased significantly over the last few years, and in 2012 reached 100 per cent, closing the gap for the first time.
- The number of **Aboriginal students successfully completing a Certificate III or higher** in the VET sector increased to 743 students, representing a 98 per cent increase since 2010.
- The proportion of **Aboriginal students completing year 12 and continuing to university** reached 38.6 per cent in 2013 – the highest rate recorded since data was first collected in 2006.



The Victorian Government is working to ensure that the \$12.2 billion investment agreed jointly between the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in the Heads of Agreement is delivered in full to Victorian schools over the next six years. School funding reform can ensure that funding and allocation reflect student need. Schools will have the additional resources to support the educational needs of all students, particularly those of highest need who are most likely to become disengaged, and who are at risk of poor post-school and life pathways. The Victorian Government is investing record funding into the school education system this year. The 2014 budgets of government schools include student-based funding, school based funding and targeted initiatives and are weighted to support children experiencing disadvantage or living with a disability.

Outcomes analysis

H4. Improve literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for Aboriginal students

Targets:

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

Other measures:

School attendance rates for Aboriginal students

Retention of Aboriginal students to Year 10

In general, Victoria continues to perform above the national average in terms of NAPLAN achievement by Aboriginal students, Victoria is generally on target to meet its COAG Closing the Gap targets. However, gaps persist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students at every year level in each NAPLAN domain and further effort is required to meet all targets, particularly in numeracy.

In 2013, there were improvements in reading in years 3, 5 and 9, particularly in year 5

where 91.4 per cent of Aboriginal students met the minimum standards, up from 81.4 per cent in 2012. Results in years 7 and 9 are less positive for writing and numeracy among Aboriginal students.

Participation by Victorian Aboriginal students in reading, persuasive writing and numeracy assessments continued to be at a lower rate than the national Aboriginal rate at almost every year level. A number of actions are in place to improve student participation.

Reading

Table 13: Percentage of students at or above the minimum standard for NAPLAN reading, Victoria

		Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
2008	Aboriginal	88.1	83.0	85.5	79.9
	non-Aboriginal	95.6	94.0	96.1	95.0
2009	Aboriginal	87.2	84.8	84.4	79.3
	non-Aboriginal	95.8	94.6	95.7	94.7
2010	Aboriginal	87.0	84.8	87.7	76.6
	non-Aboriginal	95.9	94.6	96.5	93.7
2011	Aboriginal	88.2	83.1	87.8	80.3
	non-Aboriginal	95.7	94.7	96.1	94.2
2012	Aboriginal	84.9	81.4	87.8	80.7
	non-Aboriginal	95.5	94.4	95.7	93.3
2013	Aboriginal	87.5	91.4	86.2	84.0
	non-Aboriginal	96.4	96.8	95.9	94.8

Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Reports, ACARA

Note: NAPLAN data are subject to measurement error of up to 5 percentage points

Writing (persuasive)

Table 14: Percentage of students at or above the minimum standard for NAPLAN writing, Victoria

		Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
2011	Aboriginal	91.3	83.3	74.0	66.7
	non-Aboriginal	96.6	94.7	92.1	88.0
2012	Aboriginal	90.5	81.7	76.9	66.2
	non-Aboriginal	96.6	95.0	92.2	86.4
2013	Aboriginal	89.6	82.5	72.7	64.4
	non-Aboriginal	96.3	94.6	91.7	86.5

Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Reports, ACARA

Note: NAPLAN data are subject to measurement error of up to 5 percentage points

Numeracy

Table 15: Percentage of students at or above the minimum standard for NAPLAN numeracy, Victoria

		Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
2008	Aboriginal	93.0	83.3	87.9	78.4
	non-Aboriginal	96.8	95.0	96.8	95.5
2009	Aboriginal	89.4	86.9	85.4	83.8
	non-Aboriginal	96.1	95.9	96.3	96.7
2010	Aboriginal	86.5	87.4	85.5	80.9
	non-Aboriginal	95.9	96.0	96.4	95.2
2011	Aboriginal	89.6	86.1	86.3	80.3
	non-Aboriginal	96.0	95.9	96.1	94.8
2012	Aboriginal	85.9	83.2	85.7	83.1
	non-Aboriginal	95.9	95.3	95.3	95.2
2013	Aboriginal	88.7	85.6	86.1	75.8
	non-Aboriginal	96.5	94.7	96.0	92.6

Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Reports, ACARA

Note: NAPLAN data are subject to measurement error of up to 5 percentage points

A number of targeted initiatives operate in Victoria to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students, including:

- Additional support for Aboriginal students in Years 2 to 10 who are achieving lower than expected levels in literacy and numeracy, and to support retention and completion of years 11 and 12 across Victoria's 716 government schools. The Wannik Tutorial program has been operating since 2008 and has been redesigned in 2014.
- Actively encouraging the inclusion of targets in school strategic plans and Principal Performance Plans, to improve Aboriginal student outcomes.
- Support for school leaders to participate in the Stronger Smarter, What Works and Dare to Lead programs to develop school-based actions to improve engagement with Aboriginal communities.
- Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) appointed at a local level play

a key role in facilitating engagement between students, families and schools, particularly in the development of Individual Education Plans. In 2012, 88 per cent of Aboriginal students in government schools had such Plans.

- The Koorie Academy of Excellence, a partnership between the Victorian Government, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc and La Trobe University, is raising the expectations of Aboriginal families and driving better outcomes.

Further, in 2014, the Victorian Government is delivering a new Aboriginal literacy and numeracy program targeted to early years schooling.

School attendance rates for Aboriginal children

In 2012, overall attendance by Aboriginal students in years 1 to 10 in Victorian Government schools remained steady or was slightly higher than previous years.

The gap in attendance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students is lowest during the early primary school years. Year 10 remains a pivotal year, with the lowest attendance rates for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students (82 per cent and 91 per cent respectively) and also the largest gap.

Table 16: Attendance rates for Aboriginal children in Government schools, Victoria

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Ungraded PS	Ungraded SC
2008	88	89	89	89	89	89	86	85	82	82	83	83
2009	88	88	89	89	89	89	86	82	81	81	82	82
2010	90	89	89	89	89	89	87	82	81	80	83	83
2011	89	90	89	89	89	89	87	82	80	79	84	84
2012	89	90	89	89	88	88	88	84	83	82	83	83

Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
 Note: PS refers to Primary School and SC to Secondary College

Retention of Aboriginal children to Year 10

The apparent retention rates for Aboriginal students from year 7 to 10 attending all schools reached 100 per cent in 2012. This result builds on gains achieved over the past three years, with the gap now being closed among all schools.

Priority remains to ensure apparent retention rates are strong across all schools, with concerted effort to continue improving rates at Victorian Government schools for Aboriginal students, which in 2012 was 93.8 per cent according to data reported in the 2014 *Report on Government Services*.

Table 17: Apparent retention rates for Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 10, Victoria

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Aboriginal	81.2	91.1	88.3	81.7	80.4	90.7	95.0	100.2

Source: ABS Schools, Australia 2013 (Cat. No.4221.0)
 Note: The apparent retention rate is calculated as the number of full-time school students in Year 10 as a percentage of their respective cohort at the commencement of their secondary schooling at Year 7. These data do not take account of students who move from the school to the training sector or who continue their education interstate. The smaller size of the Aboriginal cohort can result in data volatility. Because of student movements over the period, percentages may exceed 100 per cent.

A number of initiatives continue to be offered to strengthen student retention including:

- Wannik Dance Academies and Clontarf Academies, operating alongside government schools in locations with high concentrations of Aboriginal students.
- A state-wide specialist Koorie Education Workforce, comprising Koorie Education Coordinators and Koorie Engagement Support Officers. The workforce supports culturally appropriate engagement between schools and Aboriginal students and families, the implementation of outreach strategies and student transitions across the learning and development system.

Other initiatives progressed during 2013 include:

- A Teacher Practice e-module is being developed for delivery on-line to support the capacity of teachers to utilise strategies for culturally inclusive teaching and learning practice, and to build understanding of Aboriginal culture and histories. The e-module aligns to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and will be available to teachers from 2014.
- A Leading Indigenous Cultural Inclusion module will build the capacity of principals and school leaders to create organisational conditions necessary to implement and sustain exemplary culturally inclusive curriculum practices that engage and support Aboriginal students and their families.

H5. Increase the proportion of Aboriginal young people aged 20-24 who have completed at least Year 12 or equivalent

Target:

By 2020, halve the gap between the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 20-24 year olds

Other measures:

The rate of transition of Aboriginal young people aged 18-24 years to employment and/or further education
The number of Aboriginal people aged 20-65 with or working towards post school qualifications in Certificate III or above

Recent census data provided in the 2012 Aboriginal Affairs Report showed an improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal 20-24 year olds with a Year 12 or equivalent qualification.

As shown in Table 18, there has been a significant increase in the number of Aboriginal students utilising the VET sector to complete their secondary school education in Victoria. Rising from only 44 students a decade ago, to 328 in 2012, the rate of growth represents a significant change in student outcomes.

Table 18: Number of Aboriginal students who completed Year 12 or equivalent in the school and VET sectors, Victoria

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
School Sector #	127	148	145	175	160	190	225	255	257	272	354	380
VET Sector ^	44	59	69	74	82	86	112	137	187	240	328	Not available

Source: DEECD data. Includes government and non-government schools

^ Source: NCVER VOCSTATS table Students 2002-2012. Includes government funded students whose 'Highest Award Completed' was either Year 12 or any VET qualification Certificate II and above for age groups 15-19 and 14 and below.

Note: The data in the above table from the two sectors should not be added together to give a total number of students, as some students are enrolled in both the school and VET sectors in any given year.

Scholarships continue to be provided for Aboriginal students completing Year 11 and 12 in Victorian Government schools, with 106 scholarships awarded between 2009 and 2013.

Further, the Victorian Government will continue to build a strong and sustainable vocational training system, with a focus on quality and industry needs. Initiatives aimed at increasing participation include:

- Providing an entitlement to a government-subsidised training place for all Victorians, subject to age and up-skilling requirements, with eligible Aboriginal students only required to pay a concessional rate, to remove financial barriers to education.
- Supporting Aboriginal people of any age to participate in the VET system.
- Improved information so students can clearly determine the quality and cost of training.

The Wannik and Wurreker Strategies, as well as targeted programs under the

National Partnership for Youth Attainment and Transitions, further support Aboriginal students. In the vocational sector, Koorie Liaison Officers and Wurreker Brokers continued to facilitate Aboriginal student and community engagement to participate in vocational training and transition to further education or employment.

The rate of transition of Aboriginal young people aged 18-24 years to employment and/or further education

The On-Track Survey of destinations of school leavers shows that previous improvements are being consolidated, with a strong proportion of Aboriginal students completing Year 12 or equivalent enrolling in university the following year.

Of the 2012 cohort, 38.6 per cent of Aboriginal students enrolled in university, which is the highest rate since data was first collected in 2006. Overall, more than 70 per cent of these 2012 students transitioned into further education or into an apprenticeship or traineeship by 2013 - the highest proportion in many years.

Table 19: Destinations of Aboriginal Year 12 or equivalent completers (%), 2006 to 2013

Post School Destination	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
University	27.7	25.5	22.3	28.8	28.3	30.0	37.7	38.6
VET Cert IV+	18.6	17.1	21.0	16.0	15.6	12.2	9.2	15.4
VET Entry Level	6.9	7.7	8.3	6.4	8.3	6.9	6.2	5.5
Apprentice/Trainee	11.2	11.5	11.5	9.6	14.3	14.1	12.8	11.6
Employed	23.4	24.1	22.3	18.5	17.5	17.5	16.5	13.8
Looking For Work	6.9	8.0	4.5	9.6	7.9	7.8	5.5	6.8
Deferred	4.8	5.2	9.6	10.7	6.7	9.7	11.7	7.1
NILFET	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.4	1.6	1.9	0.4	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: DEECD On Track Survey

Note: Columns may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

The number of Aboriginal people aged 20–65 with or working towards post school qualifications in Certificate III or above

There has been significant growth in the number of Aboriginal Victorians enrolling in vocational training, highlighting the importance of this sector amongst the educational pathways available to Aboriginal Victorians.

In 2012, 2745 Aboriginal Victorians were undertaking a Certificate III or higher qualification in the VET sector. Further, 743 Aboriginal Victorians successfully completed a Certificate III or higher qualification in 2012, matching the growth in enrolments.

With a growing number of qualifications in areas where there is strong demand for jobs such as health care, construction and transport, improvements are also expected in employment outcomes. Recent data suggests that improvement is required to arrest the decline in the proportion of Aboriginal VET graduates in Victorian securing jobs and/or opportunities for further study.

Table 20: Number of Aboriginal students 20-64 years who undertook or completed a Certificate III or above qualification in the VET sector, Victoria

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Undertaking a Certificate III or higher #						1445	1615	1774	1861	2422	2745
Completed a Certificate III or higher ^	192	256	200	206	223	192	364	354	375	572	743

Source: Report on Government Services

^ Source: NCVET VOCSTATS table Students 2002-2012

Progress towards outcomes

Fostering successful life outcomes and economic prosperity is underpinned by participation in the economy. The VAAF recognises economic participation and development as a high priority of the Victorian Aboriginal community.

Across the indicators and measures for this Strategic Action Area, the available data indicates that:

- Continued effort is required to improve **employment outcomes** and career prospects for Aboriginal Victorians across the economy.
- **Victorian public service Aboriginal employment** rates continued to be steady at 0.8 per cent of total employees in 2013.

In December 2013, the government released the *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020*. The Strategy was developed after extensive consultation with the Aboriginal community, the business and finance sectors and social enterprises. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs hosted two Roundtables in 2013 with Aboriginal leaders in Geelong and Melbourne to ensure the approach and initiatives in the strategy have the greatest prospects of success.

The strategy relies on all sectors, including private, philanthropic, government and communities working together to provide more choice and opportunity for Aboriginal people and organisations.

The government will establish the Victorian Aboriginal Economic Board in 2014 to drive delivery of the strategy. Comprised



of leaders from across the business sector and Aboriginal community, the Board will champion Aboriginal economic outcomes by building alliances to further employment and business opportunities across key sectors of the Victorian economy.

The government also issued guidelines in April 2013, to encourage high quality development and investment in Victoria's national parks, recognising that tourism investment opportunities can complement natural values and enhance visitor experiences. The guidelines explicitly encourage partnerships with Aboriginal enterprises to build tourism operations, providing a strong basis for employment and business benefits to be leveraged for Aboriginal Victorians over coming years.

Outcomes analysis

H6. Increase Aboriginal labour force participation

Target:

By 2018, halve the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians, as measured by:

- Employment to population ratio, for 15 to 64 years old
- Unemployment rate
- Labour force participation rate

Other measures:

The proportion of Aboriginal people in various income bands
The representation of Aboriginal people on boards and committees

Updated ABS labour force data for 2012 and 2013 is expected to become available in September 2014. The most recently available data was provided in the 2012 Report. It confirmed that in 2011, approximately 48 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians aged 15 years and over were employed, representing some 14,000 people. While the labour force participation rate in Victoria has remained steady, the rate of Aboriginal unemployment, at almost 19 per cent (2800 people), is high.

The proportion of Aboriginal people in various income bands

As detailed in last year's report the 2011 census found that almost 50 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians reported annual income levels of up to \$32,000 per annum and 5.2 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians reported annual income greater than \$78,000. New data is not available for this measure.

The Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy gives emphasis to training and jobs that enhance career outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. This includes increasing opportunities for younger people, and strong positive employment experiences early in their careers.

The representation of Aboriginal people on boards and committees

Updated data shows that in 2012-13, one per cent of appointees to Victorian Government boards and committees identified as Aboriginal, an increase of 0.2 per cent from the previous year. In total, 23 Victorian Government boards and committees have members who identify as Aboriginal, excluding school councils and Crown land committees of management.

Governance training was provided to 97 people in 2013. This training included an introductory three day workshop to governance as well as a Certificate IV in Business (Governance).

Table 21: Proportion of Aboriginal people on Government boards and committees, Victoria

Aboriginal people as a proportion of total	
2011-12	0.8%
2012-13	1.0%

Source: Government and Appointment Public Entities Database, State Services Authority

Note: This number excludes people on the boards of cemetery trusts, school councils and Crown land management committees. Due to new data measurement methods data is only available from 2011-12 and varies from that published previously.

H7. Increase workforce participation by Aboriginal people in the public sector

Target:

By 2018, employment of Aboriginal people in the Victorian public service will increase to 1% of total employees

At 0.8 per cent of employees, the proportion of Aboriginal people in the public service has remained steady.

While there has been a slight decline in absolute numbers of employees in 2013, this is not significant and largely reflects employee career decisions over the last year.

Table 22: Aboriginal employees in the public service, Victoria

	Number	Percentage of total public service employees
2010	288	0.7%
2011	298	0.7%
2012	319	0.8%
2013	301	0.8%

Source: State Services Authority, Annual Workforce Data Collection, June 2013

As a major employer, the Victorian Government has sought to take active steps to attract, retain and develop Aboriginal people in the Victorian public service. Initiatives include:

- Providing opportunities and inclusive workplaces through departmental employment plans and Aboriginal inclusion action plans.
- Implementation of *Karreeta Yirramboi, the Victorian Aboriginal Public Sector Employment and Career Development Action Plan*.
- Operating a number of graduate programs for Aboriginal graduates.

Programs for Aboriginal graduates and youth in the public service

Three key programs currently operate in the Victorian public service to attract and support Aboriginal graduates. People that successfully complete these programs are offered an ongoing position in one of the many diverse areas of the public service.

The Graduate Recruitment and Development Scheme offered by the State Services Authority, features an Aboriginal Pathway, with a 12 month professional development program and support through Aboriginal staff networks.

The Koori Graduate Recruitment and Development Scheme offered by the Department of Justice, provides a unique opportunity to build a successful career, with the support of a tailored 12 month program.

The Aboriginal Study-To-Work-Program offered by the Departments of Health and Human Services offers an opportunity to complete a nationally recognised qualification at the Certificate IV level whilst working on an ongoing part-time basis over a 12 to 24 month period.

Progress towards outcomes

Evidence shows that sustained and varied effort is important to enable Aboriginal Victorians to enjoy health and wellbeing outcomes equal to those of non-Aboriginal Victorians.

Across the key indicators and measures for this Strategic Action Area, the data indicates that:

- Significantly fewer Aboriginal Victorians rated their **health status as excellent or very good** when compared with non-Aboriginal Victorians.
- Nearly a third of Aboriginal Victorians surveyed reported 'high or very high' levels of **psychological distress**.
- Aboriginal Victorians continue to **smoke** at a rate more than double the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians.
- The rates of **self-harm**, presentations at emergency departments for **alcohol-related** causes have all declined for Aboriginal Victorians, but remain higher than the rates for non-Aboriginal Victorians.
- Aboriginal Victorians accessing **homelessness services** in Victoria has increased from 8.0 per cent of all clients in 2011-12 to 8.9 per cent of all clients in 2012-13.

Building on commitments in *Koolin Balit: Victorian Government strategic directions for Aboriginal health 2012-2022*, the Premier and Minister for Health announced in April 2013 that the Victorian Government would provide \$61.7 million over the next four years for programs to support improved health and wellbeing for Aboriginal Victorians. This is the largest single investment made by a Victorian Government in Aboriginal health. The funding will specifically support



improvements in health services, including mental health and chronic disease prevention services, targeted to Victoria's growing Aboriginal population.

The success of this investment depends directly on effective partnerships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health organisations, and importantly the Commonwealth Government which is a major funder of many health services. Combined efforts aim to improve access to universal health service platforms, as well as targeted prevention, early intervention and acute services.

The commitment to collaboration and genuine partnership was evidenced in 2013, with 30 health services co-signing a statement of intent with the Minister for Health to deliver high-quality health services for Aboriginal Victorians in the areas of engagement and partnerships, organisational development, workforce development and systems of care.

Outcomes analysis

H8. Improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians

Targets:

By 2031, close the gap in the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians that report their health status as 'excellent or very good'

By 2031, close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults reporting 'high or very high' levels of psychological distress

By 2023, the proportion of Aboriginal adults who are current smokers will reduce to 21%

Other measures:

The proportion of Aboriginal adults who are obese

The rate of self harm among Aboriginal people

The rate of harmful alcohol consumption among Aboriginal Victorians

Overview of the status of health data

Many of the targets and measures in this Strategic Action Area draw on data collected through the Victorian Population Health Survey (VPHS). Data from the 2008 VPHS was reported in the 2012 Aboriginal Affairs Report, confirming gaps across a number of physical and mental health outcomes.

While the VPHS was again conducted during 2011, an analysis has found that the number of Aboriginal respondents was significantly lower. The likely reason for the recent decline in the Aboriginal sample size is the move by people from land lines to mobile phone technology. The VPHS is a landline home telephone survey only. This is an issue also impacting on other surveys, and organisations such as the ABS are working on alternative data collection strategies to ensure reliable and robust data continues to be collected for Aboriginal Australians. The Department of Health is investigating ways to resolve the issues arising with the VPHS.

Where available, alternative data is provided in this year's report for many measures in this Strategic Action Area. While not directly comparable with data previously published in the VPHS, it does provide an indication of recent change.

Health status reported as 'excellent or very good'

Alternative data to the VPHS, from the ABS Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2012-13, shows that in 2012-13, 40.3 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians reported their health to be 'excellent or very good'. This compares with findings of the ABS Australian Health Survey 2011-12 which reported that 58.9 per cent of all Victorians (aged 15 years and over) in 2011-12 reporting their health status as 'excellent or very good'. This is significantly better than the national rate, where 39.2 per cent of Aboriginal Australians reported their health status as being 'excellent or very good'.

Commitments to initiatives during 2013 to improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians include:

- The Aboriginal Health Clinical Engagement initiative aims to improve the health of Aboriginal people through changes in hospital systems. Successful projects have worked with senior clinicians in cardiac, paediatric, renal, cancer, dental, maternity, emergency care and the mental health areas.

- Cancer Council Victoria has been funded to develop an Aboriginal Recruitment Strategy to increase the participation of Aboriginal Victorians in cancer screening for breast, bowel and cervical cancer.
- Subsidies for purchasing spectacles have supported over 4,000 spectacles to be dispensed in the three years to June 2013. The scheme has been highly successful in increasing the number of Aboriginal people accessing eye health services. In July 2013, the Victorian Minister for Health announced further funding of \$750,000 over four years to continue the scheme.

Case study: Strengthening cardiac care for Aboriginal patients at St Vincent's Health

Aboriginal Victorians are more than twice as likely to die in hospitals from coronary artery disease than non-Aboriginal Victorians.

With Victorian Government support, St Vincent's Hospital worked to improve care coordination, cultural safety and data collection for Aboriginal people admitted with cardiovascular disease.

An Aboriginal hospital liaison officer and a cardiac nurse worked together to develop a culturally safe model of care. As a result of the project, there has been an increased clinical engagement with Aboriginal health services and improved referrals and attendance of Aboriginal people at cardiac rehabilitation.

Psychological distress reported as 'high or very high'

Alternative data to the VPHS, the ABS Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2012-13 found that 32.3 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians experienced 'high or very high' psychological distress. Nationally, 29.4 per cent of Aboriginal Australians reported experiencing 'high or very high' levels of psychological distress. The data also confirms that more Aboriginal people report experiencing 'high or very high' levels of psychological distress compared with non-Aboriginal people.

The rate of smoking

Alternative data to the VPHS, the ABS Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2012-13 found that 39.7 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians aged 15 years and over smoked daily, compared with 15.6 per cent of all Victorians aged 15 years and over in 2011-12. This data compares with the national rate of smoking daily among Aboriginal Australians of 41 per cent.

The Department of Health continues to fund Quit Victoria to deliver the Aboriginal Quitline Enhancement project. From 2011-12 to 2012-13 the project has resulted in a 35.3 per cent increase in the number of Aboriginal Victorians contacting the Quitline and a 14 per cent increase in number of referrals from other services and agencies.

Department of Health and Geelong Cats Football Club partner up for Deadly Choices

The Deadly Choices campaign aims to empower Aboriginal people to make healthy choices for themselves and their families – to stop smoking, to eat good food, exercise daily and access local health services.

In 2013, the Department of Health partnered with Geelong Cats Football Club and the five Aboriginal community controlled health organisations in the Barwon-South Western Region to encourage Aboriginal young people to learn more about things they can do to improve their wellbeing. Six Aboriginal players within the club have become 'Close the Health Gap Ambassadors', encouraging young Aboriginal participants to improve their health, including through involvement in the Deadly Choices community education campaign.

The proportion of Aboriginal adults who are obese

Alternative data to the VHPS, the ABS Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2012-13 found that 33.5 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians (aged 15 years and over) were obese, compared with 26.0 per cent of all Victorians (aged 18 years and over) being obese according to the ABS Australian Health Survey 2011-12. Nationally, 37.0 per cent of Aboriginal people were obese in 2012-13.

Achievements in 2013 include:

- Progressing delivery of the *Victorian Aboriginal Nutrition and Physical Activity Strategy 2009-2014*, which is being led by the Victorian Aboriginal Community

Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), including at early childhood services and in partnerships with other organisations such as SecondBite to assist those experiencing food insecurity.

- Delivery of nationally accredited nutrition and health promotion training for Aboriginal Health Workers at Certificate III and IV level, in addition to mentoring agreements that promote cross cultural exchange, skill development and ongoing professional support.

The rate of self harm among Aboriginal people

Aboriginal people have a higher rate of presentations at emergency departments with injuries due to self harm than non-Aboriginal people. The most recent data shows an increase in Aboriginal presentations in 2012-13, to a rate of 6.0 per 1000 people. The 2012-13 rate is the highest rate seen among Victoria's Aboriginal population for several years and is much higher than the non-Aboriginal rate of 1.28 per 1000 people. While the small size of Victoria's Aboriginal population can mean the annual data can be subject to variations, the increase is a matter that requires further investigation.

Table 23: Self-harm related emergency department presentations, rate per 1000 population, Victoria

Year	Aboriginal
2005-06	3.01
2006-07	3.70
2007-08	4.08
2008-09	4.68
2009-10	3.35
2010-11	4.57
2011-12	4.76
2012-13	6.00

Source: Department of Health

The Victorian Government's *Aboriginal Suicide Prevention and Response Action Plan 2010-2015* is in place and focuses on actions to build resilience, improve access to care and to support and improve responses to crisis.

Suicide is a tragic event which has long term impacts on the families and communities affected by it. The government is working with communities which have been particularly affected by suicides and seeking ways to ensure that at-risk individuals are identified and supported.

The rate of harmful alcohol consumption among Aboriginal Victorians

In 2012-13, there was a further reduction in the rate of Aboriginal people presenting to emergency departments for alcohol-related causes. While the rate remains higher than for non-Aboriginal Victorians, the 2012-13 rate is the lowest since 2006-07.

Table 24: Alcohol-related emergency department presentations, rate per 1000 population, Victoria

Year	Aboriginal
2005-06	10.06
2006-07	10.21
2007-08	11.18
2008-09	14.26
2009-10	13.29
2010-11	14.73
2011-12	13.94
2012-13	10.55

Source: Department of Health

The Victorian Government has two key plans in place to address harmful alcohol use and its impacts on the Victorian community. Reducing the drug and alcohol toll, Victoria's plan 2013-2017, is a plan to combat the personal, social, physical and economic costs of alcohol and drug abuse.

Recognising that specific actions are required to prevent and reduce the harms associated with alcohol misuse within Victorian Aboriginal communities, the targeted *Koori Alcohol Action Plan 2010-2020* was developed. Developed in partnership with the Victorian Community Controlled Health Organisation, the Koori Alcohol Action Plan's overarching objective is to achieve long-term change by supporting Victorian Aboriginal communities to reduce alcohol misuse and its negative consequences.


Guided by the two plans, a range of actions to address drugs in the community are being implemented, such as:

- The placement of alcohol and drug nurses in three of Victoria's largest regional Aboriginal communities in Mildura, Shepparton and Bairnsdale.
- Allocating funding to the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to convene professional forums on the health response to the drug Ice.

A Parliamentary Inquiry was also commissioned into the supply and use of methamphetamines, particularly Ice, in Victoria to report back in August 2014. As part of the Inquiry the Parliamentary Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Committee has been asked to focus on the impacts of Ice on Aboriginal and regional communities and the role outlaw motorcycle gangs play in the process of manufacture and distribution.

The proportion of Aboriginal people with a disability receiving disability services

In 2012-13, 741 Aboriginal people received services for their disability-related support needs in Victoria, according to the returned National Minimum Data Set (excluding



Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services and Early Childhood Intervention Services). This is a reduction in levels reported in the 2012 Report and is related to data quality improvements rather than to an actual reduction in service provision.

Recent ABS census data also found that Aboriginal people receive disability services at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal Victorians. This reflects the higher rates of disability across the community.

During 2013, the Department of Health regions and all Home and Community Care (HACC) funded agencies developed HACC Diversity plans for the period 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015. The plans include a focus on Aboriginal communities and in particular improving access to services by eligible people with complex needs. As part of the process, 76 Aboriginal HACC staff attended a range of training programs through a Commonwealth and State Government funded HACC Aboriginal training project.

Initiatives to support Aboriginal people with a disability are overseen by the Human Services Aboriginal Roundtable Working Group.

The proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who are homeless

As indicated in the 2012 Report, the last ABS census conducted in 2011 found that 3.7 per cent of homeless Victorians are Aboriginal.

Aboriginal Victorians are also over-represented as clients of government-funded services delivering homelessness assistance. The proportion of Aboriginal clients accessing homelessness services in Victoria has increased from 8.0 per cent in 2011-12 to 8.9 per cent of all clients in 2012-13, according to the Report on Government Services.

Within the community housing sector, Aboriginal community owned and/or managed organisations are significant providers of social housing in Victoria, providing 1,595 households with long term housing in Indigenous Community Housing as at 30 June 2012, with a further 379 households assisted in Long Term Community Housing.

A number of COAG agreements give priority to improving housing outcomes for Aboriginal people. Initiatives that specifically target Aboriginal people experiencing or at risk of homelessness include:

- A Family Violence-Support for Women and Children initiative that has established two new crisis accommodation and support services. The Mildura facility, Meminar Ngangg Gimba, was opened in September 2012 and the Morwell facility, Orana Gonyah, started delivering services in January 2014.
- The Indigenous Tenants at Risk Program supports householders who are experiencing difficulties in sustaining their tenancies with public and transitional housing or Aboriginal community managed housing. During 2013 the program was expanded and is now offered by Mallee Accommodation and Support and the Ngwala Willumbong Co-operative.
- Nungarra Youth Refuge, located in Gippsland, opened on 28 February 2014, and will accommodate and support up to 12 young people in eight single rooms and two self-contained units.
- Outreach support for Aboriginal families, singles or couples at risk of homelessness to successfully access accommodation and establish family connections. Support was expanded in 2013 and is now also offered by the Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited.

Progress towards outcomes

The Victorian Government is committed to reducing family violence, as outlined in the VAAF and the *Indigenous Family Violence Ten Year Plan, Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families* and improving Aboriginal justice outcomes, consistent with phase 3 of the *Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA3)*, launched in March 2013.

These initiatives recognise the issues associated with the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system and commit to long-term partnerships between justice agencies and human services organisations and Victoria's Aboriginal community, to achieve positive change.

For 2012-13 the data shows that:

- A further increase in the number of family violence incidents reported to police, where the affected family member identifies as Aboriginal, continuing the trend of improved confidence in reporting of family violence.
- The rate of Aboriginal young people on a **youth justice supervision order** decreased to 16.79 per 1000, consolidating recent decreases. Similarly there was a continued decrease in the rate of Aboriginal **young people in detention** and Aboriginal **youth processed by police** to 87.7 per 1,000. Continuing these decreases is essential to closing the gaps with non-Aboriginal Victorians.
- **Aboriginal adults** were 13.2 times more likely to be under justice supervision than non-Aboriginal adults – a marginal increase from 2011-12. Similarly the proportion of Aboriginal people sentenced to prison rather than other orders slightly increased.
- There was a decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal **people returning to prison** within two years of their release, however Aboriginal prisoner recidivism remains higher than non-Aboriginal prisoners.



Outcomes analysis

H9. Reduce the incidence of Aboriginal family violence

Targets:

Further work is required to develop an appropriate target

Other measure:

The rate of reporting (Family Incidence Reporting) of Aboriginal family violence to police

Family violence is an often under-reported crime. Fear of discrimination and subsequent child protection notifications may impede willingness to report family violence incidents.

Concerted effort over the past decade, including a community led response, has focussed on improving the understanding and awareness of family violence across all Victorian communities.

Between 2006-07 and 2012-13 the number of Family Incident Reports where the affected family member identified as Aboriginal almost tripled from 794 to 2143 incidents. The number of repeat attendances also almost tripled over the same period to 1644 attendances. This reflects an increased level of confidence to report and seek the support of police services. In relation to police responses, the rate of Family Incident Reports where charges are laid remain equivalent to the non-Aboriginal rates.

Table 25: Family Incident Reports (FIRs) by Aboriginal status of affected family member, Victoria

Year	All attendances		Repeat attendances	
	FIRs	% FIRs where charges laid	FIRs	% FIRs where charges laid
2006-07	794	28.7%	582	31.1%
2007-08	872	24.8%	644	27.2%
2008-09	1064	29.0%	770	30.8%
2009-10	1201	28.2%	895	29.6%
2010-11	1268	33.2%	963	34.4%
2011-12	1644	39.8%	1266	42.8%
2012-13	2143	41.4%	1644	43.5%

Source: Victoria Police LEAP database. Data extracted 21 January 2014.

Note: Data for 2008-09 and onwards varies from that previously published. 'Repeat Attendance' is defined where the Affected Family Member has made a previous Family Incident Report to Police based on LEAP records dating back to 1993.

Consistent with long standing partnership arrangements between the Aboriginal community and government agencies, the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum met twice in 2013 – in metropolitan Melbourne and Gippsland. Key priorities for the Forum included progressing the mid-term evaluation of the 10 Year Plan, including

development of an Aboriginal family violence target under the VAAF.

Further, a joint workshop was held in 2013 involving the Chairpersons of Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups and Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees to identify further opportunities for collaboration and strategies to address

common concerns. The workshop was the second held and built on the approach in 2011, with the aim of strengthening relationships and building alignment between the Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan and the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and overarching structures.

Initiatives undertaken in 2013 to enhance responses to family violence included:

- Victoria Police and the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service worked with Aboriginal communities to develop protocols for responding to family violence matters. The protocols aim to improve response to family violence incidents, improve Aboriginal community confidence and increase referral to support services. Protocols were launched in Ballarat, Darebin and Mildura in 2013. Additional launches are planned for early 2014.
 - The Aboriginal contextualisation of the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework, which involved the development of training materials to better equip professionals and practitioners to identify risk factors associated with family violence and respond appropriately to Aboriginal people experiencing family violence. The materials were piloted in Dandenong in 2013, with additional pilots planned for Geelong and Mildura in early 2014.
 - Four Koori Community Safety Grants were funded under the Reducing Violence against Women and their Children Grants Program. This has enabled Aboriginal organisations in Shepparton, Bairnsdale, Mildura and northern metropolitan Melbourne to provide innovative, community-based projects aimed at preventing violence before it occurs. The three-year time frame, concentration of resources and emphasis on evaluation will allow these grants to function as demonstration projects and guide future responses to violence in Victorian Aboriginal communities.
- There are a range of targeted programs that continue to support Aboriginal people experiencing family violence, including:
- An intensive case management program that enables Aboriginal women to better address the impacts of family violence.
 - A case management program to engage Aboriginal men who use violence and are removed from the family home.
 - Aboriginal family violence accommodation and support services – Meminar Ngangg Gimba in Mildura was officially opened in September 2012 and Orana Gunyah in Morwell started delivering services in January 2014 and is expected to be fully operational by April 2014.
 - Four Indigenous Family Violence Healing services and four Time Out services continue to be delivered through a community led approach to ensure services meet locally identified needs.
 - Group programs for Aboriginal men who use violence are provided in three locations to assist perpetrators of family violence to change their behaviour.
 - The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service supports women experiencing family violence and assists with related legal processes.
 - The Indigenous Family Violence Community Initiative Fund provides annual grants amounting to \$650,000 to support Aboriginal community-based projects that aim to prevent, reduce and respond to family violence. In 2013-14, funding was granted for 39 projects which responded to priorities identified by Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Groups.

H10. Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people under justice supervision

Targets:

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

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

Other measures:

The rate of over-representation of Aboriginal young people (10-17 years) processed by police

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

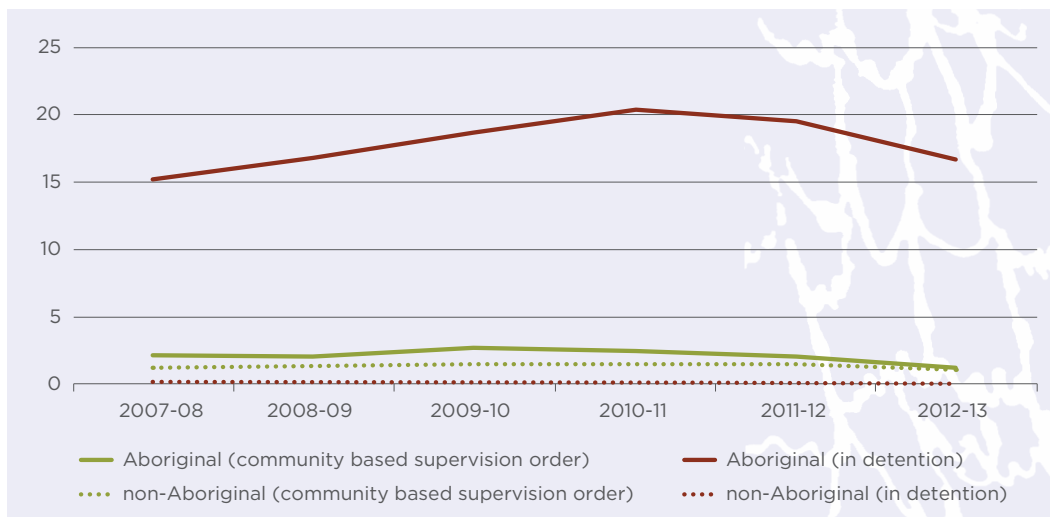
The proportion of Aboriginal adults receiving a prison sentence compared with those receiving a community corrections order

Rate of Aboriginal young people under youth justice supervision

In 2012-13, 16.79 per 1000 Aboriginal young people aged 10-17 years were on a community based supervision order compared to 1.12 per 1000 non-Aboriginal young people. This represents a significant decrease in the

rate for Aboriginal young people from the previous year. Aboriginal young people are 15 times as likely to be on a supervision order as non-Aboriginal young people. This rate is an increase on previous years, however, the change may be attributed to more Aboriginal young people receiving community based orders rather than custodial orders.

Figure 5: Young people (10-17 years) under youth justice supervision, daily average rate per 1000 population, Victoria



Source: Department of Human Services

Overall, the 2012-13 data shows that Aboriginal young people are 13 times more likely to be in detention as a non-Aboriginal young person. This is a decrease from 21.8 times as likely in 2007-08, continuing the steadily decline in the over-representation rate.

Table 26: Young people (10-17 years) under youth justice supervision, daily average rate per 1000 population, Victoria

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Community based supervision order						
Aboriginal	15.2	16.95	18.79	20.48	19.7	16.79
non-Aboriginal	1.26	1.36	1.52	1.54	1.48	1.12
In detention						
Aboriginal	2.18	2.05	2.73	2.48	2.09	1.16
non-Aboriginal	0.1	0.11	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.09

Source: Department of Human Services

During 2013, Regional Justice Plans and *Aboriginal Justice Agreement 3* (AJA3) Action Plans were developed to drive implementation of more than 80 AJA3 actions across the state. In addition to new programs, a number of successful AJA initiatives expanded in 2013 which will better support Aboriginal people include:

- Five new Children's Koori Courts opened in Bairnsdale, Latrobe, Shepparton, Swan Hill and on the Warrnambool Circuit, and a new County Koori Court was launched in Melbourne.
- The Local Justice Worker Program grew by 44 per cent to support additional Aboriginal clients. Coverage increased from nine to 13 locations across Victoria.
- The Youth Justice Bail Supervision Program aims to divert young people aged 10 to 18 from progressing further into the criminal justice system, through intensive bail supervision. In 2012-13, Aboriginal young people represented 28 per cent of all young people on supervised bail. This high number demonstrates that the program is providing a credible, community-based alternative to remand for magistrates.

The Victorian Government is focused on continuing to strengthen Victoria's youth justice system and creating clearer pathways to prevention and rehabilitation programs. Available programs include:

- The Youth Justice Remand Bail Strategy supports young people on remand, including through increased provision of supervised bail for youth across the state. A Bail Coordinator appointed at the Parkville Youth Justice Precinct acts as a point of contact for all young people on remand and links with Youth Justice Court Advice Service, legal representatives and community departmental case managers to enable young people to be bailed where appropriate.
- Youth Justice Koori Intensive Support Program connects young people to their community and culture, provides supports to enable engagement in education, employment, recreation and community activities, and where appropriate specialist cultural support. Every Aboriginal young person has the opportunity to have an Aboriginal Cultural Support Plan included as part of their assessment and supervision plan.

Targeted youth initiatives continuing under the AJA3 have contributed to a reduction in the rate at which police process Aboriginal young people, the predominant point of entry into the justice system. These programs focus on preventing contact

with the criminal justice system, through the provision of alternative educational, vocational or employment pathways and other supports, and reducing the likelihood of reoffending where contact has already occurred. Initiatives include:

- The Koori Early School Leavers and Youth Employment Program, which operates in Mildura and North Western Metropolitan Melbourne and aims to prevent adverse contact with the justice system by engaging Aboriginal young people (aged 10–20 years) with school or alternative educational, vocational or employment pathways.
- The Koori Pre and Post Release Program, which provides intensive outreach services to Aboriginal young people exiting Victoria's youth justice custodial centres.

- The Koori Youth Justice Program, which provides a range of Aboriginal culturally appropriate intensive support work to divert and rehabilitate Aboriginal young people who are at risk of offending or re-offending.

Rate of Aboriginal adults under justice supervision

In 2012-13, Aboriginal people in Victoria were 13.2 times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be under justice supervision. This rate reflects that, on an average day, for every 1000 Aboriginal adults in the state, 38.6 were under justice supervision, compared with 2.9 for every 1000 non-Aboriginal adults. This represents the sixth consecutive year that the rate has risen.

Figure 6: Daily average number of adults under justice supervision per 1000 population, Victoria



Source: Corrections Victoria

Table 27: Daily average number of adults under justice supervision per 1000 population, Victoria

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Aboriginal	29.4	27.2	29.4	30.2	35.0	36.4	35.9	38.6
non-Aboriginal	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
over-representation rate	11.3	10.9	11.1	11.7	12.1	12.4	12.5	13.2

Source: Corrections Victoria

Note: Daily average numbers of adults in prison and under community corrections orders per 1,000 of the relevant population. Does not include 18-21 year olds under youth justice supervision.

Rate of over-representation of Aboriginal young people processed by police

The rate at which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth were processed (arrest, caution, summons, warrant or other) by police decreased between 2011-12 and 2012-13, to 87.7 per 1000 Aboriginal young people. Similarly the over-representation rate of Aboriginal young people processed by police decreased to 6.1 per 1000 Aboriginal young people.

Table 28: Distinct alleged young offenders (10-17 years) processed by police who receive a caution, arrest, summons or other, rate per 1000 population, Victoria

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Aboriginal	102.4	105.3	111.9	108.1	100.3	93.0	94.6	87.7
non-Aboriginal	19.7	22.3	22.2	22.5	21.6	17.8	14.7	12.5
over-representation rate	5.2	4.7	5.0	4.8	4.6	5.2	6.4	6.1

Source: Victoria Police LEAP database. Data extracted 10 December 2013 and is subject to change as Victoria Police implements improvements to the collections and processing of data.

Note: The data is based on responses to the Standard Indigenous Question (SIQ) recorded by Victoria Police; it is not comparable to figures reported for the same or similar measures prior to 2012. Figures are subject to change as Victoria Police continues to implement improvements to the collection and processing of SIQ data.

Proportion of Aboriginal young people cautioned when processed by police

In 2012-13, 10.2 per cent of Aboriginal young people were formally cautioned when processed by police, a slight reduction from 10.9 per cent in 2011-12.

Table 29: Proportion of alleged young (10-17 years) offenders cautioned by police, Victoria

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Aboriginal	11.5%	13.4%	13.9%	13.5%	13.0%	14.7%	10.9%	10.2%

Source: Victoria Police LEAP database. Data extracted 10 December 2013.

Note: The data is based on responses to the Standard Indigenous Question (SIQ) recorded by Victoria Police; it is not comparable to figures reported for the same or similar measures prior to 2012. Figures are subject to change as Victoria Police continues to implement improvements to the collection and processing of SIQ data.

Proportion of Aboriginal adults receiving a prison sentence compared to those receiving a community corrections order

On an average day in 2012-13, there were 921 Aboriginal adults under justice supervision, of which 40.7 per cent (375 people) were in prison and 59.3 per cent (546 people) were on a community based order. This represents a marginal increase in the proportion of Aboriginal adults sentenced to prison from previous years.

Table 30: Proportion of Aboriginal adults sentenced to prison rather than other orders, Victoria

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Aboriginal	37.3%	42.2%	40.0%	39.6%	35.8%	35.2%	38.4%	40.7%

Source: Corrections Victoria

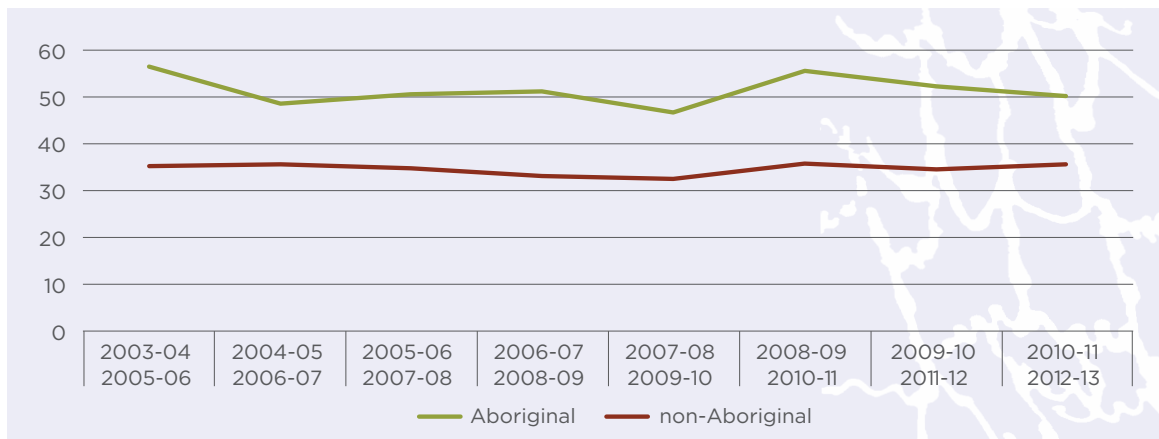
H11. Reduce the proportion of Aboriginal people who return to prison within two years of release

Target:

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

In 2012-13, 50.3 per cent of Aboriginal prisoners returned to prison within two years of being released, compared with 35.7 per cent of non-Aboriginal prisoners. This is a slightly lower proportion to the previous year, with the gap slightly narrowing.

Figure 7: Proportion of prisoners released who returned to prison under sentence within two years (%), Victoria



Source: Corrections Victoria

Table 31: Proportion of prisoners released who returned to prison under sentence within two years, Victoria

Release year	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Return year	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Aboriginal	56.5%	48.6%	50.7%	51.3%	46.6%	55.6%	52.3%	50.3%
non-Aboriginal	35.3%	35.6%	34.8%	33.2%	32.6%	35.9%	34.6%	35.7%

Source: Corrections Victoria

Strategic Action Area 6: Strong culture, engaged people and confident communities

Progress towards outcomes

The Victorian Government is committed to providing opportunities in a wide variety of ways for Aboriginal Victorians to come together and share knowledge, for young people to further develop their understandings of their community, and for non-Aboriginal Victorians to learn about and appreciate Aboriginal culture.

Progress during 2013 in this Strategic Action Area includes:

- Five additional **Indigenous Land Use Agreements** were reached during 2013.
- The rights of the Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owner group were recognised under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic) (the TOS Act) in relation to Crown land in central Victoria, further improving access to traditional lands by Aboriginal Victorians.
- The TOS Act was amended to increase the prospect of reaching settlements and facilitate economic development, supported by *Threshold Guidelines* for Victorian Traditional Owner groups seeking a settlement to provide a greater focus on economic development outcomes.
- A further 14 inspirational Aboriginal Victorians were inducted into **Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll**. In addition the full Honour Roll toured five communities across Victoria.
- The **Right People for Country** project was funded to continue to support Aboriginal Traditional Owner groups resolve boundary and group composition matters.
- An **extensive array of events** have been held during 2013 that acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal culture, providing opportunities for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to be engaged with Aboriginal culture.
- An additional 302 Aboriginal people became directly involved in **Local Indigenous Networks**, bringing the total number of participants to 2,060 people.
- The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council appointed Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation as **Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs)** in south-west Victoria, bringing the total area of Victoria covered by RAPs to 60 per cent and the number of RAPs to 10.
- **Reconciliation Victoria** activities supported 22 local reconciliation groups, promoting special events across Victoria during Reconciliation Week and working more closely with local councils.
- Under the **Cultural Strengths Initiative**, following the release of two films showcasing young Aboriginal participants making and learning about Possum Skin Cloaks which were exhibited at the *Naghtingah Boorais: Beautiful Children* exhibition at Bunjilaka, Melbourne Museum, the fuller roll-out of the Initiative commenced, including processes to appoint a Reference Group and seeking expressions of interest for further filming opportunities.



Outcomes analysis

H12. Strengthen Aboriginal culture and support Aboriginal people's engagement with community and society

Other measures:

The rate of access by Aboriginal Victorians to their traditional lands

Participation by Aboriginal people in community related arrangements and events

The proportion of Aboriginal people who felt that there are opportunities for them to have a real say on issues which are important to them

Options for all Victorians to be engaged with Aboriginal culture

Access by Aboriginal Victorians to their traditional lands

The number of Indigenous Land Use Agreements increased from 40 in 2011-12 to 45 in 2012-13. These agreements legally recognise Aboriginal people's enduring relationship with their traditional lands, not only supporting Aboriginal people to practice their traditions but also provide economic opportunities.

Table 32: Access by Aboriginal Victorians to their traditional lands

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Number of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) in Victoria	33	36	38	40	45
Total land area covered by ILUAs (km ²)	71,438	71,438	83,326	83,408	83,762
*Area including sea	*71,457	*71,457	*83,595	*83,677	*84,031
Percentage of total Victoria covered by ILUAs) (excluding sea)	31.4%	31.4%	36.6%	36.7%	36.86%
Land area over which native title found to exist or over which a Traditional Owner Settlement Act agreement has been reached (km ²)	1707	1707	14,845	14,891	17,556
*Area including sea	*1720	*1720	*15,107	*15,156	*17,821

Source: National Native Title Tribunal

In 2012-13, there were five new registered Indigenous Land Use Agreements which together comprise 354 km². In addition, the area of land where native title has been determined to exist, or Traditional Owner group rights have been recognised, increased by 2665 km², as a result of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement between the Victorian Government and the Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owner group of central Victoria. This is the first comprehensive Recognition and Settlement Agreement under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*.

There was also further significant progress in implementing the Gunaikurnai agreements,

reviewing previous settlements with the Wotjobaluk and Gunditjmarra people, progressing threshold issues arising from the Eastern Maar native title claim and the Threshold Statement of the Taungurung Traditional Owner group.

In 2013, the Draft *Ngootyoong Gunditj Ngootyoong Mara* South West Management Plan was developed as a partnership between Parks Victoria, Gunditjmarra Traditional Owners and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries. The plan covers 145 parks, reserves and Gunditjmarra community owned properties in south west Victoria.

The Draft Plan was released for comment, and submissions will be considered in the preparation of the final management plan. Included in the plan is Gunditjmarra and Parks Victoria's cooperative management of Mount Eccles National Park through the Budj Bim Council, one of the positive outcomes of Native Title processes. The development of the plan is an example of the value placed on partnerships between Traditional Owners, government agencies and the wider community in how land is managed and used for the benefit of all Victorians.

Participation by Aboriginal people in community related arrangements and events

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of culture to Aboriginal people and supports community events and celebrations in many forms. Such opportunities provide communities with valuable scope to share knowledge and experiences and increase their connections with one another and their cultures.

The Victorian NAIDOC Committee received 57 applications for funding NAIDOC Week activities and were able to commit funding to 41 of these activities, which were held across 10 regional and 25 metropolitan locations.

The Victorian Government NAIDOC Week Reception, hosted at Parliament House during NAIDOC Week, was attended by approximately 250 people.

In 2013, community support for Victoria's 39 Local Indigenous Networks (LINs) reached record levels with more than 2000 Aboriginal community members now involved in their local network. LINs aim to build a stronger local community, develop community plans and work together for a better future.

Over the past three years LIN numbers have grown consistently by around 16 per cent each year. The average number of

community participants for each LIN is now 54, and LINs in Mildura, Robinvale, Maribyrnong and the Northern Metropolitan region have more than 100 participants.

Table 33: Local Indigenous Network (LIN) participation, Victoria

	Number of LINs	Number of registered LIN participants
2009	38	959
2010	38	1307
2011	38	1503
2012	39	1752
2013	39	2060


Source: Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria

The number of Registered Aboriginal Parties increased to 10, following the appointment of the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation as Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) in south-west Victoria. The total area of Victoria covered by RAPs is 60 per cent.

In collaboration with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council regular state-wide forums are arranged for RAPs that provide information, capacity building and networking opportunities. All forums have a major focus on the implementation of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and any issues of concern to RAPs regarding carrying out their statutory responsibilities in managing and protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage on behalf of all Victorians.

In July 2013, a RAP Forum was held, which was attended by 29 community members. A Forum was also held in December 2012, which had 19 participants in attendance. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs also hosted a Ministerial Roundtable with RAPs during 2013, to discuss a range of issues, including potential reforms to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

Aboriginal young people are provided with opportunities to engage in their communities



by the Koorie Youth Council (KYC). More than 300 young people are in the KYC's broad network across Victoria. The KYC hosted a number of events during 2013, covering topics such as youth leadership and cultural heritage.

Proportion of Aboriginal people who felt that there are opportunities to have a real say on issues that were important to them

The extent to which people feel they have an opportunity to have a say and feel valued by the society in which they belong is an important means by which to measure people's perception of their belonging.

No new data is available against this indicator. Previous data provided in the 2012 Aboriginal Affairs Report indicated that while most Aboriginal people believe there were opportunities to have a real say on issues important to them, this belief was lowest amongst Aboriginal men.

Local Indigenous Networks, support for Aboriginal representation on boards and committees, and other local and state-level advisory, community groups and consultative forums provide avenues for engagement and participation for Aboriginal Victorians.

Opportunities for all Victorians to be engaged with Aboriginal culture

There are many opportunities for Victorians to engage with Aboriginal culture and events, in both metropolitan and regional areas and throughout the year.

During 2013 activities included:

- Reconciliation Victoria produced a calendar of more than 100 events across Victoria to celebrate and profile reconciliation initiatives. Reconciliation Victoria also supported 22 local reconciliation groups around Victoria.
- More than 300 people attended the Victorian Indigenous Remembrance

Service for Aboriginal servicemen and women held at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne.

- Fourteen new inductees were announced into the Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll in December 2013 and for the first time a joint nomination category of a family group who have made an important contribution to community. Also for the first time, a roadshow toured the stories of all 35 inductees from 2011 and 2012 to five communities around the state from April to June 2013 (Fitzroy, Lakes Entrance, Shepparton, Mildura and Warrnambool), enabling people to engage with the positive and affirming stories of the inductees.
- The Ricci Marks Young Achiever Award presentation ceremony in June 2013 was attended by more than 120 people.

Case Study: Cultural Strengths Initiative

In 2013, the first two short films produced as part of the initiative were released, showcasing workshops on Possum Skin Cloak making sponsored by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency. Through the workshops, the young participants learnt about the significance of the cloaks to country, language, traditions and values, while building lasting connections with Elders, community members and each other. The films were publicly launched on 11 July 2013 as part of the *Naghlingah Boorais: Beautiful Children* exhibition at Bunjilaka, Melbourne Museum.

Following this project's success, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs called for expressions of interest from the Aboriginal community to be part of a Reference Group to provide advice on all aspects of the project, including the development of a Victorian Cultural Strengths Plan that builds on the commitments in the VAAF.

Departmental progress in Aboriginal Employment Plans and Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plans, December 2013

Department	Status of:	
	Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan	Aboriginal Employment Plan
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	<i>Wirralung Ganai: Our People – Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan 2012-2014</i> (2011)	To be incorporated in Aboriginal Inclusion Action plan
Department of Environment and Primary Industries	New plan to be released in 2014 building on the former Department of Sustainability and Environment <i>Indigenous Partnerships Framework 2007-2010</i> (2007) and Department of Primary Industries <i>Aboriginal Action Plan 2013</i>	To be incorporated in Aboriginal Inclusion Action plan
Department of Health	<i>Department of Health Aboriginal Inclusion Framework</i> (2013)	<i>Department of Human Services and Department of Health Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2010-2013</i>
Department of Human Services	Response delivered through the <i>Human Services Aboriginal Strategic Framework 2013-2015</i> ; <i>Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2010-2013</i> ; the <i>Third Human Services Reconciliation Action Plan</i> and Department of Human Services Standards	<i>Department of Human Services and Department of Health Aboriginal Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2010-2013</i>
Department of Justice	<i>Mingu Gadhaba, 'Beginning Together' – Koori Inclusion Action Plan</i> (2012) Progress under this Plan is captured through the <i>Koori Inclusion Outcomes Framework</i> (2013)	<i>Koori Employment Strategy 2011-15</i>
Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)	<i>DPC Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan 2013-2015</i> (2013) to be updated during 2014	Incorporated in <i>DPC Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan 2013-2015</i> , which will be updated to also reflect the former <i>Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy</i> (2010)
Department of State Development, Business and Innovation	Both plans are being finalised taking into account recent departmental structural changes. Both plans are to be approved and implementation commenced in 2014.	
Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure	New plan being developed for release in 2014, drawing on the former <i>Department of Transport Aboriginal Action Plan – Stage 1</i> (2011) and former <i>Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan</i> (2013)	A new Aboriginal Employment Strategy is currently under development, also drawing on the former <i>DPCD Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy</i> (2010)
Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF)	<i>DTF Indigenous Inclusion Action Plan</i> (2012)	<i>2011-2013 Indigenous Employment Strategy</i> (2011)





Artwork by Barb Egan "River Bark"

Barb Egan is a Mutti Mutti Elder from Robinvale, Victoria.

The River Bark painting is a representation of the bark from the blue gum trees that grow around her home town of Robinvale in northern Victoria.
