

Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2020



Acknowledgement

We proudly acknowledge the First Peoples of Victoria and their ongoing strength in practicing the world's oldest living culture. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Victorian Traditional Owners maintain that their sovereignty has never been ceded. Since time immemorial, Victorian Traditional Owners have practiced their laws, customs and languages, and nurtured Country through their spiritual, material and economic connections to land, water and resources.

We acknowledge that while Aboriginal Victorians are strong in their culture and identity, there are long-lasting, far-reaching and intergenerational consequences of colonisation and dispossession. The reality of colonisation involved the establishment of laws and policies with the specific intent of excluding Aboriginal people and their laws, customs, cultures and traditions. We acknowledge that the impact and structures of colonisation still exist today.

Finally, we acknowledge the invaluable contributions of all those who have paved the way and fought for the rights of Aboriginal people, including the right to self-determination. We also recognise the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life and how this continues to enrich our society more broadly. Through the strength, resilience and pride of Aboriginal Victorians, their cultures, communities and economies endure and continue to grow and thrive today.

Language Statement

We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal people living throughout Victoria. While the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are commonly used by Aboriginal people of Southeast Australia, we have used the term Aboriginal in this report to include all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who are living in Victoria – with the exception of specific programs and frameworks with Koori in the title.

The use of the words 'our' and 'we' throughout this document refers to the Victorian Government.





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Message from the Acting Premier



This year's Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Report again reveals a complex reality.

Within its pages, the deep structural and societal injustices First Nations people continue to confront – and their remarkable strength and survival in the face of it all.

Measuring our progress and setbacks is no simple task. The inequalities communities face are both compounded and contemporary.

And as this report shows, there's still a long way to go.

At the same time, we know that our progress cannot only be quantitative – it must be qualitative too.

That means it must be for Aboriginal people and led by Aboriginal people.

That includes our historic journey towards Treaty.

Led by the voices of Aboriginal communities – and enshrined in law – we've already delivered on those first steps, establishing the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

Now we're ready to take the next important step on this journey.

Our nation's first formal truth-telling forum, the Yoo-rook Justice Commission is long overdue. But its work is perhaps more important than ever.

Because without truth – there can be no Treaty.

And only by reconciling with our past can we reach for a more just, more equal, more decent future – for all Victorians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "James Merlino". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Hon James Merlino MP
Acting Premier of Victoria

Message from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



I am honoured in my role as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to present the Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2020.

2020 was an incredibly challenging year for all Victorians, including Victorian Aboriginal communities. During, and in the aftermath of the devastating 2019-20 bushfires, Aboriginal communities, particularly in East Gippsland, have showed considerable strength and resilience. I commend the important ongoing work that communities are undertaking to support the holistic healing of Country, restore cultural heritage, rebuild community infrastructure and drive economic recovery. These destructive fires have reinforced that now, more than ever before, we must be guided by Aboriginal traditional knowledge and practices with respect to caring for Country.

Aboriginal organisations and community leaders should also be commended for their exceptional, proactive efforts to mobilise and respond to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on their communities. These efforts have saved countless lives. In particular, the COVID-19 Aboriginal Community Taskforce (Taskforce) and Local Aboriginal COVID-19 Response Networks were instrumental in driving comprehensive, coordinated and culturally safe responses and recovery efforts. As a result, Aboriginal organisations were able to rapidly adapt to remote service delivery and ensure that clients continued to have access to services throughout the pandemic.

Despite these challenges, there were many achievements to celebrate in 2020. This included work to establish Stolen Generations Reparations to right historic wrongs, and progressing work with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria to support future treaty negotiations.

2020 also set the groundwork for establishing a truth and justice process to investigate both historical and ongoing injustices committed against Aboriginal Victorians, across all areas of social, political, cultural and economic life. The announcement of the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission, the first of its kind anywhere in Australia, represents a significant step forward on Victoria's path towards treaty. Truth-telling recognises the strength and resilience of Aboriginal people and will ensure their voices are heard and respected.

This Report tells us that while government has come some way in addressing racism and discrimination in its systems and structures, there is still a long way to go. We are committed to this journey, which will bring together our commitments in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and our nation-leading efforts in treaty, truth and justice.

I thank all Aboriginal Elders, Stolen Generations members and families, community members and Aboriginal organisations who have long pushed for these reforms and are now seeing them come to life. As government takes heed of their calls and supports Aboriginal-led decision making, we must ensure that truth-telling, recognition of past wrongs and a focus on a better future for all Victorians is central to this work.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gabrielle Williams". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Gabrielle Williams MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of the Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report (Report) is to outline progress towards achieving the vision of the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018 - 2023 (VAAF):

'that all Aboriginal Victorian people, families and communities are safe, resilient, thriving and living culturally rich lives'.

The Report is intended to keep government accountable for improving outcomes for and with Aboriginal Victorians, as well as ongoing work to progress Aboriginal self-determination.

The Report sets out how government is working with community to realise the VAAF's 20 goals across six domains:

- Children, family & home
- Learning & skills
- Opportunity & prosperity
- Health & wellbeing
- Justice & safety
- Culture & Country

For the first time, this Report also outlines government's progress against the VAAF's four self-determination enablers:

- Prioritise culture
- Address trauma and support healing
- Address racism and promote cultural safety
- Transfer power and resources to communities.

The Report provides a snapshot of how government is embedding self-determination within its systems, processes and services, guided by the Self-Determination Reform Framework.

This Report provides community and government with valuable information that allows us to monitor outcomes across all areas of life, as well as the challenges that we still need to address.























Our shared vision: 'All Aboriginal Victorian people, families and communities are healthy, safe, resilient, thriving and living culturally rich lives.'

Self-determination enablers: What we'll do	Self-determination guiding principles: How we'll do it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise culture • Address trauma and support healing • Address racism and promote cultural safety • Transfer power and resources to communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights • Cultural integrity • Commitment • Aboriginal expertise • Partnership • Investment • Decision-making • Empowerment • Cultural safety • Equity • Accountability

Domains

 <p>1. Children, family & home</p>	 <p>2. Learning & skills</p>	 <p>3. Opportunity & prosperity</p>	 <p>4. Health & wellbeing</p>	 <p>5. Justice & safety</p>	 <p>6. Culture & Country</p>
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Goals

 <p>Goal 1 Aboriginal children are born healthy and thrive</p>	 <p>Goal 4 Aboriginal children thrive in the early years</p>	 <p>Goal 8 Aboriginal workers achieve wealth equality</p>	 <p>Goal 11 Aboriginal Victorians enjoy health and longevity</p>	 <p>Goal 15 Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system is eliminated</p>	 <p>Goal 18 Aboriginal land, water and cultural rights are realised</p>
 <p>Goal 2 Aboriginal children are raised by Aboriginal families</p>	 <p>Goal 5 Aboriginal learners excel at school</p>	 <p>Goal 9 Strong Aboriginal workforce participation, in all sectors and at all levels</p>	 <p>Goal 12 Aboriginal Victorians access the services they need</p>	 <p>Goal 16 Aboriginal Victorians have access to safe and effective justice services</p>	 <p>Goal 19 Aboriginal culture and language are supported and celebrated</p>
 <p>Goal 3 Aboriginal families and households thrive</p>	 <p>Goal 6 Aboriginal learners are engaged at school</p>	 <p>Goal 10 Aboriginal income potential is realised</p>	 <p>Goal 13 Health and community services are culturally-safe and responsive</p>	 <p>Goal 17 Aboriginal Victorians feel safe and connected</p>	 <p>Goal 20 Racism is eliminated</p>
<p>Goal 7 Aboriginal learners achieve their full potential after school</p> 			 <p>Goal 14 Aboriginal Victorians enjoy social and emotional wellbeing</p>		



Self-determination journey

In 2018, the Victorian Government worked with Victorian Aboriginal communities and organisations to develop a new VAAF that would set an ambitious and forward-looking agenda for Aboriginal affairs.

The development of the new VAAF signified a meaningful shift, one that embedded government's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination. This commitment acknowledges that the best outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians are achieved when policies and programs are led and guided by the knowledge and expertise of Aboriginal people.

The journey of transferring power, decision-making and resources back to Aboriginal communities is at an early stage. The Victorian Aboriginal community told government that they want the future agenda to be strengths-based and to demonstrate and celebrate the unique strengths and achievements of Victorian Aboriginal communities.

Community members also told government that we must move away from previous approaches focused on gaps, deficits and laying individual blame, and instead focus on the significant shift required across government systems, services, policies and broader society to improve outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The VAAF frames the understanding of, and response to, Aboriginal disadvantage by acknowledging the impact of dispossession of Aboriginal people that occurred from European colonisation and its ongoing intergenerational impacts.

This Report provides the first progress report on the Victorian Government's commitment to embed self-determination across all areas of the government through the Self-Determination Reform Framework. Consistent with this, these annual reports will no longer focus solely on how Aboriginal people are faring, but will aim to hold government accountable for what we are doing to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians and enable self-determination.

Positive change requires not only a fundamental shift in the way that governments work with Aboriginal people, it also requires significant government effort to eliminate the structural and systemic barriers experienced by Aboriginal Victorians, including ensuring services and programs are culturally safe and community-led.



Bushfires

The 2019-20 Victorian bushfires were exceptional in their size and impact, with more than 1.5 million hectares of burnt area across Victoria. The extent of the fires has significantly impacted Victorian Aboriginal communities, particularly in the Gippsland and Ovens Valley regions, which have been further compounded by the impacts of coronavirus.

Aboriginal people are disproportionately affected by the impact of fires due to existing structural and financial inequalities, a backdrop of historical and intergenerational trauma, and the significant impacts that bushfires and bushfire protection has on Country and cultural heritage.

In the early stage of recovery efforts, Aboriginal communities in Gippsland rapidly mobilised to form a community-led Bushfire Recovery Aboriginal Reference Group (Reference Group). This group has ensured Aboriginal needs and priorities are considered in statewide bushfire recovery efforts, including through Bushfire Recovery Victoria's (BRV) Advisory Council.

Across 2020, the Reference Group focused on several priority areas, including: ensuring culturally informed and holistic healing of Country, caring for Elders and carers, cultural heritage restoration, rebuilding community infrastructure, resourcing support for the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO) sector, financial relief for Aboriginal individuals and families and supporting Aboriginal employment and enterprise. These priorities have informed BRV's Bushfire Recovery Framework and State Plan.

To support these efforts, the Victorian Government is providing \$3.5 million in 2020-21 to support Aboriginal communities to recover, and work is underway to support longer term funding. This includes funding for the ACCO-led Bushfire Recovery Program, delivered through the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd (GEGAC). The Program delivers services to community members impacted by bushfires in northern and eastern Victoria.

Government has also supported urgent bushfire mitigation works at Lake Tyers Aboriginal Community, and played a support role during three evacuation processes, including by widely disseminating culturally accessible bushfire warnings during the disaster period.

Bushfire recovery work is ongoing – healing community and Country will take time. The Victorian Government will continue to support the important role of Aboriginal people in the recovery process, as well as rely on Aboriginal knowledge and expertise in bushfire prevention and management of our state.



Coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has had unprecedented impacts on all Victorians, including the livelihoods of Aboriginal Victorians. ACCOs have played a critical role in providing culturally safe frontline responses during the pandemic, including through the provision of clinical testing, outreach and emergency relief. They have also been crucial in providing urgent legal, medical and community care for Aboriginal families across the state, including those in the public housing towers' hard lockdowns.

Early on it was recognised that there was a need for a comprehensive, coordinated and culturally safe response to coronavirus impacts on Aboriginal Victorians. An Aboriginal Community COVID-19 Taskforce (Taskforce) was established in March 2020 comprising of leaders from government departments and Aboriginal organisations. The Taskforce's work was informed by the Taskforce Data Dashboard to ensure stakeholders had clear visibility and evidence of coronavirus impacts to adjust responses accordingly. Government also supported ACCOs to deliver essential services through the pandemic by prioritising ACCOs on the same level as hospitals to receive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), in recognition that coronavirus poses increased health risks to Aboriginal people if infected.

The Taskforce has also been instrumental in developing and driving response and recovery planning, including the Statewide COVID-19 Aboriginal Response Action Plan and the Aboriginal-specific outbreak management plan.

To ensure the Victorian Government's coronavirus response was informed by, and responsive to, the needs of Aboriginal communities at the local level, Local Aboriginal COVID-19 Response Networks (Networks) were rapidly established. The Networks have been critical in leveraging the local Aboriginal Victorian Public Service (VPS) workforces, and providing a single point of contact for local communities to raise issues and seek referral points from government contacts in relation to the coronavirus response.

Government also worked closely with Aboriginal organisations and trusted community voices to roll out culturally appropriate, Aboriginal-specific coronavirus communications on social and traditional media. In particular, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and 3KND Kool 'N' Deadly radio station have both been critical in disseminating culturally appropriate public health messaging.



Coronavirus pandemic

The First Peoples' COVID-19 Business Support Fund was launched in November 2020 in partnership with Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce to support Victorian Aboriginal businesses that have been affected by the COVID-19 trading restrictions. Grants of up to \$10,000 have been used by recipients for a range of business needs including meeting rent and salary costs and pivoting to online sales. The program provided \$1.3 million in grants to 130 Aboriginal-owned businesses across Victoria.

Recognising the need for a holistic budget response, in June 2020, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced a \$23 million COVID-19 Response and Recovery package for the Aboriginal community. This included funding for ACCOs to support outreach educational efforts, homelessness officers, IT capability uplift, clinical support and patient transport. Funding was also provided to Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) to support them to undertake their cultural heritage work remotely.

A \$10 million COVID-19 Aboriginal Community Response and Recovery Fund (Fund) was also established through this package to support Aboriginal communities to develop local, culturally safe responses to coronavirus impacts. Funding was provided across four categories, including: outreach and brokerage; emergency relief; social and emotional wellbeing; and cultural strengthening. The Fund has supported Aboriginal individuals, and small, medium and large organisations across the state, and project evaluations will also contribute to building the self-determination evidence base.

Across 2020, the lockdowns and broader economic effects of the pandemic had a significant impact on the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians. In 2020-21, government provided \$1.5 million to VACCHO to support the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal communities during the pandemic and into the post-pandemic recovery phase. As a consequence of this, and the strong Aboriginal-led community response, all cases contracted by Aboriginal people were contained and there has been no outbreak of coronavirus within community.

ACCO leadership was essential in achieving low transmission rates among Aboriginal Victorians. To ensure this same expertise is embedded in long-term responses, many ACCOs form part of the Victorian Aboriginal Social Recovery Advisory Group and will be eligible to share in \$40 million in funding through the Aboriginal Workforce Fund. This reflects government's recognition of the critical role ACCOs play and the importance of appropriate resourcing to build their capacity to support community now and into the future.



Yoo-rook Justice Commission

In July 2020, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (Assembly) and the Victorian Government announced a commitment to a truth and justice process to formally recognise historic wrongs and past and ongoing injustices against Aboriginal Victorians. This process, which will be led by the independent Yoo-rook Justice Commission (Commission), means Victoria will be the first and only jurisdiction in our nation to institute a formal truth-telling forum.

Aboriginal Victorians have been clear and consistent in their call for truth-telling as an essential part of the treaty process. In particular, the Assembly formally called for a truth and justice process through a resolution of its Chamber in June 2020.

In response to this call, the government worked in partnership with the Assembly to develop the Commission's terms of reference and how the process will work. The terms of reference set out the form, purpose, scope and operations of the Commission, which reflect Victoria's unique history, institutions and cultures. Partnering with the Assembly has ensured that the voices of Aboriginal Victorians are at the centre of truth and justice efforts.

The Victorian Government's commitment to truth and justice reaffirms Victoria's leadership in Aboriginal affairs, making Victoria the first and

only Australian jurisdiction to action the 'treaty' and 'truth' elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The Commission will operate in parallel to Victoria's treaty process, to ensure the momentum of the treaty process is maintained. A treaty or treaties in Victoria can help heal the wounds of the past, provide recognition for historic wrongs, address ongoing injustices, support reconciliation and promote the fundamental human rights of Aboriginal peoples.

The Commission can support the treaty process, by providing an opportunity for Aboriginal Victorians and non-Aboriginal Victorians to acknowledge our shared history and lay the foundations for new relationships and a shared future.



Treaty

The Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 (Treaty Act) – Australia’s first treaty legislation – cements the Victorian Government’s commitment to advancing a treaty process with Aboriginal Victorians.

Treaty is a practical and tangible way for the Victorian Government and Aboriginal Victorians to work together toward Aboriginal self-determination in Victoria. The treaty process will help to build a framework for ongoing relationships between Aboriginal Victorians and the State of Victoria based on fairness, equality and mutual respect.

The treaty process advances the Victorian Government’s commitment to self-determination by recognising Aboriginal peoples’ right to freely determine their participation and form of representation in the treaty process and to be the central decision-makers on the matters that affect their lives.

Victoria is currently in Phase 2 of a three-phase treaty process. Phase 1 of the process included the passage of the *Treaty Act* and the appointment of the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commissioner to lead engagement with Aboriginal Victorians on treaty and establish a representative body for Aboriginal Victorians.

Phase 2 of the treaty process commenced in December 2019, following the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs’ declaration of the Assembly as the Aboriginal Representative Body, in accordance with the *Treaty Act*. As the Aboriginal Representative Body, the Assembly is the sole representative of Aboriginal Victorians for the

purpose of working with the State to establish by agreement the elements necessary to support future treaty negotiations: a Treaty Authority, treaty negotiation framework, self-determination fund, and a dispute resolution process for Phase 2 (treaty elements). Once the treaty elements are in place, Phase 3 treaty negotiations can commence. The *2019/20 State Budget* provided \$11 million over two years to support the Assembly’s involvement in Phase 2.

Work is underway inside government to drive the change required for the Victorian Government to participate in treaty discussions with the Assembly as a model treaty partner. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is the coordinating minister for treaty. In this role, the Minister leads engagement with the Assembly on behalf of the State and oversees whole of government participation in treaty discussions. A Treaty Interdepartmental Committee, comprised of a senior representative from each department, operates to share information among departments and provide advice on procedural and substantive issues relevant to the treaty process.

In addition to discussions with the Assembly to establish the treaty elements, the Victorian Government is supporting Aboriginal Victorians to participate in the treaty process and prepare for future treaty negotiations.

Closing the Gap

On 30 July 2020, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) came into effect.

The National Agreement is the product of a true partnership between the Commonwealth, all states and territories, the Australian Local Government Association and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks).

The Coalition of Peaks comprises 49 national, state and territory non-government Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and certain independent statutory bodies. Victoria's representative on the Coalition of Peaks is the Aboriginal Executive Council (AEC).

The National Agreement represents a new way for all governments to work with Aboriginal Australians. It is the first time an agreement at the national level has been signed with a third party, and it formalises a ten-year partnership between governments and Aboriginal people. This is in recognition of the fact that Aboriginal voices must lead the way to improved outcomes for Aboriginal people.

It was developed following extensive engagement with Aboriginal communities across Australia. In Victoria, the government worked with AEC to hold consultations in Melbourne, Bendigo and Morwell.

Unlike previous Closing the Gap agreements, the National Agreement goes beyond numeric targets to include four priority reform areas:

- Shared decision-making between Aboriginal communities and governments
- Strengthening the Aboriginal community-controlled sector
- Improving government organisations
- Shared access to data and information.

The Victorian Government has made an initial investment of \$3.3 million to strengthen the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.

The National Agreement also includes 16 socioeconomic targets that track jurisdictional progress toward improving outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities across Australia.

Many of these targets align with measures already included in the VAAF, with Victoria working toward more ambitious targets in key areas such as justice, economic prosperity and health. Reporting on Closing the Gap targets will begin in 2021 and be included in the next Report.

Victoria's state plan for Closing the Gap is the VAAF, which was developed with Aboriginal Victorians in 2018. It will guide Victoria's implementation plan for the National Agreement, which will be developed in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal stakeholders within the next six months.

Victoria's implementation plan will represent a truly cross-portfolio approach to Aboriginal affairs, with all government ministers assuming responsibility for its delivery. Action under the National Agreement will complement our nation-leading commitment to treaty and Aboriginal self-determination.

Stolen Generations Reparations

Following years of advocacy from Stolen Generations members, their families and the broader Victorian Aboriginal community, on 18 March 2020, the Victorian Government announced the establishment of Stolen Generations Reparations. The purpose of reparations is to acknowledge and address the harm caused by past Victorian governments in the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families, the impacts of which continue to be felt today.

The Victorian Government is committed to Stolen Generations Reparations being operational in 2021, with its design being entirely led by Stolen Generations and their families. Reparations may include direct compensation payments, truth-telling, support for applicants and a funeral or memorial fund.

The Stolen Generations Reparations Steering Committee (Steering Committee) led community engagement on the design of the scheme.

The Steering Committee consists of Stolen Generations and family members, and four key Stolen Generations support organisations: Connecting Home Limited, Koorie Heritage Trust, Link-Up and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.

The Victorian Government's commitment to ongoing self-determination reform

Aboriginal Victorians, and Indigenous people around the world, have long fought for the right to self-determination, including the right to make decisions on matters that affect their lives and communities. The right to self-determination is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to which Australia is a signatory. Self-determination must be driven by Aboriginal Victorians, and within this, government has a responsibility to reform its systems, structures and service delivery to better reflect the aspirations of Victorian Aboriginal communities and enable self-determination.

Importantly, enabling Aboriginal self-determination takes time, and government must listen to, and be led by, Aboriginal Victorians. We would not be where we are today, working in partnership with community towards treaty, without the tireless efforts and activism of Aboriginal Victorians, who fought for the right to make decisions on the matters that affect their lives and communities, and continue to fight for these rights today.



Self-Determination Reform Framework

Whole of Government Report

The VAAF represents a new way of working for government. In the past year since the release of the most recent Report, departments have been focusing on internal government processes, practices and policies to enable self-determination.

Departments have also spent the year focussing on ways to embed Aboriginal self-determination within government structures. Some, such as the Department of Transport (DOT), are developing strategies for the first time, some are creating new partnerships like the First Peoples Partnership Group in Creative Victoria, and some are reforming existing governance structures, such as the establishment of Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja – phase 4 of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

This is the first time that government departments and agencies have reported on what they are doing to action the VAAF's self-determination enablers: prioritise culture; address trauma and support healing; address racism and promote cultural safety; and transfer power and resources to community (Figure 1).

This chapter gives an overview of this work and is useful in helping to understand how government is progressing its commitment to Aboriginal self-determination. There continues to be greater need for systematic and structural reform, such as embedding cultural values in both procurement and evaluation, embedding trauma-informed practice into the human services system, and meeting Victoria's Aboriginal recruitment targets. Enabling self-determination is equally important in universal service systems.

The greatest indicator of government's new way of working is the record investment of \$356.5 million in Aboriginal affairs in the 2020/2021 State Budget, including significant investment to support the work of ACCOs. It indicates there is growing understanding across government about self-determination and the work required to embed it. It is promising to see efforts to embed the self-determination enablers across mainstream systems and service delivery, suggesting that Aboriginal self-determination is not just being championed within Aboriginal affairs – it is becoming part of the way that government operates in its day-to-day business with Aboriginal communities.

The Victorian Government has set ambitious targets across its Aboriginal strategies and policies, many of which surpass the commitments in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. As work to reform government systems continues and new ways of working develop, positive impacts are expected across additional key areas. It is also clear from this Report there remain critical areas for ongoing government action.

Enabling self-determination

Fully embedding Aboriginal self-determination in policies, programs, services and practices across government is a significant endeavour. It needs long-term commitment and sustained effort from all parts of government.

Enabling Aboriginal self-determination requires government to transform its structures and systems, and departments are at various stages along the self-determination continuum (Figure 2). The positive case studies in this Report demonstrate what steps government is taking to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. They also help to build knowledge, capacity and accountability to progress ongoing reform.

Government departments and self-determination strategies

Almost all Victorian departments have put in place self-determination strategies that build internal governance to oversee efforts to improve partnerships with community and achieve targets.

Self-determination enablers (Figure 1)

1 Prioritise culture

We acknowledge that connection to family, community, culture and Country is critical to the wellbeing and positive self-identity of Aboriginal Victorians. Cultural identity is a key enabler of achieving positive outcomes and the full enjoyment of the right to practise culture.

2 Address trauma and support healing

We acknowledge the long-lasting, far-reaching and intergenerational consequences of colonisation, dispossession, child removal and other discriminatory government policies, including significant intergenerational trauma. Addressing trauma and supporting healing is important because the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, families and communities is fundamental to how they engage with the structures and systems that support them to thrive.

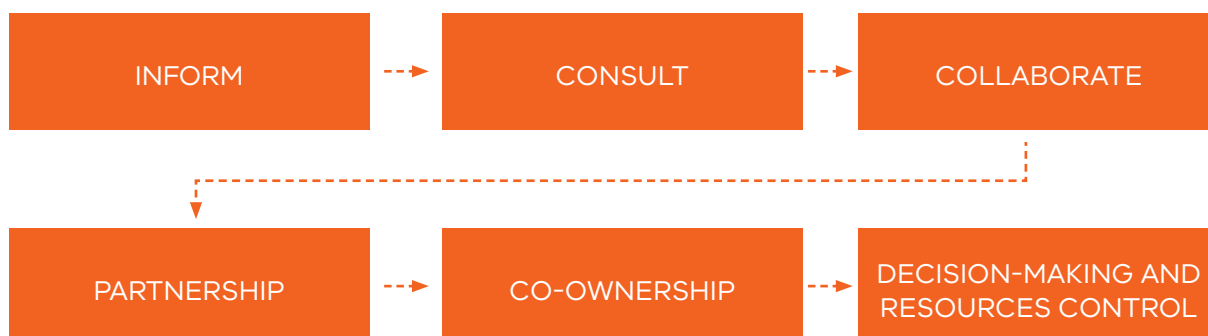
3 Address racism and promote cultural safety

The structures and systems established during colonisation had the specific intent to exclude Aboriginal people and their laws, customs and traditions, resulting in entrenched systemic and structural racism. Governments as well as Aboriginal and mainstream organisations and services should provide mechanisms and supports for Aboriginal Victorian people, families, communities and organisations to fully participate in policy development. Targeted and universal systems and services must be culturally-safe, relevant, accessible and responsive to communities. This enables Aboriginal Victorians to make decisions on the matters that affect their lives.

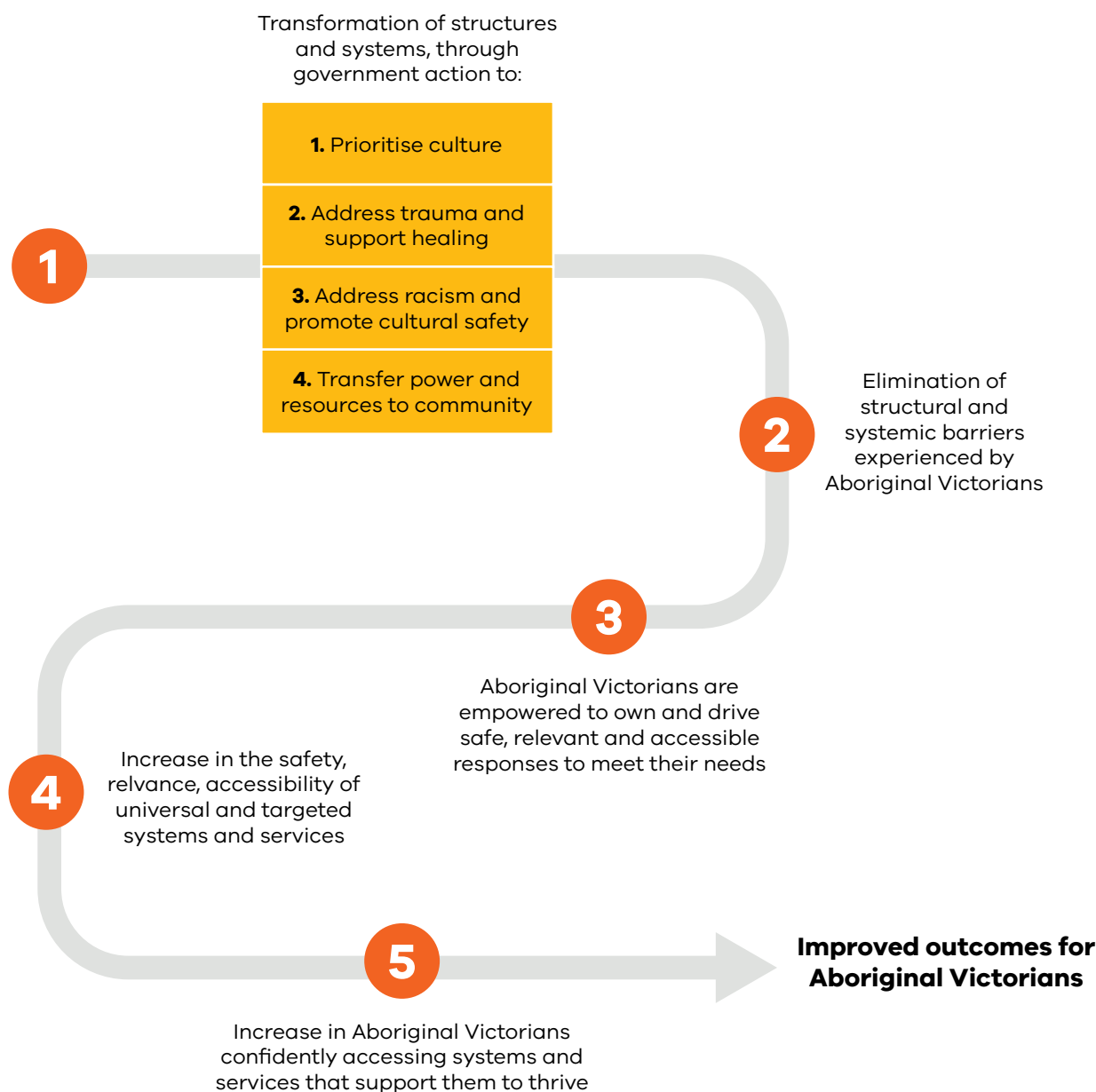
4 Transfer power and resources to communities

Aboriginal people know what is best for themselves, their families and communities. We acknowledge the right of Aboriginal Victorians to have decision-making control over the issues that affect their lives. Community-led, place-based decision-making and resourcing at the state and local level will enable Aboriginal communities to lead the development and implementation of culturally-safe and relevant responses. It will also allow Aboriginal communities to hold government, Aboriginal organisations and mainstream services to account.

VAAF Self-determination continuum (Figure 2)



VAAF Action logic (Figure 3)



The next section gives an overview of how the Victorian Government is beginning to embed the self-determination enablers, and highlights action underway to:

1. Prioritise culture by acknowledging and supporting Aboriginal people, including Elders and young people, to strengthen, connect and re-connect to culture.
2. Address trauma and support healing by addressing historical injustices and the ongoing consequences of discriminatory government policies, including embedding trauma-informed and restorative policies and practices.
3. Address racism and promote cultural safety through recognition of the many forms racism takes (systemic and individual) and the practice of culturally safe policies, programs, processes and anti-racism strategies.
4. Transfer power and resources to communities by strengthening Aboriginal leadership, representation, decision-making and resource allocation at the local, regional and state levels.

Section 1: Prioritise culture

Aboriginal Victorians have told us that connection to family, community, culture and Country is critical to their wellbeing and positive self-identity. Policy research and evaluation clearly demonstrates that making culture a priority in policy, programs and service delivery will lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Colonisation involved establishing laws and policies with the deliberate intent of excluding Aboriginal people and their lore, customs, cultures and traditions. The impacts of some of these laws and policies are still felt today.

Government has historically failed to account for cultural values in the development of policy, in the assessment of funding proposals, and in the evaluation of outcomes and programmatic decisions that affect Aboriginal Victorians. Language as a key component of culture has also been undersupported in schools and public spaces. Excluding Aboriginal languages from Victoria's public life is a significant loss for Aboriginal communities as well as for all Victorians.

Prioritising culture can help provide a safe space for Aboriginal people to share pride in their identity as the oldest living culture on Earth with non-Aboriginal people. Practicing culture is a protective factor central to programs and services – it is key to safety and security that works to prevent harm and support individuals as they interact with service systems.

First Peoples Partnership Group – Creative Victoria

The First Peoples Partnership was established in 2020 to embed Aboriginal self-determination and community voice in Victoria's next creative industries strategy, 2020-2024.

Responsibilities of the First Peoples Partnership Group include:

- Ensuring shared authority and decision-making in development and implementation of all First Peoples programs and initiatives
- Embedding the 11 principles of self-determination in the work of Creative Victoria and through the state's creative industries
- Ensuring Creative Victoria's business processes, including grant application and assessment, communications, events and recruitment, align with First Peoples cultural protocols and protect and promote cultural safety, cultural authority and inclusion.

Victorian Government departments and agencies are prioritising Aboriginal culture by:

- Acknowledging, respecting and celebrating the diversity and strength of Aboriginal culture. For example, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) (formerly the Department of Health and Human Services) is embedding culture as a protective factor in the new family preservation and reunification model in Victoria's child protection system.
- Supporting cultural pride and identity among Aboriginal Victorians by celebrating NAIDOC week, and embedding Aboriginal language and culture in the built environment. This includes using traditional place names and the visible presence of Aboriginal art across all government buildings. This recognises the immense contributions of Aboriginal Victorians and provides opportunities for Aboriginal staff to network and be proud in their culture.
- Providing dedicated Aboriginal recruitment and career progression pathways for current and future Aboriginal staff in the VPS, as well as opportunities for non-Aboriginal staff to build their awareness and knowledge. For example, the Department of Justice and Community Safety's (DJCS) Koori Employment and Career Strategy provides clear pathways and tailored initiatives for new and existing Aboriginal employees to support individuals' career potential. This operates alongside the Koori Cultural Respect Framework to ensure all employees have the knowledge and skills to deliver services in more culturally appropriate ways and create work environments that are culturally inclusive.
- Supporting the work of Aboriginal governance forums across government to embed cultural supports and prioritise culture in broader government reforms in key areas such as justice, child protection and prevention of family violence. Sector experts and community leaders provide a critical voice to government through forums such as the Aboriginal Children's Forum, the Marrung Central Governance Committee, the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum to address family violence, the Aboriginal Justice Forum, the Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum, the Aboriginal Executive Council, and the Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council.

Section 2: Address trauma and support healing

Addressing the intergenerational trauma created by colonisation, dispossession, child removal and other discriminatory government policies is fundamental to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, families and communities.

Successive Victorian Governments have played a significant part in past regimes of colonial dispossession, assimilation and erasure. Addressing trauma and supporting healing requires not only acknowledging past wrongs, but initiating restorative processes to address the ongoing impacts of intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal people. It also requires the embedding of trauma-informed people, practices and policy across all portfolio areas.

The Victorian Government has begun directly addressing the trauma caused by past government regimes. Departments must continue to build on the actions below to address the intergenerational impacts of trauma and support healing for Aboriginal Victorians.

Some major examples of such work over the past year are committing to the establishment of:

- Stolen Generations Reparations to help address the trauma and suffering caused by the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families by providing financial compensation alongside a range of potential other supports. The design of reparations has been community-led, with Stolen Generations members and their families as well as Aboriginal service providers determining the scope and format for engagement and advice to government.
- A truth and justice process, led by the independent Yoo-rook Justice Commission, which will occur in parallel to the treaty process to support truth-telling and reckon with past and present injustices perpetrated against Aboriginal Victorians. The truth and justice process is an historic commitment called for by the Aboriginal community. It acknowledges the incredible strength and survival of Aboriginal people – and will ensure Aboriginal voices are heard and respected. It will also help to heal and unify Victorians and reset the story and foundations of our state.

Other action underway to address trauma and supporting healing for Aboriginal Victorians across Victorian Government departments and agencies includes:

- Investing in mainstream and ACCO-run prevention and early intervention initiatives across all sectors to build strong families and communities. For example, DJCS' Koori Youth Justice Program provides preventative, early intervention and case management services for Aboriginal children and young people at risk of justice involvement, or subject to a Youth Justice Order.
- Addressing historical and contemporary discrimination by embedding trauma-informed policy and practice into funded services. For example, the Department of Health's (DH) South Division's Mental Health Response is amending its service delivery model to achieve this aim, consistent with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) feedback.
- Ensuring mainstream organisations and the wider community understand the ongoing impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma. This includes providing trauma and healing informed practice training, and embedding and measuring self-determination in family violence responses.
- Government and public communications campaigns like the Deadly Events Series, Deadly Questions, and Deadly & Proud promote the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and encourage discussion around intergenerational trauma, which can support broader understanding and healing.
- First Peoples-State Relations (formerly Aboriginal Victoria) has engaged external specialists Dadirri to deliver Healing Informed Practise staff training, in order to support staff to understand trauma and apply healing informed approaches in their engagement and improve the design of policies and programs.

Identifying opportunities for restorative justice responses across the justice system

The Hume and Eastern Metropolitan Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees (RAJACs) are working in collaboration with community partners to develop the Restorative Justice Project (Project). The Project considers opportunities for developing and integrating restorative justice responses across the criminal justice system, such as healing circles and group conferencing, to bring parties together to collectively agree how to deal with the aftermath of an offence and its implications for the future.

A Steering Committee has been established, along with local working groups for each pilot location who are identifying priorities for program delivery. A pilot service model will be designed to connect with and improve existing opportunities within the justice system to deliver a culturally specific restorative justice response for Aboriginal young people.

Addressing trauma through culturally safe mental health services

There are significant challenges for Aboriginal people and ACCHOs in Gippsland navigating the regional mental health service system. The level of knowledge about Aboriginal specific services in East Gippsland is poor, which limits the number of Aboriginal people who access mental health services.

DH is improving service coordination between East Gippsland Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation, universal health services, and regional mental health and alcohol and other drug (AOD) services by employing mental health practitioners and making amendments to existing models of delivery to better support Aboriginal people.

Since commencement of this initiative outcomes achieved include:

- an increase in Aboriginal community members accessing counselling services offered by the mental health practitioner
- an increase in training and upskilling of staff in mental health identification, initial response and referral pathways
- development of culturally appropriate universal mental health intake/assessment/referral tools which have been piloted and are currently being reviewed to meet service requirements
- improved service coordination and working relationships between ACCHOs, universal health services, mental health service providers and AOD service providers.

Section 3: Address racism and promote cultural safety

Systems and services must be culturally safe, relevant, accessible and responsive so that Aboriginal Victorians can make decisions on the matters that affect them.

Racism takes many forms. Addressing racism and promoting cultural safety requires the Victorian Government to continually refine its policies, structures and cultural environment to better enable self-determination.

Cultural awareness training and building the capability of staff is central to ensuring the services government delivers and funds are culturally supportive.

Training in cultural safety and building an awareness of the relevance of self-determination for government staff continues to be rolled out across all departments. Currently, there is no uniform or mandatory cultural safety training provided across all departments, and departments and agencies should commit to, and expand upon, ongoing training to build greater awareness among their staff.

In addition to the optional cultural safety training that is offered by departments and agencies, further work has been done to:

- establish DPC's Treaty and Self-Determination Coordination Group to hold executives across DPC accountable for undertaking reform within their relevant branches, especially in preparation for treaty
- support the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to improve racism reporting across Victoria
- deliver tailored cultural safety and Aboriginal self-determination training to DTF analysts during the budget process
- provide a suite of cultural safety learning materials for DJPR and DFFH/DH staff, including mandatory e learning and training sessions
- install Welcome to Country plaques at all of DoT's Major Road Projects Victoria offices, procured from an Aboriginal business and co-designed with Traditional Owners.

Case study: conducting a 'Cultural Audit' to increase accountability for promoting cultural safety

In 2019-20, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) developed an Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework (Framework), which included a cultural audit of the department undertaken by VACCHO.

The cultural audit identified that:

- a significant proportion of DELWP's Aboriginal staff experienced racism at work
- inconsistent support is provided to Aboriginal staff
- many non-Aboriginal DELWP staff have limited knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures.

Approaching VACCHO to do a cultural audit demonstrates DELWP's commitment to being accountable for its actions to enable self-determination, including ensuring culturally safe behaviours are demonstrated by its staff, and preventing racism and lateral violence in the workplace.

To put this commitment into action, DELWP has commenced rolling out Aboriginal cultural safety and awareness training to its staff. Implementation of the Framework will be monitored and evaluated by a recently established DELWP Aboriginal Leadership Group, to ensure the department has - and lives - a policy of zero tolerance of racism and lateral violence in the workplace.

Section 4: Transfer power and resources to communities

Genuine self-determination requires an institutional shift toward community-led decision-making and resourcing.

Government must respond to Aboriginal community needs, voices and calls for leadership by transferring decision-making power to Aboriginal communities. Government must also resource local Aboriginal organisations to lead the design, development and delivery of policies and services. Moving toward treaty represents a crucial part of this work.

Across government, significant governance reform has created new approaches of working in partnership with Aboriginal Victorians. While partnership alone is not self-determination, it is an important step in strengthening the relationship between government and community as government continues to shift toward community-led decision-making and resourcing.

Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council (Council)

The Council was established by the Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions (DJPR) in 2020 to ensure a strong and enduring relationship between government and the Victorian Aboriginal community, including Traditional Owners, Elders, communities, organisations and businesses.

The Council will help to ensure investment in economic development is consistent with government's commitment to self-determination. It will be supported by several Partnership Working Groups, prioritising areas of Employment, Small Business, Entrepreneurship, Procurement, Tourism and Traditional Owners.

Membership of these groups is intended to include departmental executives and Aboriginal stakeholders, and they will make a concerted effort to engage a broader section of community not previously involved in government partnership structures. This will also strengthen relationships between community and Metro/Regional Partnerships.

Work is underway to consider models under which power and resources may be able to transfer through treaty. Alongside Victoria's treaty process is the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Due for completion in July 2021, Victoria is designing an Implementation Plan in partnership with the Aboriginal Executive Council and transforming the partnership between government and ACCOs. The move toward increasing partnerships can also be seen in the establishment of the former COVID-19 Aboriginal Community Taskforce, comprised of government and ACCO representatives, which was established to drive comprehensive, coordinated and culturally safe responses to COVID-19 impacts on Aboriginal Victorians.

Transport engaging as one with Aboriginal Victorians to embed self-determination and enhance VAAF outcomes

Under the new Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Self-Determination Plan 2020-23, DOT (including associated agencies) and the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority are implementing a new model of engagement with Aboriginal Victorians to reduce consultative burden and identify opportunities to enhance outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

This new model of engagement will provide Aboriginal Victorians with complete information and resources to make decisions about transport issues that matter to them. Self-determined actions arising during engagement will be used to create regional implementation plans (Regional Chapters) and promoted on transport portfolio websites.

Under the new model of engagement, RAPs will be invited to co-design tailored partnership agreements that enable more strategic conversations to occur between transport entities and RAPs on transport issues impacting their traditional lands. This provides a pathway for the development and delivery of bespoke models that reflect the needs and aspirations of each RAP, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach.

Some areas of the public service have taken steps beyond a partnership approach by moving to co-ownership or the full transfer of power and resources to Aboriginal organisations for service delivery.

It is important government learns from these models, and continues to listen to community, as it builds its knowledge and capacity to do things differently. Efforts to transfer power and resources can be seen in:

- **The transfer of power and resources in the out of home care system from government to ACCOs:** Under this reform, government is transferring the case management of Aboriginal children on protection orders to ACCOs. This means that ACCOs are now responsible for the care of Aboriginal children in out of home care. This fulfils part of government's commitment to the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care initiative, which is a co-designed model of Aboriginal child protection that provides ACCOs with greater funding, resources and authority to deliver a culturally sensitive service which focuses on strengthening connection to community, culture and family.
- **RAPs and the establishment of Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council:** *The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Act)* makes Traditional Owners the ultimate statutory decision-making authority about their cultural heritage, through the establishment of RAPs. RAPs provide clear and accountable incorporated bodies through which Aboriginal Traditional Owners are able to exercise their rights and responsibilities as primary decision makers and sources of information about Aboriginal cultural heritage. The Act also establishes the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, a Council of 11 Traditional Owners from Victoria, who appoint RAPs and have various statutory functions including control over Aboriginal Ancestral Remains. The Act is an important mechanism in transferring decision-making power to Traditional Owners in this area and the only system of its kind across Australian jurisdictions.

Case study: Budj Bim Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) project

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in July 2019. Early, informal engagement between Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners (GMTO) and DELWP's Land Information and Spatial Services (LISS) branch highlighted how comprehensive spatial data could assist with safeguarding valuable and culturally important natural and artificial areas across the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape. The Budj Bim LiDAR project was then co-designed with representatives of GMTO, in partnership with DELWP's Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Branch.

The project trials a new approach to data sovereignty, with GMTO to hold ownership of the data and ultimate decision-making authority over its access and use by third parties. This represents a shift to greater self-determination for Traditional Owners, delivering on DELWP's commitment to enable self-determination across all areas of service delivery and each stage of the project.

The partnership is delivering positive outcomes for both DELWP and Traditional Owners. These include greater collaboration, enhanced technical skills in data management and experience in co-designing projects, and new ways of working to enable greater self-determination and data sovereignty for Traditional Owners.

With the acquisition of the data completed in June 2020, DELWP will work with Traditional Owners through 2020-21 to finalise the project.

Victorian Government investment

The 2020/21 State Budget provided a record investment of \$356.5 million over four years to support Aboriginal Victorians, progress treaty and further Aboriginal self-determination.

This represents a significant commitment by the Victorian Government to provide appropriate support to the Aboriginal community and take genuine steps towards Aboriginal self-determination and treaty.

This includes a record investment in ACCOs and in community-led responses, including:



\$20.2 million over three years to support community aspirations for Victoria's treaty and truth and justice processes



\$10.0 million over two years to progress development of Stolen Generations Reparations



\$40.0 million over two years for a service delivery fund for ACCOs and ACCHOs



\$20.2 million over two years to enable economic recovery and development through increasing the capacity of Traditional Owner groups across the state to enhance their ability to process heritage approvals and exercise their related procedural rights



\$4.4 million in 2020-21 to continue support for lapsing Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing programs and to commence design of a new Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre



\$7.5 million over two years to support delivery of Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2023 to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students in Victoria



\$11.8 million over four years for Aboriginal community-led responses within the youth justice system including demand reduction initiatives to establish and expand programs and supports to help reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system.

About data

Data collection and limitations

This Report provides the latest available information about how the Victorian Government is progressing against the six domains and 111 measures in the VAAF. The majority of data reported provides an assessment of progress from 2008 (or closest to) until 2019-20. Where data is available, the baseline year is 2008 as this was the year in which the National Indigenous Reform Agreement was established.

As a first preference, the data has been sourced from annual administrative collections. If this is not available, survey data has been used, for example for most non-service related measures not directly collected and reported on by the Victorian Government. This data has primarily been sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) and Health Survey (NATSIHS) for Aboriginal Victorians; and General Social Survey (GSS) and National Health Survey (NHS) for comparison with non-Aboriginal Victorians. The use of survey data means the latest year of available data varies across the Report, particularly given the latest NATSISS and GSS data is from 2014-15.

It should be noted that some of the data reported against the VAAF measures does not directly align with the measure definition due to the limitation of data published in the public domain.

Impact of change in population estimate

The estimated population is used as the denominator to calculate rates across VAAF measures. Between the publication of the 2019 and 2020 Reports, these population estimates have been revised (from using a 2011 census base to a 2016 census base). It has led to a decrease in historic rates for Aboriginal Victorians due to a considerable increase¹ in the estimated Aboriginal population between those two census periods. As a result, the rates reported in previous VGAARs, particularly for Aboriginal Victorians, may not match 2020 reported figures.

Non-reported measures

Due to unavailability of latest data, a considerable number of measures (especially for the Opportunity and Prosperity domain) have not been reported in the 2020 VGAAR. Measures that are derived from the Census have mostly been impacted by this issue. A complete list of non-reported measures is available in Appendix A.

VAAF Data Dashboard

In line with government's commitment in the VAAF to improve data access, transparency and narration, an interactive Data Dashboard has been developed. The Data Dashboard can be accessed via the Aboriginal Victoria website and offers a user-friendly platform to access detailed state level data. Government is working towards including disaggregated local level data in future Data Dashboards.

Aboriginal data sovereignty

The Victorian Government acknowledges the importance of Aboriginal data sovereignty and is committed to working with the Aboriginal communities and organisations to develop appropriate policies and frameworks in line with its commitment under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

¹ Census of Population and Housing: Understanding the Increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Counts, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018.

Domain 1: Children, Family & Home



Our shared commitment:

All Aboriginal children and young people are safe, resilient, thriving and living in culturally rich, strong Aboriginal families and communities.

Families and Aboriginal child-rearing practices are fundamental to raising strong Aboriginal children and young people. Supporting Aboriginal families with safe and effective services enables better outcomes.

Encouraging Aboriginal children and families to be strong in culture and proud of their unique identity can ensure that every Aboriginal child has the best start in life.

This means ensuring Aboriginal children and families have access to culturally appropriate services throughout pregnancy and early childhood, and reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal young people in care.





Goal 1: Aboriginal children are born healthy and thrive



1.1 Improve maternal and infant health

Improvements in birth weight, preterm births and immunisation rates are encouraging and key to ensuring that Aboriginal children thrive and grow up to be healthy adults. Most notably, immunisation rates for Aboriginal children are the highest they have ever been, and Aboriginal five year olds are now more likely to be immunised than their non-Aboriginal peers.

Improved health outcomes are closely linked to social determinants measured in other VAAF domains, including education, economic opportunity, employment and housing, as well as culture, family, community, and access to traditional lands. A holistic approach is key to supporting Aboriginal children and families to be healthy and thrive.

Measure 1.1.1 Rate of low birth weight

In 2018, 12.1 per cent of babies of Aboriginal mothers were born with a low birth weight, which decreased from 15.2 per cent in 2009. In comparison, only 6.9 per cent of babies of non-Aboriginal mothers were born with low birth weight in 2018.

Measure 1.1.2 Rate of preterm birth

In 2018, 12.4 per cent of babies of Aboriginal mothers were born preterm compared to 14.5 per cent in 2009. The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rate of preterm birth decreased slightly during this period and was 3.9 per cent in 2018.²

Measure 1.1.3 Rate of perinatal mortality

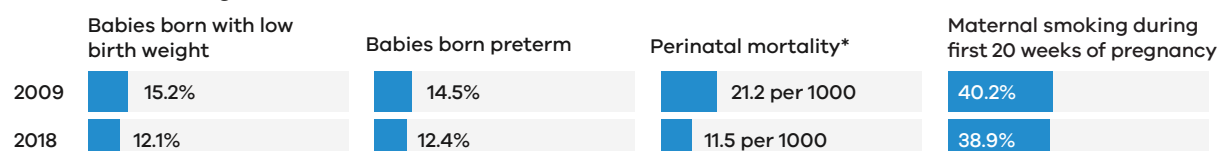
The rate of Aboriginal perinatal mortality in 2016-18 was 11.5 per 1,000, which is significantly lower than 2007-09 level (23.1 per 1,000). During the same period, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perinatal mortality rate dropped from 10.4 to 2.8 (per 1,000).

Measure 1.1.4 Smoking during pregnancy

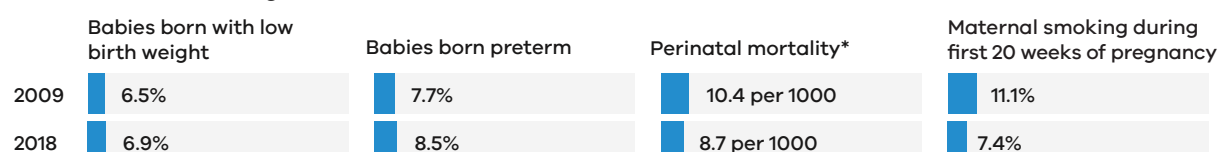
In 2018, 38.9 per cent of Aboriginal women smoked during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy, which remained similar to 2009 (40.2 per cent). The rate of smoking during pregnancy was five times higher for Aboriginal women compared to non-Aboriginal women in 2018.

Maternal and infant health

Babies born to Aboriginal mothers



Babies born to non-Aboriginal mothers



*Includes perinatal mortality data from 2009-11 and 2016-18

2 Note this measure differs from the target under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Closing the Gap target will be included in the 2021 VGAAR.

1.2 Children thrive in their first 1000 days

Measure 1.2.1 Participation rates for Maternal and Child Health Key Ages and Stages Consultations

Participation rates for Maternal and Child Health Key Ages and Stages Consultations have generally increased year to year. In 2017–18, participation at the first home visit consultation was near universal for Aboriginal families.

Significant increases in participation have been shown for Aboriginal children over time for the eight-month, 12-month, two-year and 3.5-year consultations. However, participation has tended to decline for all families over time, particularly after the four-month visit. There is still more work to be done to achieve the participation rates of non-Aboriginal children. The Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health program aims to do so by focusing on provision of integrated, coordinated and culturally safe services to mothers and their babies.

Case study – Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health services

In October 2020, six Aboriginal organisations were announced as new providers for Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health services. They join four existing Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health service providers that were part of a trial which commenced in 2017, reaching more Aboriginal children and families across the state.

The Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health program strengthens self-determination by enabling Aboriginal organisations to meet the health, safety and wellbeing needs of their local Aboriginal communities. The program delivers better health outcomes for Aboriginal families by offering them access to culturally safe, flexible Maternal and Child Health services at their local Aboriginal organisation or ACCO. It also strengthens the relationships between mainstream Maternal and Child Health providers and Aboriginal organisations as they work together to provide integrated, coordinated support to the Aboriginal community.

Participation at Key Ages and Stages Consultations

Aboriginal children (%)

	Home visit	2 weeks	4 weeks	8 weeks	4 months	8 months	12 months	18 months	2 years	3.5 years
2010–11	99.6	94.8	87.2	83.0	79.4	62.7	52.9	49.7	61.9	45.3
2017–18	97.9	89.9	88.9	83.9	80.4	70.6	60.7	67.5	62.1	61.1

All children (%)

	Home visit	2 weeks	4 weeks	8 weeks	4 months	8 months	12 months	18 months	2 years	3.5 years
2010–11	100	97.6	96.8	96.3	93.7	85.0	81.9	71.5	68.9	62.8
2017–18	100	96.7	97.1	95.9	94.1	85.8	83.4	74.2	70.6	64.2

1.2 Children thrive in their first 1000 days

Measure 1.2.2 Attendance at Koori Maternity Service

In 2018-19, 485 women attended a Koori Maternity Service (KMS) to access maternity care from a midwife and/or an Aboriginal health worker. Due to an update of the KMS minimum dataset in 2018, it is not possible to compare 2018-19 KMS participation data to previous years.

Measure: 1.2.3 Immunisation rates at 24 months and 60 months

Immunisation rates for Aboriginal children at all age levels increased significantly in recent years. In 2018, immunisation rates for Aboriginal children at 2 years and 5 years were 89.1 per cent and 96.8 per cent respectively.

Case study – Koori Maternity Services

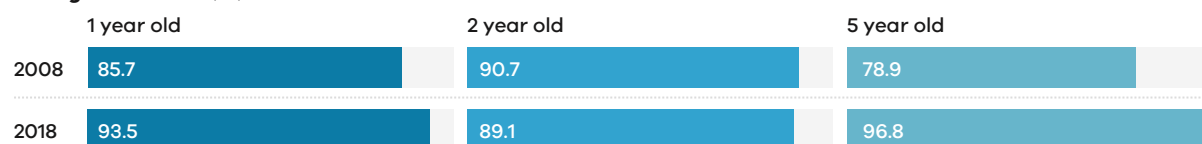
Koori Maternity Services deliver culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal women and women having Aboriginal babies, and their families, across 14 sites in Victoria, including three in public hospitals.

Koori Maternity Services are an integral component of Victoria's maternity service system working in partnership with women, families and the local community to ensure that service delivery is culturally safe, responsive and meets the unique needs of individuals and community.

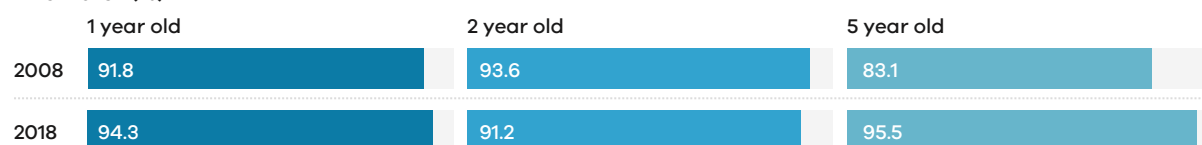
The role of Koori Maternity Services include caring for women, babies and their families during pregnancy, birthing and postnatally. This continues to be critical to improving outcomes and increasing participation in maternity care for Aboriginal women, babies and families.

Immunisation rates

Aboriginal children (%)



All children (%)



1.2 Children thrive in their first 1000 days

Measure 1.2.4 Participation in facilitated playgroups (0-5 years)

Participation in facilitated playgroups for Aboriginal children aged 0-5 years has increased over the years. In 2019, eight per cent of Aboriginal children aged 0-5 years participated in a supported playgroup compared to two per cent in 2017.

Supported playgroups operated by ACCOs, such as the five Koorie Kids Playgroups operated by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, play an important role in providing an alternative option to mainstream supported playgroups that are culturally safe, fun and an empowering environment for families with children aged five years and under.



Participation of children 0-5 years in Supported Playgroups (SPG)

	Aboriginal 0-5 years children in SPG (n)	Proportion of Aboriginal 0-5 years children in SPG (%)	All 0-5 years children in SPG (n)	Proportion of All 0-5 years children in SPG (%)
2017	186	2.0%	4,006	1.0%
2018	533	6.0%	12,312	3.0%
2019	668	8.0%	18,315	4.0%

Goal 2: Aboriginal children are raised by Aboriginal families



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

Aboriginal children continue to be over-represented in care services³. In 2019-20, the rate of Aboriginal children in care services was 20 times the rate for non-Aboriginal children in care. This is the highest rate of over representation in any jurisdiction and well above the national rate (11 times the rate of non-Aboriginal children).

The increase in numbers is partly due to changes in data collection methodology⁴, including improved identification and documentation of Aboriginal status, however figures remain concerning. Reducing over representation in care services remains a key focus, alongside increasing the proportion of Aboriginal children and young people being placed with Aboriginal carers or relatives.

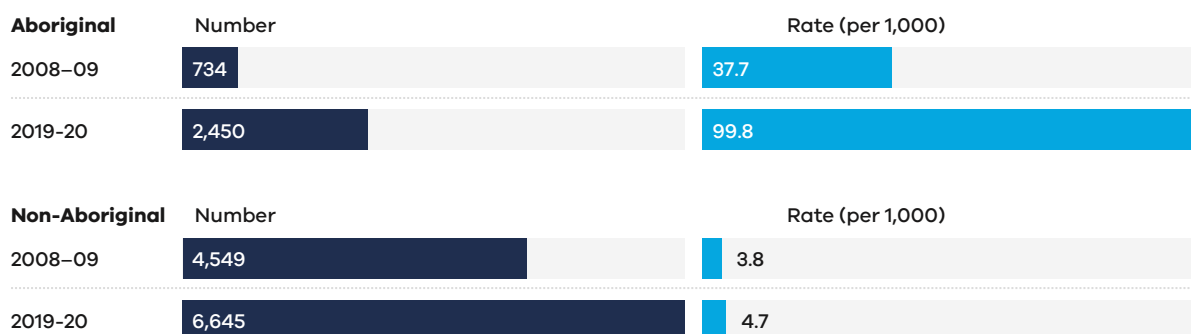
Measure 2.1.1 Rate and number of children and young people in care

The number of Aboriginal children and young people in care increased from 734 in 2008-09 to 2,450 in 2019-20⁵. At 30 June 2020, Victoria had a rate of 99.8 per 1,000 Aboriginal children in care compared to the rate of non-Aboriginal children in care of 4.7 per 1,000.

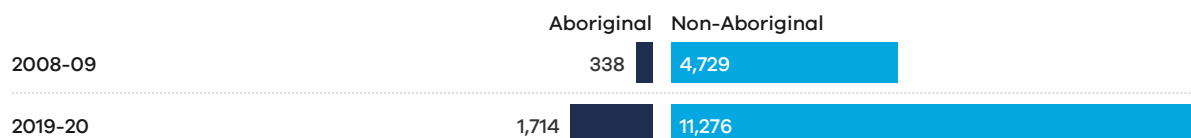
Measure: 2.1.2 Number of families engaged with family support and intensive family support services

The number of Aboriginal children engaged with family support and intensive family support services increased significantly from 338 in 2008-09 to 1,714 in 2019-20. A similar trend was observed for the non-Aboriginal cohort during the same time period.

Number and rate of children in care



Number of children engaged with family support and intensive family support services



³ Care services was previously referred to as 'out-of-home care'.

⁴ From 2018-19, the scope of out-of-home care has changed. Please see box 16.1 and sub-section 16.4 of Report on Government Services 2021, Productivity Commission, for further details.

⁵ The national definition of 'out-of-home care' changed in 2018-19 (see RoGS Box 16.1 Change in the scope of out-of-home care) so it is not possible to make direct comparisons to 2008-09.

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

Measure 2.2.1 Number and proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in care placed with i) relatives/kin and ii) other Aboriginal carers

In 2019-20, 79.3 per cent of Aboriginal children were placed either with relatives/kin or other Aboriginal carers. This is a significant improvement from 57.7 per cent in 2008-09.

Measure 2.2.2 Number and proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in care with a Cultural Plan

It is a requirement that a Cultural Plan for children in care is approved within 19 weeks of entering care. At 30 June 2019, 53.3 per cent of Aboriginal children in care for longer than 19 weeks had an approved Cultural Plan⁶. A new model for cultural planning was implemented in 2017, at which point all existing plans were deemed non-compliant. The increase from a zero base to 53.3 per cent is encouraging, but there remain many Aboriginal children in care without a Cultural Plan.

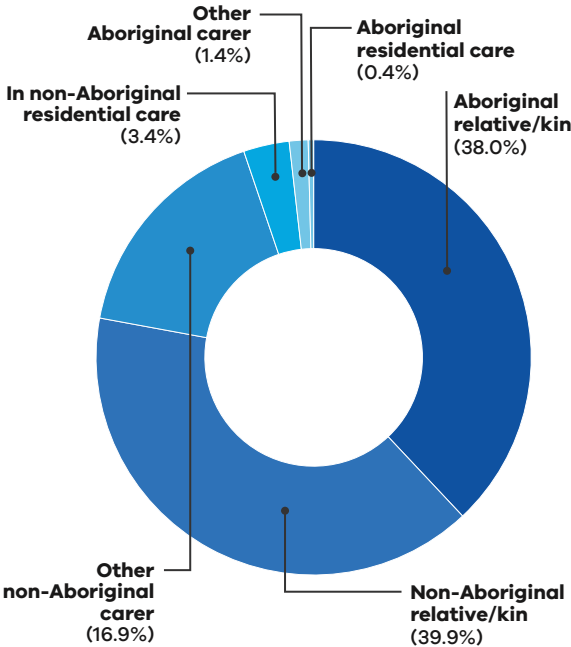
Measure 2.2.3 Number and proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in care on contractible orders managed by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)

In 2019-20, 43 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people in care on contractible orders were managed by ACCOs, compared to only 8.7 per cent in 2015-16.

Measure 2.2.4 Number and proportion of Aboriginal children and young people on protection orders under the direct authority of an ACCO (Section 18)⁷

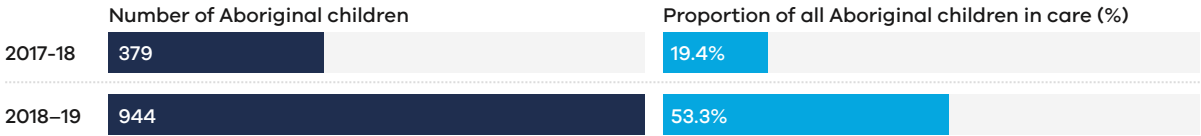
In 2019-20, 5.7 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people on protection orders were under the direct authority of an ACCO (Section 18) compared to 1.6 per cent in 2017-18.

Aboriginal children in care by placement type, 2019-20

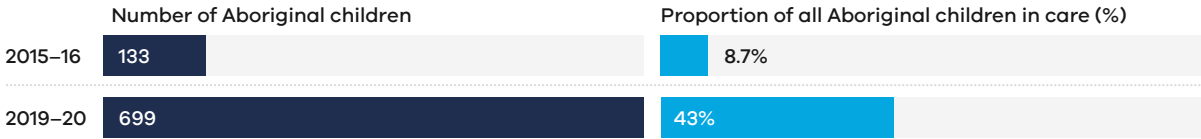


Excludes 8 Aboriginal young people who were living independently or unknown.

Aboriginal children and young people in care with a Cultural Plan



Aboriginal children and young people in care on contractible orders managed by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)



⁶ Data extracted on 1 May 2020.

⁷ The data for Aboriginal children under ACAC (Section 18) is inclusive of children on Family Preservation Orders.

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

Measure 2.3.1 Number of children and young people reunified with parent(s) within 12 months of admission to care as a proportion of all Aboriginal children and young people admitted to care

In 2018-19, 47.5 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people were reunified with parent(s) within 12 months of admission to care. The rate is lower than the 2008-09 level when the corresponding rate was 57.6 per cent⁸.

Measure 2.3.2 Number of Aboriginal children and young people who exit care and do not return to care within 12 months as a proportion of all Aboriginal children and young people who exit care

In 2018-19, 69.5 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people who exited care did not return to care within 12 months. This is a significant negative outcome as the corresponding rate in 2008-09 was 80.6 per cent.

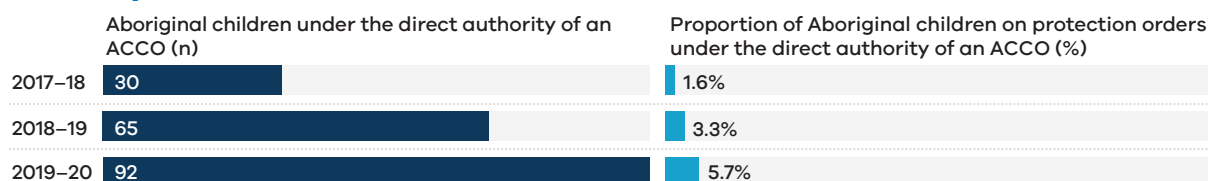
Case study – Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care

Self-determination underpins the government's commitment to the transfer of case management of Aboriginal children on protection orders to ACCOs. The two initiatives that contribute to that goal are:

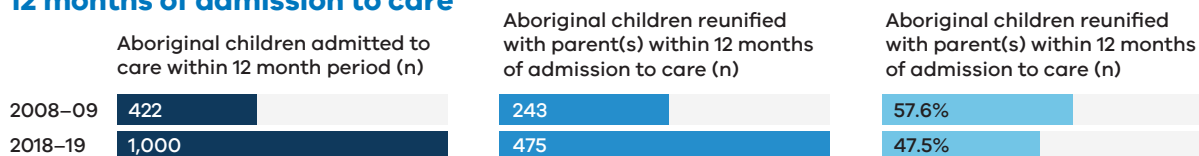
- Transitioning Aboriginal children to ACCOs: This involves the department contracting case-management of Aboriginal children in care to ACCOs.
- Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC): This involves an approved Aboriginal agency being authorised to take on responsibility for an Aboriginal child's case management and case plan while they are on a protection order.

Under ACAC, authorised Aboriginal agencies actively work with the child's family, community and other professionals to develop and implement the child's case plan in a way that is culturally safe and in the best interests of the child.

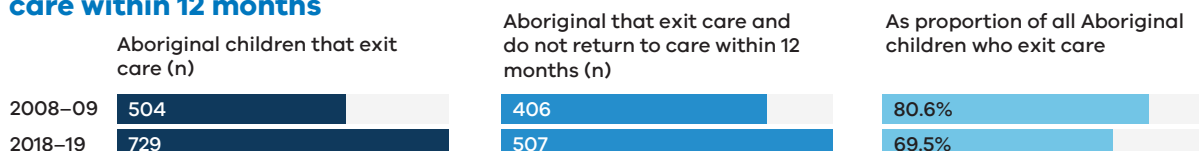
Aboriginal children and young people on protection orders under the direct authority of an ACCO (Section 18)



Proportion of Aboriginal children and young people reunified with parent(s) within 12 months of admission to care



Aboriginal children and young people who exit care and do not return to care within 12 months



⁸ Non-Aboriginal data available in data tables and online dashboard.

Goal 3: Aboriginal families and households thrive



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

In all cohorts, including Aboriginal communities, women experience family violence at higher rates than men. Aboriginal women face unique barriers to reporting family violence, including a mistrust of government, the legal system and mainstream service systems, as well as discriminatory practices within police and child protection services⁹.

Significant reforms and funding for the prevention of family violence since 2016 have resulted in a rise in family violence reporting across Victoria within both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. While an increase in reporting does not necessarily indicate increased experience of family violence, it does illustrate the magnitude of the issue while continuing to highlight the disproportionate rate of family violence experienced by Aboriginal Victorians.

The Victorian Government continues to fund the prevention of family violence in Victoria, including providing \$18.2 million for over 45 Aboriginal-led initiatives and services through the Dhelk Dja Family Violence funding pool. The pool enables Aboriginal organisations to deliver culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal victim survivors and people who use violence.

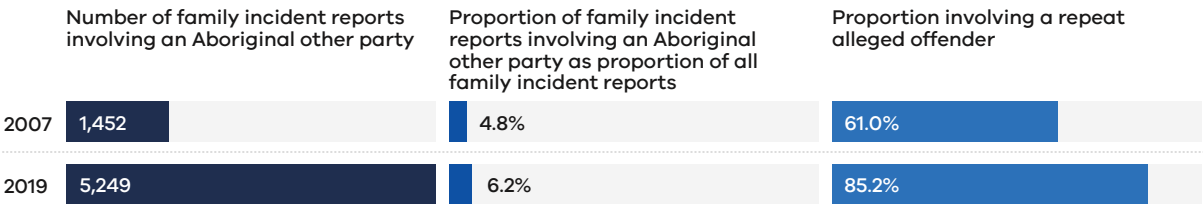
Measure 3.1.1 Number and proportion of family incident reports involving an Aboriginal other party¹⁰; and proportion of those who were the subject of a previous family incident report

Since 2007, reporting on the number of family violence incidents by an Aboriginal other party increased steadily. In 2019, 5,249 family violence incidents by an Aboriginal other party were reported and of these, 85.2 per cent were repeat offences.

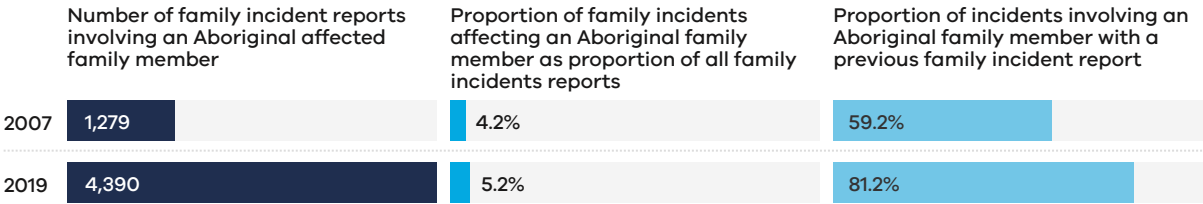
Measure 3.1.2 Number and proportion of family incident reports involving an Aboriginal affected family member¹¹; and proportion of those who were the subject of a previous family incident report

4,390 family violence incidences were reported against an Aboriginal affected family member in 2019, which represents 5.2 per cent of all family violence incidents.

Family violence incidents by an Aboriginal other party



Family violence incidents against an Aboriginal family member



⁹ Braybrook, Antoinette. Family violence in Aboriginal communities [online]. DVRCV Advocate, No. 2, Spring/Summer 2015: 18-21. Available at: <https://www.thelookout.org.au/sites/default/files/Family-violence-in-Aboriginal-communities-FVPLS.pdf>.
¹⁰ The alleged perpetrator involved in a family incident is referred to as the 'other party'. The other party could be a current partner, former partner or a family member.
¹¹ An 'affected family member' is the alleged victim; the individual who is deemed to be affected by events occurring during a family incident.

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

Measure 3.1.3 Number and proportion of notifications to child protection for children and young people where family violence is identified

In 2018–19, 5,028 reports to child protection were recorded for Aboriginal children and young people where family violence was identified. The corresponding figure was only 133 in 2008–09. It should be noted that in 2010–11, enhancements to the child protection Client Relationship Information System saw a new field added to capture family violence as an area of concern at the report stage. Since then, the rate of notification to child protection for children where family violence is identified has considerably increased for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children.

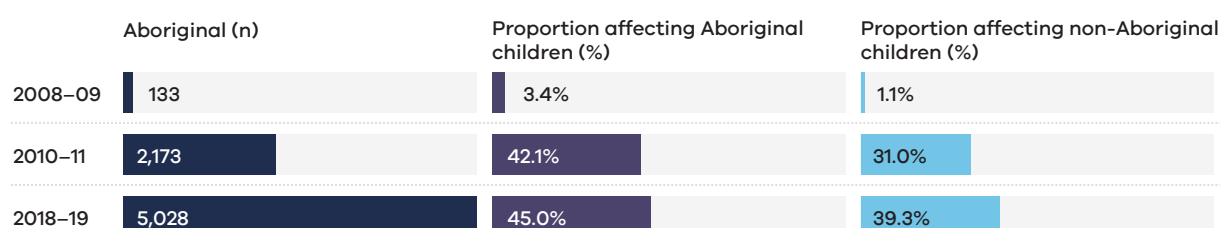
In response, government has worked with the VACCA to develop the Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification Response (the Response) – an innovative approach to delivering relational, evidence-informed and coordinated support to vulnerable children and families through a strengthened partnership with child protection. Aboriginal cultural elements have been developed by the VACCA and co-designed with ACCOs for implementation by all Response practitioners to advance Aboriginal self-determination and support cultural healing.

Case study – Koori Women’s Place

Koori Women’s Place was established in 2017 and sits within Djirra, an ACCO that provides support for Aboriginal people experiencing family violence. Koori Women’s Place responds to the significant and unique barriers that Aboriginal women face in accessing services and support for family violence. It is a welcoming, culturally safe physical drop-in space where Aboriginal women know that their identity will not be questioned, culture will be respected, and the traumatic history of colonisation will be understood and shared.

For women who have experienced, are experiencing or are at risk of family violence, Koori Women’s Place integrates cultural, social and emotional wellbeing activities alongside a range of other support services. Aboriginal women can drop in for a yarn, attend cultural workshops (e.g. to create possum skin cloaks), have direct access to Djirra’s legal and non-legal services such as counselling and case management, access visiting mainstream services and receive practical and ongoing support. Since opening, hundreds of Aboriginal women from across Victoria have connected with Koori Women’s Place.

Child protection notification where family violence is identified



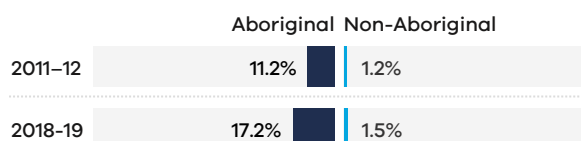
3.2 Increase income and housing security for Aboriginal households

A stable home and a culturally safe and responsive housing and homelessness system is fundamental to achieving equity in housing outcomes. Across 2019-2020, progress has been made towards this aim, including through the Victorian Government's support for Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort, the landmark Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework, developed by Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) and community housing partners.

Measure 3.2.4 Proportion of Victorians accessing homelessness services

In 2018-2019, 9,837 Aboriginal Victorians accessed homelessness services, which equates to 17.2 per cent of the Victorian Aboriginal population. This rate is 11.6 times higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal Victorians, and well above the national rate of 9.8 per cent.

Proportion of Victorians accessing homelessness services



Case study: Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework

In February 2020, Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort (Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home) Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework was launched. Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort is the first statewide housing policy to be developed by and for Aboriginal people in any Australian jurisdiction.

The Framework was developed through a community-led process with Aboriginal Housing Victoria in conjunction with other key Aboriginal community stakeholders. It makes housing central in the work to support Aboriginal people to thrive through self-determination.

The Framework's key actions include: building the housing supply needed for a fast-growing population; opening doors to the autonomy of living in the private market; and stimulating Aboriginal home ownership. It involves creating a homeless support system that understands Aboriginal people and responds to their needs. The Framework builds capacity in the Aboriginal and mainstream systems to make homelessness the exception and home ownership the norm.

The Framework is backed by major investments. In May 2020, the Victorian Government committed \$35 million for property maintenance for Aboriginal Victorians. In November 2020, it announced that 10 per cent of new social housing (around 1,200 homes) is earmarked for the Aboriginal community.

Victorian Government Action

The Victorian Government is partnering with Aboriginal community stakeholders and organisations to drive improved outcomes for children and families.

Family Violence

Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong People, Strong Families 2018-2028 is driving reforms to develop and implement preventative and culturally safe responses to family violence. *Dhelk Dja's* five strategic priorities are: Aboriginal culture and leadership; Aboriginal-led prevention; self-determining Aboriginal family violence support and services; system transformation based on self-determination principles; and Aboriginal-led and informed innovation, data and research.

***Dhelk Dja's* key actions and investments in 2020 include:**

- An **\$18.2 million** Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund has been established over two years as a flexible pool of funding streams for eligible Aboriginal community groups to enable a range of Aboriginal-led tailored responses for victims, survivors and people who use violence.
- A Concept Model for Aboriginal Access Points has been endorsed by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, supporting the design and establishment of Aboriginal Access Points to the family violence system, alongside The Orange Door network.
- The Dhelk Dja Monitoring Evaluation and Accountability Plan has been endorsed to support the monitoring and evaluation of Aboriginal-led family violence initiatives against the Dhelk Dja Agreement using Aboriginal defined measures of success.
- The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme continues to be implemented by Family Safety Victoria.
- Perpetrator focussed Risk Identification and Assessment tools and the perpetrator focussed practice guides have been developed, in collaboration with Curtin University.
- An Aboriginal Data Mapping and Data Needs project has commenced to improve understanding of Aboriginal family violence and build evidence for effective prevention and intervention.

Children and family services

Wungurilwil Gagapduir: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement is overseen by the Aboriginal Children's Forum, and drives reforms to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people, including efforts to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care services by strengthening their connection to culture, Country and community.

***Wungurilwil Gagapduir* key actions and investments in 2020 include:**

- **\$46.2 million** in 2020-21 to increase capacity of the child and family services sector to provide support to children and families during the coronavirus pandemic. This includes funding for the delivery of the Response.
- Development of the Victorian Family Preservation and Reunification Response and Aboriginal Family Preservation and the Response. As discussed on page 38, Aboriginal cultural elements have been developed by the VACCA and co-designed with ACCOs for implementation by all Response practitioners to advance Aboriginal self-determination and support cultural healing.
- Continuation of ACAC and Transitioning Aboriginal Children to Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations initiatives. As at June 2020, approximately 50 per cent of Aboriginal children in care on contractable orders were under the care and case management of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (801 children).

Housing

Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort: Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework is overseen by a working group that includes government, Aboriginal Housing Victoria and other Aboriginal community-controlled housing providers.

Mana-na worn-tyeen maar-takoort key actions and investments in 2020/21 include:

- **10 per cent** of new social housing in the Victorian Government's **\$5.3 billion** Big Housing Build allocated for Aboriginal Victorians, delivering a minimum of 820 dwellings.
- **\$35 million** to maintain and deliver property upgrades to more than 2000 long-term social housing properties owned and managed by ACCOs.
- **\$4.2 million** for the Private Rental Assistance Program to assist Aboriginal Victorians access private rentals.
- **\$300,000** for a feasibility study into an Aboriginal specific homelessness access point.
- **\$450,000** to support the extension of Aboriginal Housing Victoria's More Than a Landlord program which provides social supports for tenants.
- **\$1.06 million** for ACCOs to provide outreach support to social housing tenants.
- **\$440,000** for additional homelessness support workers in ACCOs to support increased demand due to coronavirus.

Domain 2: Learning & skills



Our shared commitment:

Every Aboriginal person achieves their potential, succeeds in life, and feels strong in their cultural identity.

A quality education includes a place of learning that is responsive, welcoming and supportive. Creating culturally inclusive learning environments is vital to ensuring Aboriginal students feel safe and supported to achieve their learning aspirations.





Aa	Bb	Cc	Dd	Ee	Ff
Gg	Hh	Ii	Jj	Kk	Ll
Mm	Nn	Oo	Pp	Qq	Rr
Ss	Tt	Uu	Vv	Ww	Xx

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12

Our Masterpieces

Goal 4: Aboriginal children thrive in the early years



4.1 Optimise early childhood development and participation in kinder

A quality education includes a place of learning that is responsive, welcoming and supportive. Creating culturally inclusive learning environments is vital to ensuring Aboriginal students feel safe and supported to achieve their learning aspirations.

Early childhood learning provides an important foundation for future learning and development. The strong enrolment rates for Victorian Aboriginal children in three- and four-year-old kindergarten is expected to have a positive flow on effect when these cohorts reach school.

Measure 4.1.1 Number and proportion of eligible children enrolled in a funded four-year-old kindergarten program in the year before school

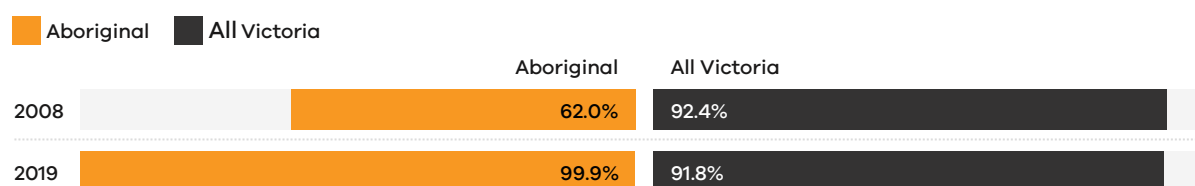
Providing culturally responsive, targeted assistance in the early years has seen Aboriginal kindergarten participation increase significantly in recent years. In 2019, 99.9 per cent of Aboriginal four-year-old children were enrolled in a funded kindergarten.

While the increased enrolment of Aboriginal children in early childhood education is significant, the Victorian Government is also working to increase the attendance of Aboriginal children at their early childhood education service through increasing the inclusivity and quality of early childhood education services, in line with key priorities in Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2023 to ensure early childhood education is inclusive and culturally safe, enabling Aboriginal children to meaningfully participate.

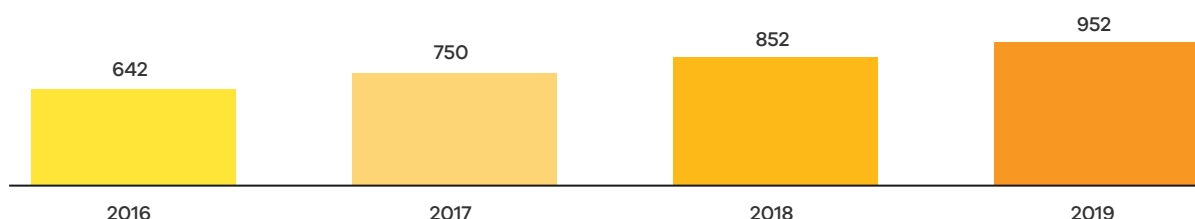
Measure 4.1.2 Number of children funded to participate in Early Start Kindergarten

The number of Aboriginal children participating in the Early Start Kindergarten¹² program steadily increased from 642 in 2016, to 952 in 2019. The proportion of Aboriginal children aged four years participating also increased across this period from 44.6 per cent in 2016 to 66.1 per cent in 2019.¹³

Proportion of eligible children enrolled in a four-year-old kindergarten program



Aboriginal children enrolment in Early Start Kindergarten program



¹² Early Start Kindergarten gives Aboriginal children 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week for two years before starting school.

¹³ Note: No 'all children' comparison rate or number is available for this data series as only Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and children known to Child Protection are funded to participate in Early Start Kindergarten or Access to Early Learning programs.

Goal 5: Aboriginal learners excel at school



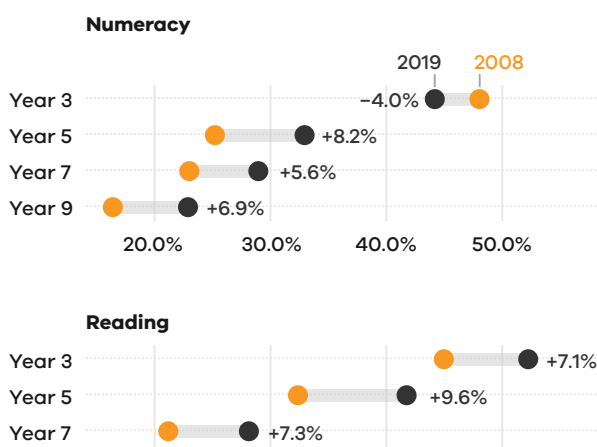
5.1 Bring Aboriginal achievement at school in line with learners' aspirations

An increase in the number of Aboriginal learners achieving scores in the top three bands for NAPLAN testing shows significant growth in literacy and numeracy skills across most school years. However, lower rates of feeling connected to their school, as well as lower attendance rates, remain significant challenges. This highlights the need for schools to be culturally safe and engaging places for Aboriginal learners to enable learners to reach their full potential – this includes Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home-care, who will be supported by ACCOs in their education endeavours under the transfer of guardianship from government to Aboriginal organisations.

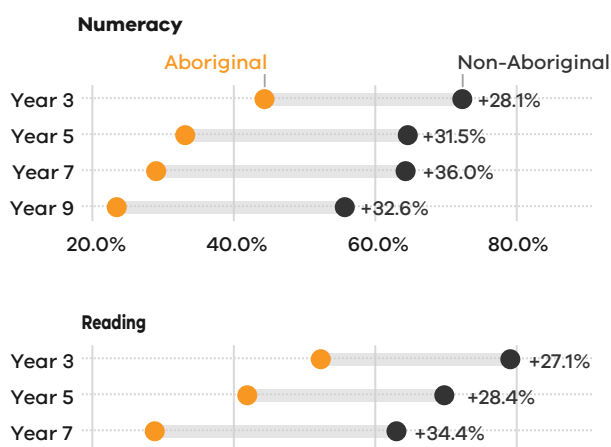
Measure 5.1.1 Percentage of students in top three bands – Reading and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9

The percentage of Aboriginal students in the top three bands for NAPLAN Reading increased between 2008 and 2019 for all years (3, 5, 7 and 9), with the largest increase (9.6 per cent) in Year 5 Reading. The percentage of Aboriginal students in the top three bands in NAPLAN Numeracy increased across Years 5, 7, and 9, and rates decreased for Year 3.

Percentage of Aboriginal students in top three bands for NAPLAN, 2008 and 2019



Percentage of students in top three bands for NAPLAN, 2019



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

Measure 5.2.1 Proportion of students who feel connected to their school

There is significant variation across school years, with students reporting much higher levels of connectedness in primary school, which then decreases substantially by Years 10 to 12. This is the same trend for non-Aboriginal students.

Measure 5.2.2 Student attendance rates in government schools

From 2014 to 2019, Aboriginal students' school attendance rates decreased across all years of schooling¹⁴. While school attendance rates during this time is higher in the early years in primary school, attendance drops significantly from Year 7 to Year 8, inferring more support is needed to help Aboriginal students transition to high school. In 2019, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students school attendance remained significant, with an average gap of 6.6 per cent across all school years.

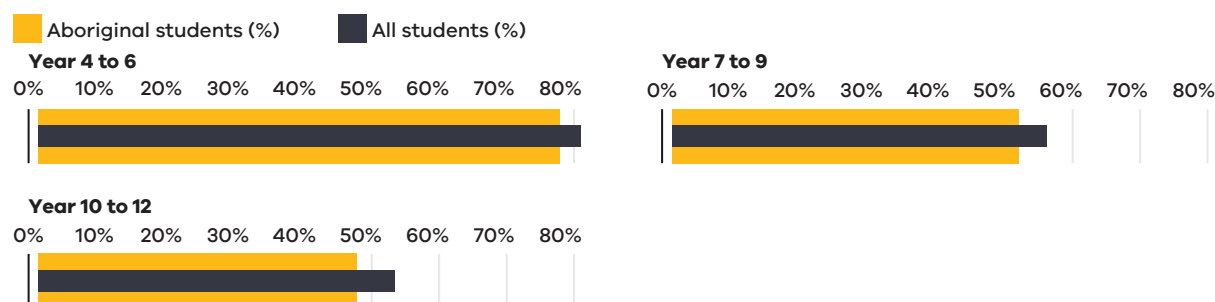
Measure 5.2.3 Number of Aboriginal people on school councils

The number of Aboriginal people on school councils increased substantially from 164 in 2018 to 374 in 2019, across 114 schools.

Number of Aboriginal people on school councils



Proportion of students who feel connected to their school, 2019



Student attendance rate in government schools, 2014 and 2019

Aboriginal (%)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 5	Year 4	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
2014	88.6%	89.4%	89.0%	89.5%	88.1%	87.8%	84.6%	82.1%	81.4%	80.4%
2019	87.5%	88.9%	88.1%	88.1%	87.9%	86.4%	84.5%	80.1%	78.9%	80.6%
Non-Aboriginal (%)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 5	Year 3	Year 6	Year 4	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
2014	93.1%	93.4%	93.5%	93.4%	93.3%	93.2%	92.7%	91.0%	89.9%	89.9%
2019	92.4%	92.5%	92.9%	92.7%	92.7%	92.3%	92.4%	90.2%	89.2%	89.4%

¹⁴ We identified a mistake in last year's reported figures for measure 5.2.2 Student attendance rates in government schools. This has been corrected in this report.

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

Measure 5.2.4 Proportion of students who report bullying at school

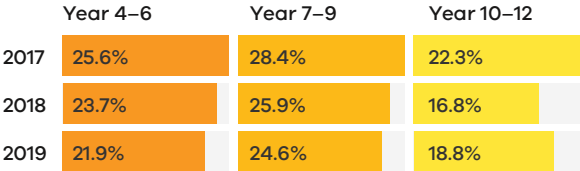
In 2019, Aboriginal students in all school year levels reported experiencing higher rates of bullying than their non-Aboriginal peers. Notably, around a quarter of Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 9 reported having been bullied.

Measure 5.2.6 Number of schools teaching an Aboriginal language

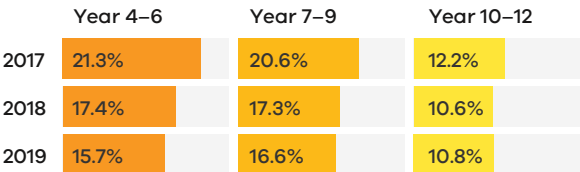
The number of schools teaching an Aboriginal language has grown significantly over the past decade, from one in 2010 to 17 in 2019.

Proportion of students who report experiencing bullying at school

Aboriginal students (%)



Non-Aboriginal students (%)

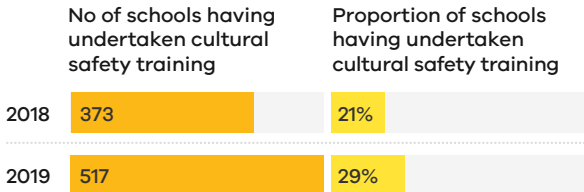


Measure 5.2.7 Number of government schools having undertaken Cultural Understanding and Safety Training

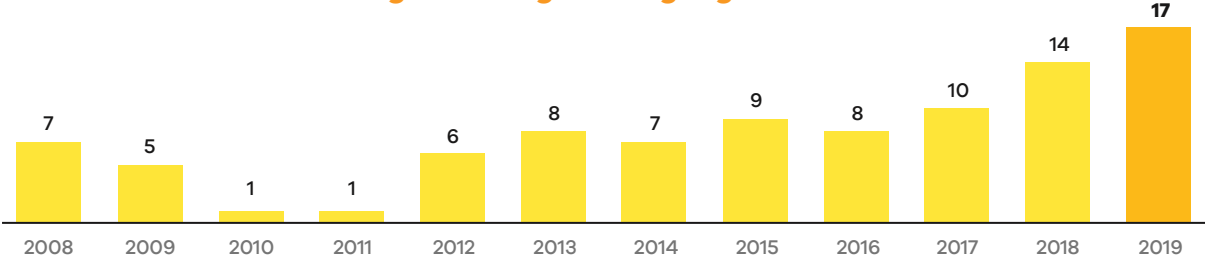
In 2019, 29 per cent of all Victorian Government schools (i.e. school staff and/or council members) had undertaken Cultural Understanding and Safety Training¹⁵ (CUST). There was a sharp increase from 373 in 2018 to 517 in 2019.

CUST builds the capacity of Victorian Government school staff to better support Aboriginal learners, including through developing more culturally inclusive practices. Programs such as CUST are an important first step to ensure that schools provide a safe and welcoming learning environment, to improve attendance for Aboriginal students.

Cultural safety training in government schools



Number of schools teaching an Aboriginal language



15 From 2021, CUST will be renamed to Community Understanding and Safety Training.

Goal 6: Aboriginal learners are engaged at school



6.1 Increase Year 12 or equivalent attainment

More Aboriginal young people than ever before are completing a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, highlighting the importance of ongoing work to support student engagement, particularly through key transition periods.

Measure 6.1.2 Apparent retention rates for students in Years 10 to 12

While more Aboriginal young people are completing Year 12, there continues to be disparity in apparent retention rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners. While the gap narrowed overall from 26.2 per cent to 19.4 per cent between 2010 and 2019, it has been expanding again since 2015.

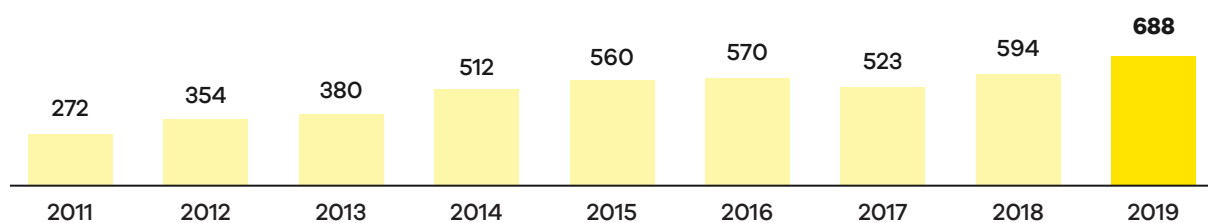
Measure 6.1.3 Number of Aboriginal students who complete the VCE, VCAL or VET in Schools Certificate

More Aboriginal students are completing a Year 12 or equivalent qualification than ever before. The number of Aboriginal students who completed a VCE, VCAL or VET Schools Certificate more than doubled between 2011 and 2019, including a sharp increase of 13 per cent from 2018 to 2019.

Student attendance rates in government schools, 2019



Number of Aboriginal students who complete the VCE, VCAL or VET in Schools Certificate



Goal 7: School leavers achieve their potential



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

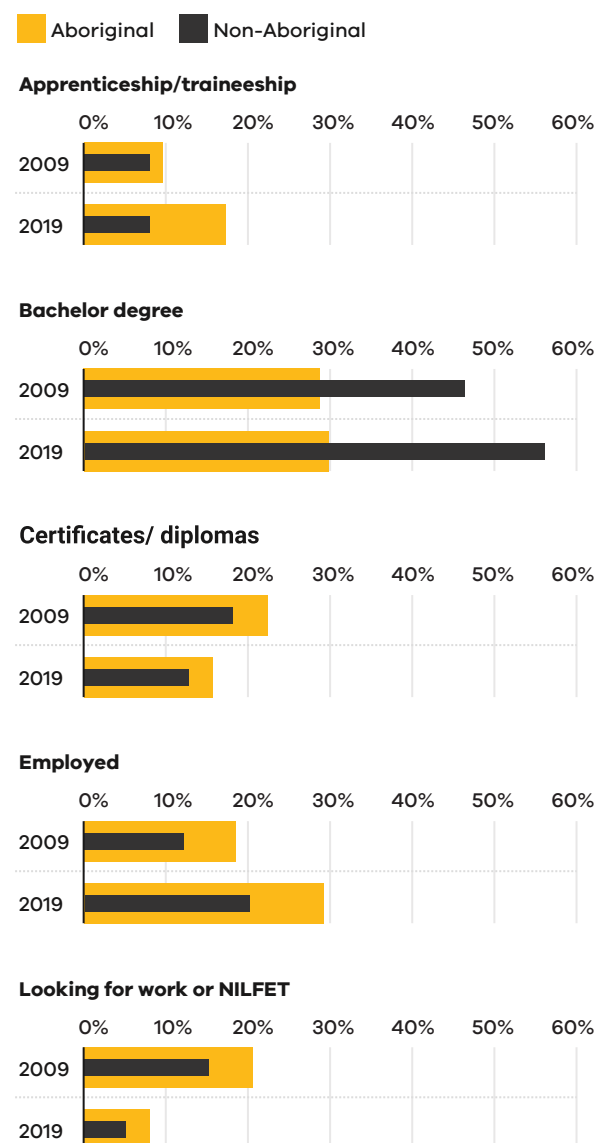
The number of school leavers who go on to work, further education or training has grown significantly over the past decade, indicating that more Aboriginal school leavers than ever before are participating in further study, training and work.

Measure 7.1.1 Destinations of Year 12 completers

The proportion of Aboriginal young people engaged in education, training or employment has grown significantly across the last decade. According to the Department of Education and Training's (DET) On-Track survey, in 2019, Aboriginal Year 12 completers were more likely to go on to do a Bachelor degree, apprenticeship or traineeship or be employed, and were less likely to be looking for work than they were in 2009.

Of the 62.8 per cent of Aboriginal Year 12 completers surveyed in 2019 that went on to further education and training, 29.8 per cent undertook a Bachelor degree at University, 15.7 per cent a diploma, and 17.3 per cent an apprenticeship. Of the 37.2 per cent who were not in education or training, the majority were employed.

Destinations of Year 12 completers, 2009 and 2019



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

While it is encouraging to see more Aboriginal 18-24 year olds enrolled in VET programs in 2019, historically, the completion rate has been lower compared to non-Aboriginal Victorians. In particular, in 2019, completion rates (as a proportion of 18-24 year old population) dropped to 0.8 per cent from 1.1 percent in 2015 for the Aboriginal cohort who enrolled for VET studies at universities.

Measure 7.1.3 Tertiary education participation and completion:

7.1.3a: VET participation rate

7.1.3c: VET course completion rate

7.1.3b: University participation rate¹⁶

7.1.3d: University course completion rate¹⁷

The number and rate of Aboriginal students undertaking university studies increased significantly in recent times. In 2019, 2,450 Aboriginal students were enrolled in universities compared to 1,150 in 2009. During the same period, the award course attainment rate of Aboriginal students also improved - from 0.38 per cent in 2009 to 0.69 per cent in 2019.

In 2019, 5,716 Aboriginal Victorians aged 18-24 years took part in VET studies delivered by both non-university and university providers. Since 2015, this represents a 46.7 per cent increase in VET participation for Aboriginal Victorians aged 18-24 years. In contrast, non-Aboriginal participation in VET decreased by 28.3 per cent across the same period.

Participation and completion of Victorian 18-24 year olds in VET studies delivered by Non-university providers*

	Enrolments (n)	Completions (n)	Proportion of enrolled who completed VET studies (%)	Enrolments as a proportion of 18-24 year old population (%)	Completions as a proportion of 18-24 year old population (%)
Aboriginal					
2015	3,707	738	19.9%	47.1%	9.4%
2019	5,422	727	13.4%	64.8%	8.7%
Non-Aboriginal					
2015	186,485	51,898	27.8%	31.8%	8.9%
2019	126,678	35,050	27.7%	19.6%	5.4%

*Non-university providers includes TAFE institutes, Community education providers, Enterprise providers and private training providers. Schools are excluded.

Participation and completion of Victorian 18-24 year olds in VET studies delivered by Universities

	Enrolments (n)	Completions (n)	Proportion of enrolled who completed VET studies (%)	Enrolments as a proportion of 18-24 year old population (%)	Completions as a proportion of 18-24 year old population (%)
Aboriginal					
2015	189	87	46%	2.4%	1.1%
2019	294	69	23.5%	3.5%	0.8%
Non-Aboriginal					
2015	20,558	6,532	31.8%	3.5%	1.1%
2019	21,688	5,895	27.2%	3.4%	0.9%

*Non-university providers includes TAFE institutes, Community education providers, Enterprise providers and private training providers. Schools are excluded.

¹⁶ The reported figures in the last year's report was not correct, and they have been amended in this report.

¹⁷ As above.

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

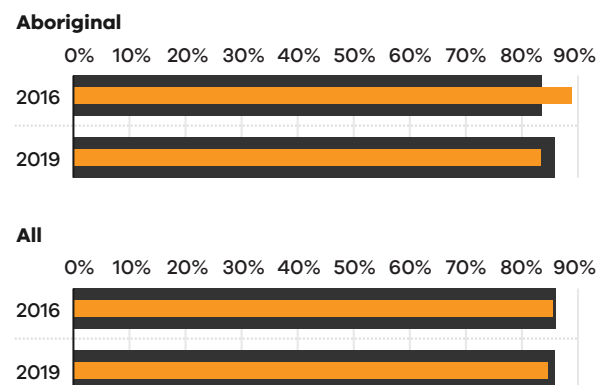
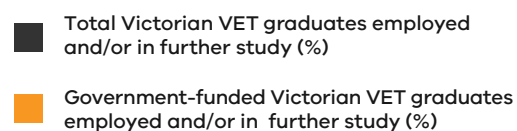
Measure 7.1.5 Proportion of 20–64 year old government-funded and total VET graduates employed and/or in further study after training

In 2019, after completing training, 85.9 per cent of all Aboriginal VET graduates were employed and/or pursuing further study. This is a small increase from 2018 and now on par with non-Aboriginal VET graduates.

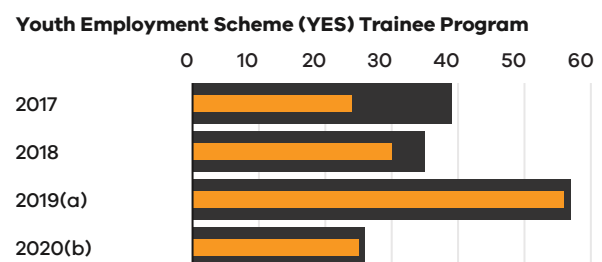
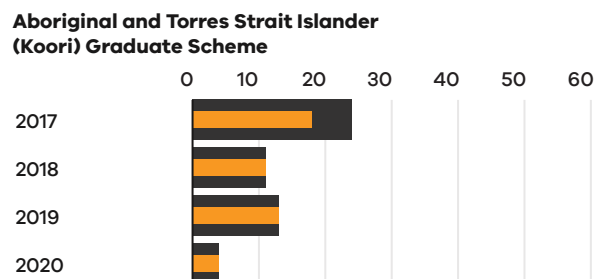
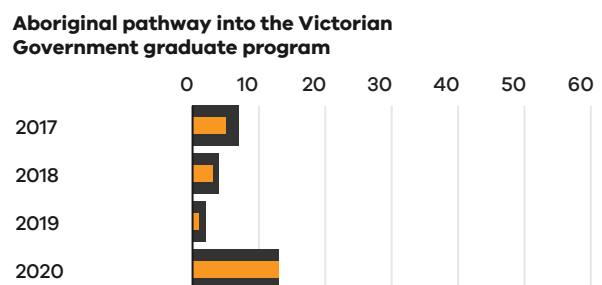
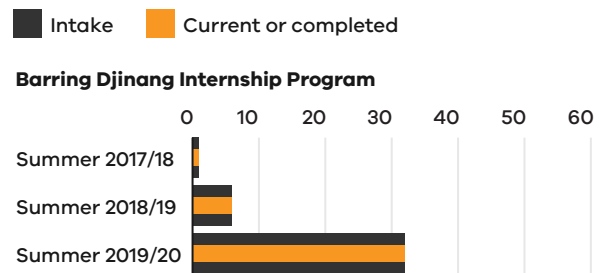
Measure 7.1.6 Proportion of graduates and cadets employed in VPS; retention, progression and satisfaction

The VPS provides a key employment pathway for Aboriginal Victorians. Between 2017 and June 2020, 235 Aboriginal Victorians were employed in the VPS as graduates or cadets. Of these, 203 (86.4 per cent) have either completed or are on track to complete their respective employment program.

Proportion of 20–64 year old government-funded and total VET graduates employed and/or in further study after training



Number of graduates and cadets employed in VPS



(a) Excludes 10 participants from the school based traineeship program with Victoria Police.
 (b) As at 30 June 2020.



Case Study: The Aunty Mary Atkinson Scholarship Program

DJPR has partnered with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) to develop and deliver the Aunty Mary Atkinson Scholarship Program. Aunty Mary Atkinson was a Wiradjuri and Bangerang Elder, whose tenacity and integrity made her an inspirational leader. She dedicated her life to the pursuit of equality for Aboriginal people, particularly in the area of education, which she saw as fundamental to changing lives for the better.

The Program, which was offered for the first time in 2020, offers financial support for Aboriginal students to undertake full-time study in a broad range of fields related to the portfolio areas of the Department. DJPR will award up to eight scholarships at any one time of \$30,000 annually for up to four years to support both undergraduate and postgraduate students. The Program aligns with the Department's Aboriginal Recruitment and Career Development Strategy 2020-23 and its commitment to supporting successful career pathways for Aboriginal people.

Victorian Government action

The Victorian Government is driving action through *Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026* (Marrung) to ensure that all Aboriginal Victorians achieve their learning aspirations. Marrung's success relies on the active involvement of local Aboriginal communities and education services providing culturally safe learning environments. Marrung has been developed with and continues to be governed by key Aboriginal community partners, including VAEAI.

The commitment to Marrung is reflected in the significant recent investments of over **\$35.6 million** over six years and **\$4.8 million** ongoing through the last five State Budgets for Aboriginal-specific supports.

Early childhood

Key actions and investment in 2020 include:

- Continuing to support Aboriginal children to attend kindergarten through providing three and four-year-old children with 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week.
- Supporting 17 early childhood services to deliver an Aboriginal language in 2020 as part of the Early Childhood Language Program. In partnership with VAEAI, the Department continues to support a further five early childhood services to establish their Aboriginal language program.
- **\$1.2 million** for an additional seven FTE Koorie Pre-school Assistants from 2021.

Schools

Key actions and investment in 2020 include:

- **\$5.0 million** in the 2021/22 Budget for an additional 16 Koorie Engagement Support Officers.
- **\$1.2 million** in the 2018/19 Budget to support online resources and professional development for teachers of Koorie English speakers and a Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Professional Practice Leader.
- **\$7.9 million** from the 2016/17 to 2020/21 State Budgets and **\$1.3 million** ongoing for the Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program to support Aboriginal students not meeting expected benchmarks in literacy or numeracy.
- **\$2.7 million** over four years and **\$1.2 million** ongoing in the 2016/17 Budget for Cultural Understanding and Safety Training for all government school staff.
- Aboriginal students will also have access to the **\$250 million** Tutor Learning package, that will see 4,100 tutors being deployed to ensure students that may have fallen behind are supported to catch up.

Tertiary

Key actions and investment in 2020 include:

- Free TAFE for priority courses will expand Aboriginal Victorians' access to training and employment opportunities. The initiative covers tuition fees for eligible students undertaking priority courses, including 45 non-apprenticeship courses and 18 apprenticeship pathway courses.
- Development of options to support Aboriginal learners to engage and participate successfully in VET, including through the redesign of the existing Aboriginal VET workforce. Ongoing support of 18 Koorie Liaison Officers in TAFE and Dual sector institutes and establishment of 32 newly created Koorie Students Support Officers from 2021.
- Improving support for Aboriginal learners undertaking further education and training through **\$1.7 million** to apply an Aboriginal-specific loading to support pre-accredited learners.

Domain 3: Opportunity & Prosperity



Our shared commitment:

Building opportunity and economic prosperity for all Aboriginal Victorians.

Fully participating in the economy provides Aboriginal Victorians with the resources they need to self-determine their future. The Victorian Government is committed to supporting Aboriginal Victorian workers, employers and businesses to thrive, including supporting them to recover from the financial impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. As part of government's efforts, fostering inclusive economic growth is key.

This means stimulating work and additional economic development and business opportunities for Aboriginal young people, women, people living with disability and those in regional areas, and ensuring Aboriginal Victorians are represented at all levels, across all sectors and in all pursuits.





Goal 8: Aboriginal workers achieve wealth equality



8.3 Increase Aboriginal business ownership and support Aboriginal entrepreneurs

Measure 8.3.2 Aboriginal businesses that government enters into a purchase agreement with as a proportion of small to medium enterprises

The number of Aboriginal businesses that the Victorian Government entered into a purchase agreement with increased by 35 per cent in the past 12 months, from 94 in 2018-19 to 127 in 2019-20. During the same period, total procurement value with Aboriginal businesses increased by 176 per cent, from \$16.7 million to \$46.1 million.



The Social Procurement Framework (SPF)

The Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) has led development and implementation of the Social Procurement Framework (SPF). The SPF embraces self-determination by providing a platform for government to engage with Aboriginal businesses thereby promoting access to economic opportunities that may not ordinarily occur for these businesses. In 2019-20 the major road and rail projects (delivered by the Level Crossing Removal Project, Major Road Projects Victoria, North East Link Project, Rail Projects Victoria and the West Gate Tunnel Project) indirectly spent through their contractors \$58.3 million with Victorian Aboriginal businesses and organisations.



Aboriginal businesses that government enters into a purchase agreement with



*Includes Victorian Aboriginal businesses, Traditional Owner Groups, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisations and Aboriginal Trusts.

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

9.1 Increase Aboriginal workforce participation

Measure 9.1.3 Aboriginal jobseekers supported into work

Under the Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) program, the Victorian Government funds several training and employment linkage programs to support Aboriginal jobseekers. In 2019, 303 Aboriginal jobseekers secured JVEN placements compared to 230 in 2018. This equates to an increase of 24.1 per cent from 2018.

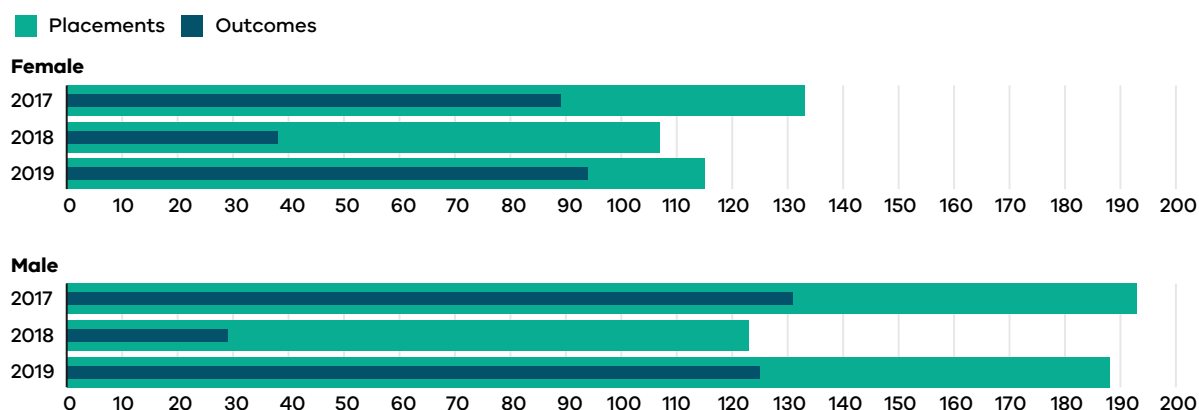


Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) – Aboriginal Employment

The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) has established formal partnerships with several Aboriginal organisations to deliver employment support to Aboriginal jobseekers. Where a local area does not have an Aboriginal organisation available, non-Aboriginal organisations often employ Aboriginal employees to ensure services are culturally appropriate and delivered by those with lived experience of potential barriers. These partnerships and roles enable organisations to reduce structural and systemic barriers experienced by Aboriginal jobseekers in the Victorian labour market.

The next iteration of the JVEN will include extensive consultation with Aboriginal communities to inform the Victorian employment support services required for Aboriginal jobseekers in a labour market impacted by coronavirus.

Aboriginal job seekers participating in Jobs Victoria Employment Network



Note: Outcomes are calculated at 26 weeks of continued employment. Not all outcomes captured due to lags in reporting.

9.4 Increase Aboriginal leadership and representation across all sectors and levels

Measure 9.4.2 - Aboriginal employees within the Victorian Public Service (VPS)

The number of Aboriginal employees within the VPS has grown each year from 2017 to 2019, however as a percentage of the total VPS, it remained steady at 1.2 per cent in 2018 and 2019. On a positive note, the number of Aboriginal staff employed in the VPS as a proportion of the 18 years and above Aboriginal population in Victoria has been higher than the non-Aboriginal cohort during the same period. In 2019, 1.6 per cent of the Aboriginal 18 years and above population was employed in the VPS compared to 0.5 per cent of the non-Aboriginal 18 years and above population.

Measure 9.4.3 - Number of Aboriginal people at VPS 6 level and above in the VPS

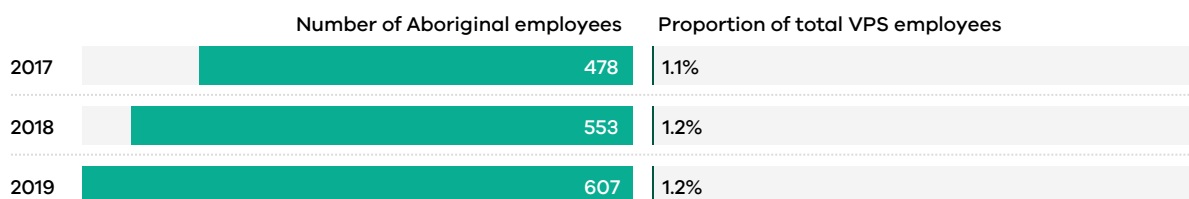
From 2018 to 2019, the number of Aboriginal employees within the VPS in leadership roles declined slightly from 59 to 56. In 2019, 9.2 per cent of all VPS Aboriginal staff were at Grade 6 or above.

Government acknowledges that given the important role of ACCOS in delivering programs and services, there remains an ongoing need to support the ACCO-sector workforce.

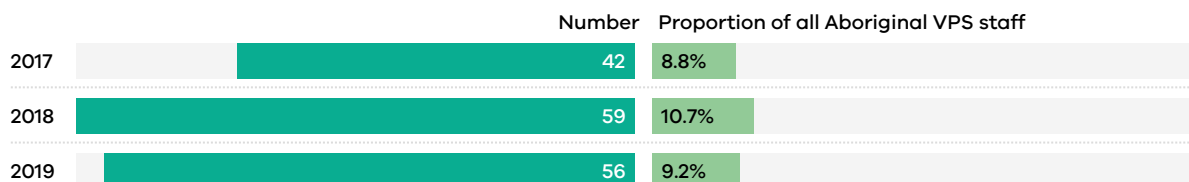
Measure 9.4.4 Number of Aboriginal people participating on Victorian Government boards

In 2019, 90 Aboriginal people were on Victorian Government boards, which represented 1.3 per cent of all Victorian Government board appointments.

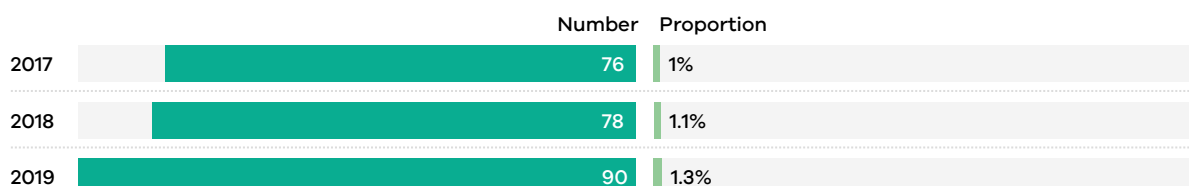
Aboriginal employees within the Victorian Public Service



Aboriginal people at Level 6 and above in the Victorian Public Service



Aboriginal people participating on Victorian Government boards



Goal 10: Aboriginal income potential is realised



Case study - Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council

DJPR has established the Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council (the Council) to improve employment and economic outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians, with its first meeting held in October 2020.

The Council operates within the principles of self-determination and membership is comprised of 20 appointed Aboriginal community members (Koori Caucus), DJPR Executive Board members and Executive Officers from State and Commonwealth government agencies. The Council's 20 Aboriginal community members serve a 12-month term and include six standing community members representing peak Aboriginal organisations and 14 community members. Community members offer diverse experience, skills and broad representation in economic development across areas of

business and entrepreneurship, Traditional Owner economic development, skills development, creative industries, community organisations and development, and tourism.

The Council provides advice and guidance to government on matters affecting Aboriginal Victorians in business, employment, tourism, culture and broader economic development. The Council also provides a mechanism for the Aboriginal community to have direct input into the design, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs and practices to drive Aboriginal economic prosperity.

In its first 12 months, the Council will lead on the development and monitoring of the new Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development Strategy.



Victorian Government action

The Tharamba Bugheen Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017 – 2021 (VABS) and Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020 (VAES).

Tharamba Bugheen Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017-2021 (VABS) guided Victoria's efforts to support Aboriginal businesses and economic development, while the *Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy 2013-2020 (VAES)* has supported opportunity and economic prosperity for Aboriginal Victorians across the last decade. Both VABS and VAES lapsed in June 2020. Through VAES and VABS, the government partnered with non-government organisations to deliver on many of the initiatives within the strategies.

Key investment across 2020 include:

- **\$15.6 million** for employment initiatives generated through the Working for Victoria Program to support 33 proposals from ACCOs, Traditional Owner Groups and First Peoples Creative Industry bodies, which led to the creation of over 260 employment opportunities.
- **\$5.7 million** for the development of economic development strategies by Kaiela Institute and 11 Traditional Owner Groups.
- **\$502,000** for Kinaway Chamber of Commerce and RMIT University to deliver three initiatives in 2020 to support Aboriginal businesses.
- **\$285,000** for delivery of support to Aboriginal businesses and business owners to address the significant health, wellbeing, and economic impacts of coronavirus.

Key actions across 2020 include:

- Support provided from VABS funds to deliver three initiatives with RMIT University and Kinaway Chamber of Commerce:
 - **Aboriginal Women's Business Development Manager** to employ an Aboriginal Women's Business Development Manager over 12 months to foster growth in the Aboriginal Women's Business Sector
 - **Aboriginal business joint venture awareness program** to assist in developing high-growth, export ready Aboriginal businesses
 - **'Trade Routes' Aboriginal business growth program** to deliver a program to guide and improve outcomes for Aboriginal joint ventures.

- Support provided from VABS funds to respond to the significant health, wellbeing and economic impacts of coronavirus on Aboriginal businesses and business owners. Initiatives were developed in consultation with Aboriginal community partners, Kinaway Chamber of Commerce and Ngarrimili, that enhance access to existing support services. Initiatives funded include:
 - **Health and Wellbeing Package** to provide mental health and wellbeing services through third party providers
 - **Tax-focused Professional Support Package** to administer professional services packages to Aboriginal businesses to ready themselves for the eligibility requirements of government coronavirus response funding initiatives
 - **Online Visibility Support Package** to administer online visibility support packages to Aboriginal businesses to transition to or enhance their business' online presence
 - **Women's COVID-19 Support Package** to support Aboriginal women in business by providing access to core business skills workshops.
- Support provided through VAES in 2020 enabled:
 - Aboriginal consultancy business Wan-Yaari to work in partnership with the Geelong Aboriginal community to develop a model for a VPS sector-wide Aboriginal Recruitment and Career Development Strategy
 - Development of Regional Economic Development Strategies by Kaiela Institute and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation.

Barring Djinang: Aboriginal Staff Strategy

Barring Djinang is the five year Aboriginal Employment Strategy for the Victorian public sector. It includes 16 initiatives designed to enhance attraction, recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff.

Barring Djinang initiatives help public sector agencies support and improve career experiences for Aboriginal employees, placing a strong focus on career development.

The Victorian Public Sector Commission's Aboriginal Employment Unit drives the roll out of initiatives across the public sector and partners with ACCOs to remain responsive.

Key actions across 2020 focused on continued delivery of Barring Djinang programs and initiatives, including:

- Barring Djinang Leadership Program, which was completed by 26 emerging Aboriginal leaders from Aboriginal Community Controlled, Traditional Owner and Victorian public sector organisations
- Barring Djinang Career Development program which was completed by 23 participants across two intakes
- Barring Djinang Internship program, which welcomed 34 Aboriginal interns to a variety of public sector agencies
- Inaugural intake of 10 participants into the Barring Djinang Vocational Education and Training/TAFE Graduate Program
- 12 Aboriginal graduates entered the Victorian Government Graduate Program via its Aboriginal Pathway
- Continued delivery of the Barring Djinang Regional Aboriginal Staff Networks
- Launch of the Aboriginal Cultural Capability in the Workplace Program (formerly the Public Entity Capacity Building program)
- Publication of guidance to public sector employers on the application of Special Measures provisions in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*.

Domain 4: Health & Wellbeing



Our shared commitment:

*Self-determining, healthy and safe
Aboriginal people and communities.*

Holistic approaches to Aboriginal health and wellbeing are critical to improving outcomes. This includes not only considering the physical, mental and social determinants of Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety, but also the cultural determinants, such as connection to culture and Country. While many Aboriginal Victorians report good health, health inequities remain.

Together, government service providers, Aboriginal organisations and communities must take significant steps to ensure that all Aboriginal Victorians have access to high-quality, culturally safe and responsive health care services. Improving overall health outcomes and having a good quality of life is a basic necessity to ensure all Victorian Aboriginal communities can thrive.



Nakisha

Shumyiah

Basic Information
SUPERHEO
FOODS



Goal 11: Aboriginal Victorians enjoy health and longevity

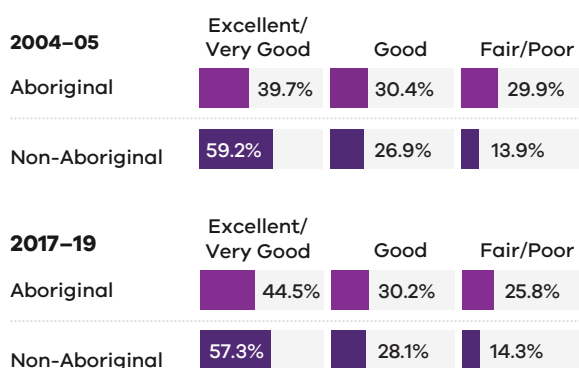
11.1 Improve Aboriginal health status, quality of life and life expectancy¹⁸

Aboriginal Victorians are living longer, and there are growing rates of individuals reporting that they have excellent or very good health. Positive trends have also been observed in smoking reduction, particularly among the younger generations. While emergency department presentations for alcohol and drug related harm have increased, more people are accessing specialist alcohol and other drug services to support their recovery. Another key area for improvement includes a stronger focus on preventative health measures to reduce the high rate of liver and lung cancers.

Measure 11.1.2 Proportion reporting 'excellent or very good' health status¹⁹

In 2017-19, 44.5 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians rated their own health as 'excellent' or 'very good', which has increased from 2014-15 (36.9 per cent). However, across the same period, Aboriginal people were more likely to consider themselves as having 'fair' or 'poor' health (25.8 per cent) compared to non-Aboriginal Victorians (14.3 per cent).

Self-reported health status by people aged 15 years and over



Case study – Aboriginal community-led coronavirus recovery and response work

Aboriginal self-determination and community voice have been at the centre of coronavirus response and recovery efforts. The COVID-19 Aboriginal Community Taskforce (Taskforce) enabled Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) and government representatives to work collaboratively through the pandemic.

Some key achievements of the Taskforce included:

- securing \$13 million funding over two years to meet the increase in service demand for ACCOs. This supports elders, education, homelessness services, and stable housing and funds Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) to provide specialist health supports.
- ensuring priority access to personal protective equipment for ACCOs
- supporting effective and culturally safe testing and contact tracing
- providing outreach efforts to address food insecurity and provide public housing support.

In November 2020, the Victorian Government announced a \$40 million Aboriginal Workforce Fund for ACCOs and ACCHOs over two years. The funding supports the Aboriginal community sector workforce to recover from the pandemic. The Victorian Aboriginal Social Recovery Advisory Group continues the work of the Taskforce by ensuring Aboriginal self-determination principles and Aboriginal voice drive the social recovery directions, priorities and practices.

18. Official life expectancy estimates for Indigenous Australians for selected jurisdictions are produced every five years by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Victoria is not part of selected jurisdictions due to its small Indigenous population. The life expectancy figures reported in the 2019 VGAAR were based on the Enhanced Mortality Database (EMD) developed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). No further update is currently available on Aboriginal life expectancy in Victoria.

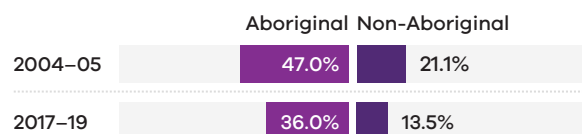
19. Gender disaggregated data not available at the time of reporting.

11.1 Improve Aboriginal health status, quality of life and life expectancy¹⁸

Measure 11.1.3 Rate of daily smoking

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in Australia. While the proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who smoke daily is still high (36 per cent in 2017-19), there has been a long term downward trend in daily smoking (down from 47 per cent in 2004-05).

Proportion of persons aged 18 and above who are daily smokers



Measure 11.1.5 Incidence of selected cancers

Between 2013 and 2017, there were 978 cancer diagnoses for Aboriginal Victorians (an average of 163 diagnoses per year). In the five-year period 2013-17 inclusive, the incidence rate of cancer in Aboriginal Victorians was 580.8 and 494.6 per 10,000 for men and women respectively, which was considerably higher than the incidence rate of cancer in non-Aboriginal men and women (346.5 and 287.1 per 10,000 respectively).

Case study – Aboriginal Cultural Safety Grants

Aboriginal Victorians have significantly higher cancer incidence and mortality rates than non-Aboriginal Victorians. A lack of culturally safe health services is one reason that Aboriginal people with cancer do not seek diagnosis or treatment. The former Department of Health and Human Services' cancer unit piloted the Aboriginal Cultural Safety Grants which provide funding of up to \$25,000 to 12 metropolitan and regional health services to support culturally safe cancer services, including:

- the creation of a yarning garden next to the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service oncology unit which includes custom-made seating incorporating local Aboriginal totems and panels featuring the five Gunai Kurnai clans
- the development of quilts and dilly bags for Aboriginal patients with cancer at St Vincent's Hospital. The quilts and dilly bags made by an Aboriginal artist are gifted to cancer inpatients at the commencement of their hospital stay.



Lung cancer

3 times higher for men and 4.3 times higher for women



Liver cancer

3.8 times higher for men and 4.5 times higher for women



Head and neck cancer

1.5 times higher for men and 2.4 times higher for women



Cervical cancer

2.9 times higher for women

11.1 Improve Aboriginal health status, quality of life and life expectancy¹⁸

Measure 11.1.6 Rate of emergency department presentations for alcohol or drug-related harm

In 2018-19, Aboriginal Victorians presented at hospital emergency departments for alcohol and drug related harm at 5.8 times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians, with rates increasing year on year since 2012-13. Rates increased sharply among Aboriginal young people, from 27 per 1,000 in 2017-18, to 37.5 per 1,000 in 2018-19, which is around four times the rate of non-Aboriginal young people (9.4 per 1,000).

Despite increased rates of risky alcohol and drug use, Aboriginal Victorians represent just 7.2 per cent of all Victorian Alcohol and other Drug (AOD) consumers in 2018-19, which is lower than the national average of 17 per cent (see AIHW, 2018-19). A lack of engagement with AOD services means that opportunities to intervene early and prevent admission to emergency departments are missed.

The former DHHS held a roundtable with key Aboriginal sector representatives in November 2020 to explore AOD service delivery priorities for Aboriginal people, in particular the need for Aboriginal specific models of care and culturally sensitive practice across mainstream services. Further work is underway to identify opportunities to address these issues including implementation of recommendations from the final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and as part of development of the new health model for public intoxication.

Measure 11.1.7 Specialist alcohol and other drug treatment services provided to Aboriginal Victorians

Service provision of specialist AOD treatment for Aboriginal Victorians has increased over time. Between 2008-09 and 2017-18, the number of Aboriginal clients completing treatment increased from 55.2 per 1,000 persons to 101.9 per 1,000.²⁰

Closed episodes for alcohol and other drug treatment services

Aboriginal	Number	Rate (Per 1,000)
2008-09	2,933	55.2
2017-18	6,102	101.9

Non-Aboriginal	Number	Rate (Per 1,000)
2008-09	39,358	8.0
2017-18	57,205	9.0

Rate of emergency department presentations for alcohol or drug related harm

Aboriginal	2008-09	2018-19
All ED presentations	12.2 per 1,000	21.8 per 1,000
Youth ED presentations (15-24 years)	11.0 per 1,000	37.5 per 1,000

Non-Aboriginal	2008-09	2018-19
All ED presentations	4.0 per 1,000	3.8 per 1,000
Youth ED presentations (15-24 years)	8.1 per 1,000	9.4 per 1,000

20. This data from AIHW includes services provided by both government and non-government organisations.

Goal 12: Aboriginal Victorians access the services they need



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

Aboriginal people are increasingly accessing health services across all ages, including health checks and cancer screenings. There has been a significant increase in the 0-14 year age group getting their annual health assessment, which is critical to improving longer-term health outcomes. Additionally, Aboriginal Victorians aged 50 and above are now on par with non-Aboriginal Victorians in accessing aged care services. ACCOs and ACCHOs continue to play a key role in providing culturally safe and appropriate health services to community.

Measure 12.1.1 Proportion who received a health check or assessment by age

Measure 12.1.5 Number and proportion of people aged 55 years or over who had an annual health assessment

Between 2007-08 and 2018-19, the proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who received a health check or assessment increased for all age groups. Across this period, the largest increase in participation was for those aged 0-14 years (1.5 per cent in 2007-08 to 15.2 per cent in 2018-19), followed by similar increases for those over 55 years (7.5 per cent to 20.9 per cent) across the same period.

Case study – Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group Fluoride Varnish Program for Aboriginal Children

The Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group (LMARG) Fluoride Varnish Program focuses on improving the oral health of Aboriginal children in key settings including schools, Aboriginal specific early years services and ACCOs. The pilot program started in 2019 and has provided approximately 200 Aboriginal children aged 3-18 years with two fluoride varnish applications, oral health screens and dental tooth packs.

Highlights of the pilot include:

- development and establishment of sustainable culturally appropriate systems and processes under the guidance of the four LMARG ACCOs in the region
- roll out in six regional towns (Bendigo, Echuca, Kerang, Swan Hill, Robinvale and Mildura) across early learning centres and schools
- establishment and strengthening of partnerships between ACCOs, public dental services and dental schools/universities
- increased awareness and engagement of Aboriginal families with oral health services.

The program has been funded an additional \$360,000 to continue implementation in 2020-21 and is expected to reach approximately 600 Aboriginal children.

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

Measure 12.1.2 Participation rates for cancer screening

Between 2008-09 and 2017-18, the proportion of Victorian Aboriginal women aged 50-69 participating in BreastScreen Australia's cancer screening program increased from 20.3 per cent to 34.2 per cent. Over the same period, the rate for all Victorian women remained relatively the same at 53.2 per cent and 53.8 per cent, respectively.

Measure 12.1.3 Proportion and number accessing disability services and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

In 2018-19, 623 Aboriginal Victorians accessed disability services, which represents 2.1 per cent of all disability service recipients. This is slightly lower than the 2008-09 level when 2.9 per cent of disability service recipients were Aboriginal. This could suggest a gap in appropriate culturally safe disability services for Aboriginal people.

As of June 2020, the NDIS identified 2,705 Aboriginal Victorians as potential candidates for the NDIS. Of these, 66.8 per cent (1,808 clients) had been assessed and successfully transitioned to an NDIS plan. The remaining 33.2 per cent (897 clients) were undergoing an eligibility process to transition to the NDIS and were not receiving any disability supports from the NDIS.

DFFH has engaged with the sector to understand the access and planning issues for Aboriginal people with disability and the below issues have been reported:

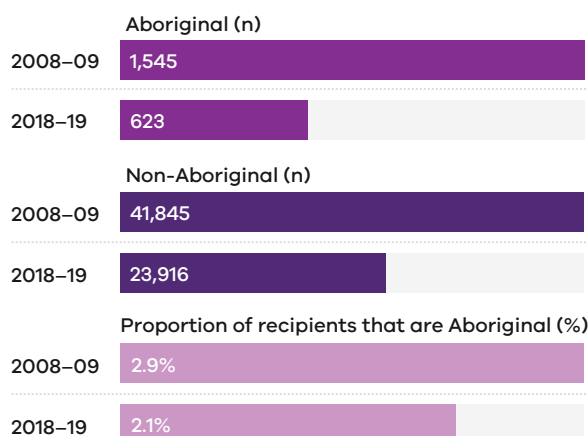
- access and planning materials are not culturally sensitive and do not reflect the way that disability is perceived in Aboriginal culture
- plans fail to reflect Aboriginal culture in what is reasonable and necessary. For example, recognising and building in family and community supports into NDIS plans is a key challenge for both participant and the NDIS
- lack of Aboriginal planners who can effectively engage with participants and community.

DFFH is working collaboratively with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to enhance their Aboriginal outreach and community engagement work. The department is also working with ACCOs and Aboriginal communities to support people's transition to the NDIS. In 2018, the department allocated Transition Support Package (TSP) funding

Participation rates for women screened by BreastScreen Australia



Access to disability services



to ACCOs to develop local responses to NDIS transition challenges for Aboriginal people with disability. VACCHO was also allocated TSP funding to further their existing work supporting ACCOs to understand the NDIS and to implement business changes to operate within the NDIS context.

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

Measure 12.1.4 Number and proportion accessing aged care services²¹

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's final report has laid out the extensive changes needed to ensure aged care services are high quality and safe and meet the needs of the people accessing them. The Royal Commission made 148 wide-ranging recommendations, including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care pathway to provide culturally safe and flexible aged care to meet the needs of people wherever they live.

The proportion of Aboriginal Victorians aged 50 years and above accessing aged care services²¹ increased between 2007-08 and 2018-19, from 4.0 to 7.1 per cent. Over the same period, the proportion of non-Aboriginal Victorians aged 65 years and above accessing aged care services has remained relatively stable at 7.1 and 7.0 per cent, respectively.

Access to aged care services

Aboriginal



Non-Aboriginal



Case study – Aboriginal services providing aged care assessment and services

Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative and the Aborigines Advancement League provide aged care assessments and aged care services for Aboriginal Victorians. These services aim to provide culturally safe and appropriate services that recognise and respect the cultural strengths of individuals, family and community.

Rumbalara is a community-controlled organisation that provides Regional Assessment Services to older Aboriginal people in the Greater Shepparton area, the Community Home Support Program in their local area, Home Care Packages across four regions in Victoria and New South Wales, and

a thirty bed Elders Residential Care Facility. Rumbalara is focused on self-reliance and self-determination, employing Aboriginal Victorians and using Aboriginal owned and operated businesses wherever possible.

Formed in 1957, the Aborigines Advancement League delivers a broad range of services for people in northern metropolitan Melbourne. This includes Regional Assessment Services and the Community Home Support Program for older Aboriginal Victorians. It also administers and initiates programs which aim to improve the social, economic and cultural advancement of Aboriginal Victorians.

21. Aged care services include residential care, transition care and home care.

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



13.1 Increase the cultural safety and responsiveness of services

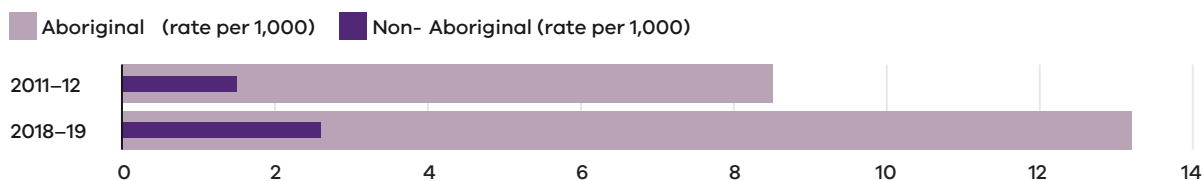
There are a number of concerning trends emerging in this chapter. Culturally safe and responsive health services are vital to ensuring that Aboriginal Victorians feel safe and supported when seeking the healthcare they need. Cultural safety is about creating an environment that is safe for Aboriginal people. This means there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identities and experiences.

Both mainstream and Aboriginal organisations are responsible for providing culturally safe environments for their clients. While ACCOs and ACCHOs provide much of Victoria's culturally safe and appropriate health and community services to the Aboriginal community, sustained efforts are needed to build the cultural safety of mainstream services to ensure Aboriginal Victorians have access to culturally safe services regardless of their service provider.

Measure 13.1.3 Hospitalisations where patients left against medical advice/ were discharged at own risk

In 2018-19, Aboriginal Victorians were discharged from hospitals against medical advice at a rate of 13.2 per 1,000 people, which is over five times the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians. This may reflect Aboriginal people not feeling culturally safe when in hospital and indicates that more must be done to ensure hospitals are safe and welcoming places for Aboriginal people requiring medical care.

Hospital discharge against medical advice (rate per 1,000)



Goal 14: Aboriginal Victorians enjoy social and emotional wellbeing



14.1 Improve Aboriginal mental health and social and emotional wellbeing

The concept of Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing goes beyond only mental health to encapsulate the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of a person. The term recognises a multitude of factors that contribute to a holistic definition of wellbeing, including connection to Country, culture, family and community.

While many Victorian Aboriginal people are thriving and enjoy excellent social and emotional wellbeing and mental health, the impacts of colonisation, inter-generational trauma, racism, discrimination and marginalisation have resulted in poor mental health outcomes.

Levels of psychological distress and rates of self-harm reported by Aboriginal Victorians are highly concerning, as is data indicating that these rates are increasing over time. It is anticipated that COVID-19 will only exacerbate mental health issues.



Measure 14.1.1 Proportion reporting 'high or very high' levels of psychological and psychosocial distress

In 2017–19, 36 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians aged 15 years and above reported 'high' or 'very high' levels of psychological distress, which is almost three times higher than the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians.

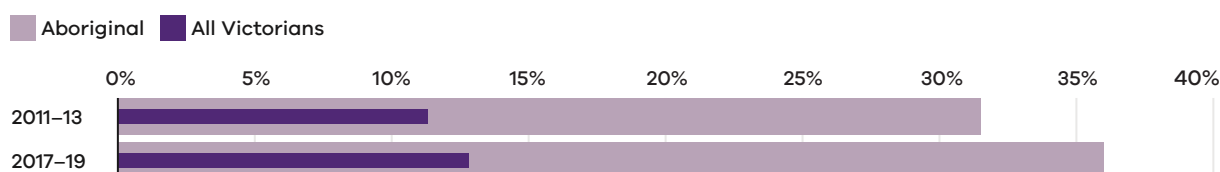
Psychological distress is a proxy measure of the overall mental health and wellbeing of the population, and very high levels of psychological distress may signify a need for professional help and provide an estimate of the need for mental health services (DHHS, Victoria's Mental Health Services Annual Report 2019–20, p. 20).

Aboriginal people with 'high' or 'very high' levels of psychological distress have poorer general health and wellbeing outcomes and are more likely to:

- self-report poor or fair health
- smoke
- drink at chronic or risky levels
- use illicit substances
- be a victim of violence.

This is compounded by experiences of racism across health and human service settings and the broader community. Racism continues to have a significant impact on Aboriginal peoples' decisions about when and why they seek health services and their acceptance of and adherence to treatment (Balit Murrup, p. 17).

Level of psychological distress reported as 'high' or 'very high'



*Reported by persons aged 15 and above.

14.1 Improve Aboriginal mental health and social and emotional wellbeing

Measure 14.1.2 Rate of self-harm related emergency department presentations (by 15-24 years, and all)

In 2018-19, Aboriginal Victorians of all ages presented at hospital emergency departments for self-harm related reasons at a rate five times higher than non-Aboriginal Victorians. Similarly, the rate per 1,000 of Aboriginal people aged 15-24 years old presenting to emergency departments for self-harm related reasons increased significantly in the last decade (5.6 in 2008-09 to 37.5 in 2018-19).

Recent (2018-19)²² changes to hospital codes that identify intentional self-harm and suicidal ideation-related presentations to Victorian emergency departments are likely to have contributed to the increased specificity in recording emergency presentations for self-harm related injuries. However, it is also noted that mental health emergency department presentations have been rising over time for all Victorians, and some of these presentations relate to self-harm. This may in part relate to greater awareness of mental health concerns and greater willingness to seek assistance.

Self-harm-related emergency department presentations, 15-24 years

Aboriginal	Number	Rate (per 1,000)
2008-09	58	5.6
2018-19	450	37.5

Non-Aboriginal	Number	Rate (per 1,000)
2008-09	2,313	3.1
2018-19	8,037	9.4

Self-harm-related emergency department presentations, all ages

Aboriginal	Number	Rate (per 1,000)
2008-09	159	3.1
2018-19	1,072	17.5

Non-Aboriginal	Number	Rate (per 1,000)
2008-09	6,617	1.3
2018-19	22,764	3.5

22. These changes to hospital codes include a 'human intent' code of:

- Intentional self-harm – non-suicidal self-injury
- Intentional self-harm – suicide attempt
- Intentional self-harm – suicidal intent cannot be determined

14.1 Improve Aboriginal mental health and social and emotional wellbeing

Evidence suggests that higher rates of mental health related issues and self-harm among Aboriginal Victorians can be linked to experiences of continued intergenerational trauma, grief, loss, sexual abuse, family violence, marginalisation, racism and discrimination, past removal policies, culturally unsafe services, unemployment, low levels of educational attainment, and lack of connection to Country, culture, community and spirituality.

Case study – Yarning SafeNStrong Counselling Helpline

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) established an Aboriginal owned and operated Yarning SafeNStrong counselling helpline. This helpline is providing counselling support to callers who experience anxiety, distress and mental health during the pandemic.

Yarning SafeNStrong is also providing outbound referrals and connecting local ACCOs and other support services (statewide and local services) with community members who wish to be contacted.

Case study – Investment in Aboriginal Alcohol and other Drug (AOD) Workers

In 2017-18, the Victorian Government invested \$2.4 million per annum in recurrent funding to establish an additional 34 Aboriginal AOD worker positions, to be phased in over three years. Consistent with the Korin Korin Balit-Djak policy on self-determination, VACCHO led the design and delivery of the funding. Over the past three years, this initiative increased the Aboriginal AOD workforce to 94 workers, representing a more than 50 per cent increase in community based AOD treatment and support to Aboriginal clients across the state.

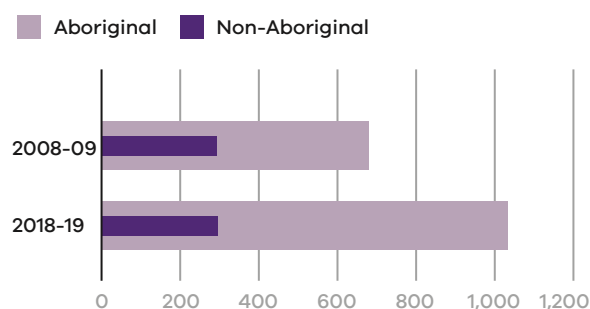
Measure 14.1.5 Number of Aboriginal Victorians receiving clinical mental health services

The rate of Aboriginal Victorians receiving community mental health care services contact increased substantially from 679 per 1,000 in 2008-09 to 1,034.2 per 1,000 in 2018-19.²³ In the same time period, non-Aboriginal Victorians accessing clinical mental health care services dropped from 313.3 per 1,000 in 2008-09 to 299.1 per 1,000 in 2017-18.

Outcome indicators show that Aboriginal Victorians continue to be over-represented in clinical mental health services. Aboriginal people form about 0.7 per cent of Victoria's population, with 3.1 per cent receiving clinical mental health care, compared with 1.16 per cent of the Victorian population overall. This has been trending upwards over the past five years (DHHS, Victoria's Mental Health Services Annual Report 2019–20, p. 20).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework report (2017) notes that 'while Indigenous Australians use mental health services at higher rates than other Australians, it is hard to assess whether this use is as high as the underlying need.' (p.167).

Access to community mental health care service contacts, rate per 1,000



23. Any patient can have one or more service contacts over the relevant financial year period.



Case Study: Improving Mental health outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians

The Improving mental health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with moderate to severe mental illness projects (Demonstration Projects) continue to test new Aboriginal-led service models for Aboriginal Victorians with moderate to severe mental illness, trauma and other complex health and social needs.

Since 2017, more than 400 Aboriginal people and their families have received support through the Demonstration Projects. \$8.5 million provided in 2019-2020 builds upon previous investments (\$7.7 million in 2016-17, \$4.0 million in 2018-19) for Demonstration Projects operating across four sites:

- Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (in partnership with Ballarat Health)
- Mallee District Aboriginal Services (in partnership with Mildura Base Hospital and Mallee Family Care)
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (in partnership with St Vincent's Health, Austin Health, Northern Area Mental Health)
- Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative (in partnership with Barwon Health).

Each Demonstration Project is Aboriginal-led, delivering culturally safe and integrated services that support Aboriginal self-determination and empower community members to be heard, to make decisions, and to plan and shape their own journeys of care, recovery and healing.

The Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative Demonstration Project (Keela Borron) has the ultimate goal of family reunification, and the safety and protection of children.

The project works to build parental capacity over time, focusing on supporting Aboriginal parents with a mental illness and who have children in, or at risk of entering the child protection system.

Some of the group programs established under Keela Borron include psychological-education and self-management, parenting skills, mindfulness and stress reduction, communication skills and life skills programs. The program has experienced success, with 18 children involved in the child protection system being reunified with their families between July 2017-June 2020.

Victorian Government Action

Korin Korin Balit-Djak 2017-2027 and Balit Marrup 2017-2027

The Victorian Government, in partnership with Aboriginal communities, community organisations and mainstream service providers, is driving action to improve the health and safety of Aboriginal Victorians through *Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017-2027* and *Balit Marrup: Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing framework*. These reforms are driven through the Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum, and Divisional and Area Aboriginal governance committees.

In November 2020, the Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum endorsed the development and implementation of Korin Korin Balit-Djak as a systems transformation strategy to focus on priorities that make the most difference for Aboriginal Victorians at a system-wide and departmental level. The strategy has five priority reform areas: governance and self-determination; funding and commission reform; cultural competency; data and knowledge; and leadership and workforce.

Key investments in 2020-21 include:

- **\$40 million** Aboriginal Workforce Fund for ACCOs and ACCHOs for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.
- **\$23.4 million** for a Mental Health Bushfire Recovery Package over two years (2019-20) in East Gippsland and North Eastern Victoria. As part of this package, the Victorian Government provided \$3.0 million and transferred decision making control to VACCHO who has commissioned seven local ACCOs to deliver Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing programs in their local communities.
- **\$1.5 million** to VAHS in 2020-21 to establish a 24 hour Aboriginal owned and operated Yarning SafeNStrong counselling helpline.
- **\$1.35 million** has been committed in the *2020/21 Victorian State Budget* to further support the Aboriginal Mental Health Traineeship program (established in 2017-18 with \$3.5 million over three years) that will see 10 Aboriginal trainees across the state offered full-time ongoing employment in the area mental health service where they have undertaken their traineeship. Eight area mental health services are participating in the traineeship program: Eastern Health, Bendigo Health, Alfred Health, Peninsula Health, Latrobe Health, Mildura Base Hospital, Monash Health and Forensicare.
- **\$1.57 million** has been committed in the *2020/21 Victorian State Budget* to further support the employment of clinical and therapeutic mental health positions in positions in selected ACCOs across rural and metropolitan areas. The clinical and therapeutic mental health positions are selected from a broad range of disciplines (such as mental health nurses, occupational therapists, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers), as determined by ACCOs. The clinical and therapeutic mental health positions are located at 10 ACCOs:
 - Ramahyuck and District Aboriginal Cooperation (Morwell)
 - Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
 - Mallee and District Aboriginal Health Service (Swan Hill)
 - Oonah Health and Community Services Aboriginal Corporation
 - Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative
 - Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative
 - Budja Aboriginal Cooperative
 - Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation
 - Dhauwurd-Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service
 - Kirrae Health Services.

Key actions across 2020 include:

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

- The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (the Commission) was established in February 2019, and delivered its final report on 3 February 2021. The final report was tabled in Parliament by the Victorian Government on 2 March 2021.
- The final report is the culmination of a 24-month inquiry, with nearly 3,000 pages and includes 65 recommendations which set out the reforms required to deliver a reimagined mental health and wellbeing system for all Victorians. This builds on the priority recommendations the Commission made in its interim report in November 2019 to respond to immediate needs and to lay the foundations for the future.
- The Commission received more than 12,500 contributions to its work including through consultations, roundtables, public hearings, witness statements, surveys, workshops and more than 3,200 submissions from individuals and organisations.
- For the first time in history, Aboriginal leaders, organisations, people, families, carers, and communities were given the opportunity to share their individual and collective experiences of pain, trauma and resilience and help shape a redesign of Victoria's mental health system. The Commission also acknowledged the significant contribution of VACCHO, which developed the Balit Durn Durn report to support the Commission's deliberation.
- The Commission's interim report identified the urgent need to address mental illness in Aboriginal communities and the central role of self-determined Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing services in promoting Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing. The interim report recommended expanding the delivery of multi-disciplinary social and emotional wellbeing teams across ACCHOs. It also recommended the establishment of a new Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre to support the transformation of Aboriginal mental health care across the state.
- The recommendations contained in the final report build on the interim report recommendations. They include funding for two healing centres to complement the social and emotional wellbeing services delivered by ACCHOs. This reform recognises healing is an essential component of improved Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing. The Commission recommended a suite of reforms to provide children and families with early, culturally safe and flexible support through Aboriginal-led organisations in partnership with mental health services. Aboriginal children and young people will be able to access specialist mental health services, family-oriented therapeutic care and intensive multidisciplinary care delivered within community settings. These reforms focus squarely on care being delivered through Aboriginal organisations.
- Many Aboriginal people access mainstream mental health services for their care and it is incumbent on mental health services to provide culturally safe, responsive and inclusive treatment, care and support.
- The Commission's aspiration is for a mental health and wellbeing system where Aboriginal self-determination is respected in the design and delivery of care. In the new system, Aboriginal people should be able to choose to receive care within ACCOs, within mainstream services, or a mix of both. Irrespective of where treatment, care and support are delivered for Aboriginal people, communities and families, it is fundamental that it is safe, inclusive, respectful and responsive.
- In 2020, Mental Health Reform Victoria (MHRV) and VACCHO formed the VACCHO-MHRV Partnership. The VACCHO-MHRV Partnership is planning the implementation of the recommendations and co-designing activities to strengthen Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing. This partnership with its focus on supporting Aboriginal self-determination is critical to the successful delivery of all the Commission's Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing recommendations.

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System – Final Report

Recommendation 33: Supporting Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing

1. Build on the recommendation from the Commission's interim report which supports Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing, and fund the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre to establish two co-designed healing centres.
2. Fund Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services to support ACCHOs by providing primary consultation, secondary consultation and shared care.
3. Fund ACCHOs to commission the delivery of culturally appropriate, family-oriented, social and emotional wellbeing services to children and young people.
4. Fund VACCHO, in partnership with an Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, to design and establish a culturally appropriate, family-oriented service for infants and children who require intensive social and emotional wellbeing supports.

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System – Interim Report

Recommendation 4:

The Commission recommends that the Victorian Government, through the Mental Health Implementation Office, expands social and emotional wellbeing teams throughout Victoria and that these teams be supported by a new Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre. This should be facilitated through the following mechanisms:

- dedicated recurrent funding to establish and expand multidisciplinary social and emotional wellbeing teams in Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations, with statewide coverage within five years
- scholarships to enable Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing team members to obtain recognised clinical mental health qualifications from approved public tertiary providers, with a minimum of 30 scholarships awarded over the next five years
- recurrent funding for VACCHO to develop, host and maintain the recommended Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre in partnership with organisations with clinical expertise and research expertise in Aboriginal mental health. The centre will help expand social and emotional wellbeing services through:
 - clinical, organisational and cultural governance planning and development
 - workforce development including by enabling the recommended scholarships
 - guidance, tools and practical supports for building clinical effectiveness in assessment, diagnosis and treatment
 - developing and disseminating research and evidence for social and emotional wellbeing models and convening associated communities of practice.



Aboriginal suicide prevention pilot programs

- The Department of Health (formerly DHHS) is supporting the development of culturally appropriate and safe suicide prevention approaches which respond to particular issues for Aboriginal communities. This work includes Primary Health Networks (PHNs) implementing place-based approaches to suicide prevention across 12 sites in Victoria. The establishment of the suicide prevention trial sites has led to the formation of more than 300 local partnerships including partnerships with local ACCOs.
- An example of local partnership work to support Aboriginal suicide prevention and post-vention support, includes the DH and DJCS partnering with local Aboriginal organisations, Aboriginal Elders and the Gippsland PHN to develop a Gippsland Aboriginal Postvention Framework. The Gippsland Aboriginal Postvention Framework is being developed to support Aboriginal communities in the Gippsland region to have culturally appropriate and safe access to mental health and Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing support services. The Gippsland Aboriginal Postvention Framework will support families, friends and communities affected by suicide while also providing a suicide prevention and early intervention response. The Gippsland Aboriginal Postvention Framework will support Aboriginal self-determination and will emphasise the strength of cultural, family and community connections.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Framework (Framework) for health, human and community services

- In January 2020, the former DHHS publicly rolled out the Framework to assist mainstream Victorian health, human and community services. The Framework aims to create culturally safe environments, services and workplaces for Aboriginal Victorians. It provides a continuous quality improvement model to strengthen the cultural safety of individuals and organisations.



Domain 5: Justice & Safety



Our shared commitment:

Aboriginal people have access to an equitable justice system that is shaped by self-determination, and protects and upholds their human, civil, legal and cultural rights.

Most Aboriginal people will never be involved with the criminal justice system. Those who are, however, are more likely to experience ongoing involvement. Systemic and structural barriers lead to Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and entrenched cycles of disadvantage. These barriers include inequality, racism, discrimination and unconscious bias, social and economic disadvantage and involvement with the child protection system. While the over-representation of Aboriginal people remains, community-led responses are going some way to address these underlying structural factors.



OUR SHARED HISTORY

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



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

Aboriginal Victorians are over-represented in both the adult and youth justice systems. Contributing factors to this include a greater likelihood of Aboriginal people being charged with an offence after being detained and increases in remand-based detention. Broader system responses are needed to address the factors that contribute to over-representation in the justice system.

Measure 15.1.1 Number, rate and age profile of unique youth (10-17 years) alleged offenders processed by police

On average, Aboriginal young people are more likely to have contact with the police at a younger age than their non-Aboriginal peers. Between July 2007 to June 2020, the proportion of alleged youth offenders aged 10-17 years was consistently higher for Aboriginal Victorians compared to non-Aboriginal Victorians.

In 2019-20, Aboriginal young people (10-17 years) were almost six times more likely to be processed by police as alleged offenders than their non-Aboriginal peers.

Measure 15.1.2 Average daily number and rate of children and young people (10-17 years) under youth justice supervision in detention and community-based supervision

On an average day in 2018-19, there were 19 Aboriginal young people and 103 non-Aboriginal young people in detention. When looking at detention rates per 10,000 people, this means that Aboriginal young people were about ten times more likely to be detained than their non-Aboriginal peers. This has improved from the 2007-08 level, when the corresponding rate ratio was 17.7 times.

Unique youth alleged offenders in the justice system

Aboriginal

	Youth aged 10-17 years (n)	Youth aged 10-17 years (rate per 10,000)	Youth aged 10-14 years (n)	Youth aged 10-14 years (rate per 10,000)	Youth aged 15-17 years (n)	Youth aged 15-17 years (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	711	754.1	299	506.1	412	1,170.5
2019-20	627	617.2	230	354.1	397	1,083.9

Non-Aboriginal

	Youth aged 10-17 years (n)	Youth aged 10-17 years (rate per 10,000)	Youth aged 10-14 years (n)	Youth aged 10-14 years (rate per 10,000)	Youth aged 15-17 years (n)	Youth aged 15-17 years (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	11,286	213.4	3,651	111.9	7,635	376.7
2019-20	6,157	103.8	1,661	43.8	4,496	210.4

Youth justice supervision

Aboriginal young people

	Community based supervision (daily average number)	Community based supervision (per 10,000)	Detention (daily average number)	Detention rate (per 10,000)	Community based supervision (total during the year)	Detention (total during the year)
2009-10	127.0	133.3	18.0	19.3	273.0	80.0
2018-19	89.0	87.8	19.0	18.6	173.0	80.0

Non-Aboriginal young people

	Community based supervision (daily average number)	Community based supervision (per 10,000)	Detention (daily average number)	Detention rate (per 10,000)	Community based supervision (total during the year)	Detention (total during the year)
2009-10	808.0	15.3	67.0	1.3	1,676.0	404.0
2018-19	452.0	7.7	103.0	1.8	916.0	480.0

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

Measure 15.1.3 Proportion of first-time youth alleged offenders (10-17 years) cautioned by police

The proportion of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal first-time alleged youth offenders receiving a caution from police declined significantly between 2007-08 and 2019-20. Cautions are an important diversionary response that can prevent further involvement in the justice system.

In 2019-20, around half (50.9 per cent) of Aboriginal first-time alleged offenders aged 10-17 years received a caution from police. The figure was slightly higher for the non-Aboriginal cohort (55.1 per cent).

Measure 15.1.4 Proportion of young people (10-17 years) in detention on remand

In 2018-19, the proportion of young people (10-17 years) in detention on remand increased for both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cohorts compared with results in 2007-08. In 2018-19, the proportion of Aboriginal young people in detention on remand (66.7 per cent) was slightly lower than the proportion of non-Aboriginal young people (70.5 per cent), a trend similar to 2007-08.

Case study - Aboriginal Youth Cautioning Project (AYCP)

Victoria Police hosted a series of workshops involving Aboriginal providers to progress the target under *Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja - The Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4* of 43 fewer Aboriginal people in youth justice supervision on an average day. The workshops identified that current policy on the eligibility of a child to receive a caution requires the child to make an admission of guilt, thereby limiting the eligibility of those who may receive a caution. The AYCP is piloting a holistic community approach to diverting Aboriginal young people, upon receiving a caution, from the justice system and into locally administered Aboriginal community programs. This pilot has been implemented in Bendigo, Dandenong and Echuca.

First-time youth alleged offenders (10-17 years)

Aboriginal		Proportion of first time alleged offenders cautioned by police (%)
Year	First time alleged offenders (n)	
2007-08	360	71.9%
2019-20	289	50.9%

Non-Aboriginal		Proportion of first time alleged offenders cautioned by police (%)
Year	First time alleged offenders (n)	
2007-08	7,829	80.5%
2019-20	4,006	55.1%

Young people (10-17 years) in detention on remand

Aboriginal young people		Proportion of those in detention that are on remand (%)
Year	Number of young people in detention (n)	
2007-08	14	50.0%
2018-19	18	66.7%

Non-Aboriginal young people		Proportion of those in detention that are on remand (%)
Year	Number of young people in detention (n)	
2007-08	53	54.7%
2018-19	95	70.5%

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

Measure 15.2.1 Number and rate of unique adult female alleged offenders processed by police

Since 2007-08, the rate of unique adult female offenders processed by police has increased significantly for all women, with a larger increase for Aboriginal women. In 2019-20, Aboriginal women were nearly 11 times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be processed by police for an alleged offence.

Measure 15.2.2 Average daily number and rate of Aboriginal women under corrections supervision in prison and community corrections

In 2018-19, the average daily rate of Aboriginal women under corrections supervision in community corrections was around 14 times higher than for non-Aboriginal women, and the rate for Aboriginal women in prison was almost 22 times higher than for non-Aboriginal women. These rates are an increase from those of 2007-08.

Adult female unique alleged offenders processed by police

Aboriginal women

	Unique alleged offenders (n)	Unique alleged offenders (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	559	402.6
2019-20	1,257	663.6

Non-Aboriginal women

	Unique alleged offenders (n)	Unique alleged offenders (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	8,624	42.8
2019-20	16,445	62.8

Adult women - Corrections supervision: Community-based corrections and prison

Aboriginal women

	Community based supervision (n)	Community based supervision (per 10,000)	Prison (n)	Prison (per 10,000)
2007-08	83	68.5	15	12.4
2017-18	237	140.6	65	38.6

Non-Aboriginal women

	Community based supervision (n)	Community based supervision (per 10,000)	Prison (n)	Prison (per 10,000)
2007-08	1,218	6.0	226	1.1
2017-18	2,288	9.0	435	1.7

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

Measure 15.2.3 Proportion of women who return to prison under sentence within two years of release

The rate of Aboriginal women returning to prison within two years of release grew significantly from 2007-08 to 2018-19, from around 38 per cent to 55 per cent.

Measure 15.2.4 Proportion of women in prison on remand

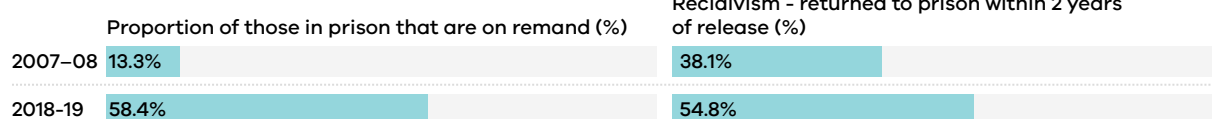
In recent years, a greater proportion of Aboriginal women in prison were placed on remand. In 2018-19, more than half the Aboriginal women in prison (58.4 per cent) were on remand compared to around 45 per cent of non-Aboriginal women in prison. This is a significant increase from the 2007-08 level for Aboriginal women (just over 13 per cent). The proportion of non-Aboriginal women in prison on remand also increased but to a lesser extent.

Case study - Baggarook Women's Transitional Housing

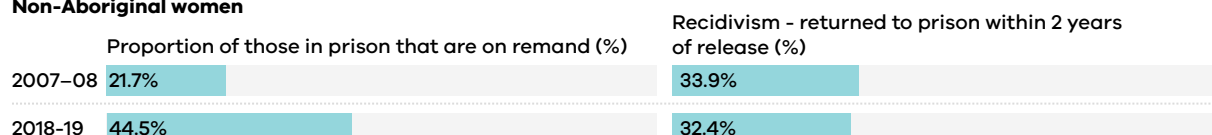
In 2017, Corrections Victoria recorded that 17 per cent of women on remand were Aboriginal. One major obstacle for Aboriginal people, particularly Aboriginal women, being granted bail is access to safe and stable housing. Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service's (VALS) Baggarook program (Program) is funded by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. The Program is culturally safe and designed to support highly vulnerable Aboriginal women as they transition from prison, recognising the significant and complex needs of these women. The Program's integrated support model involves housing support, provision of care packages, and ongoing support from justice workers and other allied health professionals. Within the first year of the Program, VALS was able to expand the Program to support non-cisgender women.

Adult women - Remand and recidivism

Aboriginal women



Non-Aboriginal women



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

Measure 15.3.1 Number and rate of unique adult male alleged offenders processed by police

In 2019-20, as in previous years, Aboriginal men were over-represented as alleged offenders, processed by police at around six times the rate of non-Aboriginal men.

Measure 15.3.2 Average daily number and rate of Aboriginal men under corrections supervision in prison and community corrections

Between 2007-08 and 2018-19, the average daily number of Aboriginal men under both community-based supervision and in prison significantly increased, more than doubling for community-based supervision and tripling for prison. In 2018-19, Aboriginal men were around 14 times more likely to be under corrections supervision in prison and nearly 10 times more likely to be on community-based supervision, when compared with non-Aboriginal men.

Measure 15.3.3 Proportion of men who return to prison under sentence within two years of release

The proportion of Aboriginal men returning to prison under sentence within two years of release has not changed significantly in the last decade. Over the same time, the proportion of non-Aboriginal men returning to prison under sentence within two years of release has increased, from 34.9 per cent to 43.4 per cent. The rate of return for Aboriginal men continues to be higher than that for non-Aboriginal men (in 2018-19, 51.9 per cent of Aboriginal men returned to prison under sentence within two years of release compared to 43.4 per cent of non-Aboriginal men).

Measure 15.3.4 Proportion of men in prison on remand

Similar to the young people and female cohorts, the increasing rates of incarceration of Aboriginal men is partly driven by a higher proportion of offenders being held on remand. From 2007-08 to 2018-19, the proportion of Aboriginal men on remand in prison nearly doubled. While there has also been an increase in the proportion of non-Aboriginal men in prison who are on remand, higher proportions of Aboriginal men continue to be held on remand in prison when compared with non-Aboriginal men.

Adult male - Unique alleged offenders processed by police

Aboriginal men

	Unique alleged offenders (n)	Unique alleged offenders (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	1,337	993.1
2019-20	2,739	1,449.4

Non-Aboriginal men

	Unique alleged offenders (n)	Unique alleged offenders (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	33,832	175.0
2019-20	56,692	225.1

Adult men - Remand and recidivism

Aboriginal men

	Proportion of those in prison that are on remand (%)	Recidivism - returned to prison within 2 years of release (%)
2007-08	22.2%	51.3%
2018-19	43.8%	51.9%

Non-Aboriginal men

	Proportion of those in prison that are on remand (%)	Recidivism - returned to prison within 2 years of release (%)
2007-08	19.2%	34.9%
2018-19	34.9%	43.4%

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



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

Culturally appropriate prevention, early intervention, diversion and support services are critical to addressing Aboriginal over-representation in the criminal justice system and helping to break cycles of offending.

Community developed and delivered, and culturally tailored services and supports can connect Aboriginal people to culture and promote positive outcomes within community corrections and prison environments. In recognition of this, Corrections Victoria currently offers Aboriginal men and women access to culturally tailored programs and services that aim to re-connect participants to culture and support them to address their offending behaviours prior to reintegration into the community. Programs and services include a suite of cultural programs under the Kaka Wangity Wangin Mirrie (KWWM) Cultural Programs Grants Scheme, the Yawal Mugadjina Cultural Mentoring Program, the Prisoner Support Program and the Torch Statewide Indigenous Arts in Prison Program.

Measure 16.1.1 Number and proportion of Aboriginal youth receiving intensive bail support through the Koorie Intensive Support Program

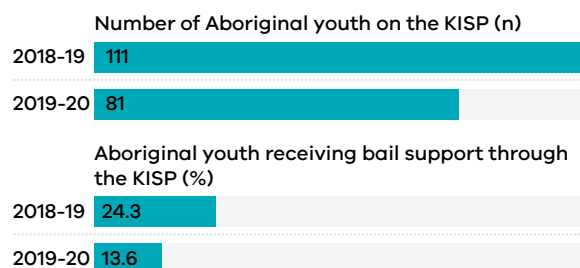
In 2019-20, 81 Aboriginal young people received intensive support through the Koorie Intensive Support Program, a decrease from 111 in 2018-19. Of these young people, 11 (or 13.6 per cent) received intensive bail support in 2019-20, a decrease from 27 (or 24.3 per cent) in the previous year. One of the potential reasons behind this reduction stems from lower overall numbers entering the youth justice system, particularly during the second half of the 2019-20 financial year. In addition, being a relatively new data measure, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of any 'natural' variation that might have impacted year-on-year movement.

Maintaining cultural supports for prisoners during 2020

As a result of coronavirus, significant changes were made in 2020 to the way in which justice programs were delivered. Throughout the pandemic, DJCS ensured that cultural supports for Aboriginal prisoners and offenders were maintained. Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers continued to actively support Aboriginal prisoners onsite and remote service delivery options were implemented for cultural programs and mentoring. As an example, during 2020, the Torch Statewide Indigenous Arts in Prison Program supported more participants than ever before and shifted its annual exhibition online, providing a virtual tour of almost 300 artworks.

Access to intensive bail support and culturally safe justice services is an important way to reduce recidivism and maintain connection to family, culture and Country.

Aboriginal youth receiving intensive bail support through the Koorie Intensive Support Program (KISP)



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

Measure 16.1.2 Number and proportion of Aboriginal adults receiving intensive bail support

In 2019-20, 234 Aboriginal adults (18 years and above) received intensive bail support through the Court Integrated Services Program (CISP), which represents 50.8 per cent of Aboriginal adults referred.

It is to be noted that the average acceptance rate onto CISP is 50 per cent across all programs. There are a number of reasons why an individual may not have been accepted onto CISP including:

- nature of offence
- recommended for community referral
- declined to participate
- denied bail and therefore not accepted onto the program as part of their bail condition.

Measure 16.1.3 Number of Aboriginal young people accessing community support programs through youth justice community services

In 2019-20, 502 Aboriginal children and young people (10-17 years) participated in Aboriginal community support programs. This includes all Aboriginal specific programs funded by DJCS. It is to be noted that DJCS commenced collecting data for this measure from 2020.

Supporting Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja community-based diversion programs:

- **Dardi Munwurro Youth Journeys *Bramung Jaarn Program*:** The Bramung Jaarn program aims to support young Aboriginal boys aged 10-17 years to divert them from contact with the criminal justice system. It assists them to grow into healthy young adults with positive support networks within their peer group and the broader community. This is done through: one-on-one mentoring; fortnightly group sessions that focus on skills development, education, role modelling, behavioural change, anger management, healthy relationships, healthy lifestyles, emotional intelligence, managing emotions, sexual health, and conflict management; and providing access to strong positive male mentors and Elders in community to support their journey.
- **Dungulayin Mileka:** The Massive Murray Paddle is a five-day paddling adventure race that commenced in 1968. In 2019, the Aboriginal Justice Caucus endorsed funding to expand Dungulayin Mileka into a broader community-based intensive youth diversion program, supporting Aboriginal children and young people at risk of contact with the criminal justice system before and after their participation in the Massive Murray Paddle.

Adults receiving intensive bail support

Aboriginal

	Number of adults referred for intensive bail support (n)	Number of adults receiving intensive bail support (n)	Proportion of referred adults who received intensive bail support (%)
2007-08	248	123	49.6
2019-20	461	234	50.8

Non-Aboriginal

	Number of adults referred for intensive bail support (n)	Number of adults receiving intensive bail support (n)	Proportion of referred adults who received intensive bail support (%)
2007-08	2,367	1,473	62.2
2019-20	3,189	1,666	52.2

Goal 17: Aboriginal Victorians feel safe and connected



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

Aboriginal Victorians continue to face structural barriers including racism, discrimination and unconscious bias. Ensuring that the police and corrections workforces have Aboriginal representation and that all staff complete cultural awareness training is an important part of improving justice outcomes.

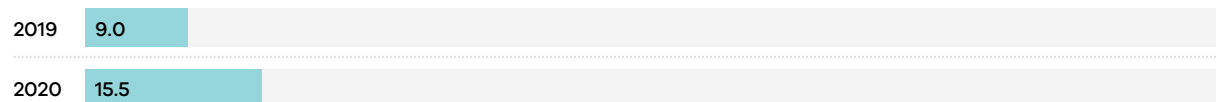
Measure 17.1.1 Proportion of police officers who have received Aboriginal cultural awareness training

As at 30 June 2020, 15.5 per cent of police officers had received Aboriginal cultural awareness training. This is an increase from nine per cent at the same time the previous year.

Measure 17.1.4 Number and proportion of Aboriginal people employed across the justice system

Since 2007-08, the number of Aboriginal people employed across the justice system has increased significantly. Due to these increases, the proportion of Aboriginal people employed across DJCS and Court Services Victoria now exceeds the Victorian public sector target of two per cent by 2022.

Proportion of police officers who have received Aboriginal cultural awareness training (%)*



*As at 30 June of given year

Aboriginal staff employed across the justice system*

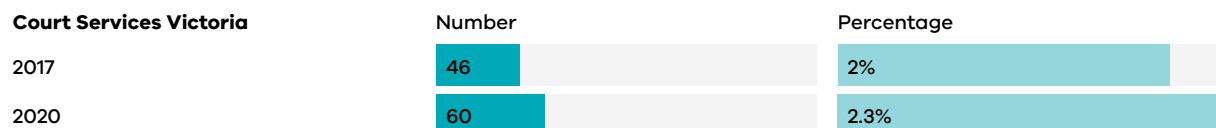
Department of Justice & Community Safety (DJCS)



Victoria Police



Court Services Victoria



*As at June 30 of given year

Preventing Aboriginal deaths in custody

2021 marks the 30-year anniversary of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC). The Commission found while Aboriginal people died in custody at similar rates to non-Aboriginal people, they were far more likely to be in prison than non-Aboriginal people. Racism and social, economic and other systemic inequalities were the most significant factors contributing to Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system.

Since its release in 1991, Victoria has taken action to implement responses to RCIADIC recommendations. While the DJCS has undertaken a broad range of actions under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and related reforms, there were three Aboriginal deaths in prison custody between July 2018 and June 2020.

Although the Coroner determined that the cause of death was natural for all three cases, this has highlighted that more work needs to be done to ensure our justice system is safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.

To this end, the Victorian Government continues to work with the Aboriginal Justice Caucus to identify reform opportunities that address Aboriginal over-representation in custody and implement the remaining RCIADIC recommendations in a way that meets the intent of the recommendations. Aboriginal leadership in overseeing the implementation of the recommendation of RCIADIC remains critical.



Victorian Government Action

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) is a formal partnership between the Aboriginal community and the Victorian Government to improve justice outcomes by addressing over-representation in the justice system and improving family and community safety.

The AJA was established in 2000 as a response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The fourth phase of AJA – Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja, launched in August 2018, is an inter-generational plan to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal justice outcomes by 2031.

In partnership with the Aboriginal Justice Caucus, the Victorian Government is currently progressing an extensive range of actions under Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja to improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal people. Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja is supported through a \$40.3 million investment over five years to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians in contact with the justice system.

Key investments across 2020 include:

- \$40.2 million in crisis accommodation and specialist services for people experiencing or at risk of family violence. The package includes targeted funding for ACCOs to meet additional demand for family violence case management and crisis support.
- \$670,000 to support Aboriginal specific family violence services to adapt service delivery in response to the impacts of coronavirus including out of hours phone support services.
- Combined Victorian Government funding of \$402,000 and Commonwealth funding of \$475,000 to VALS and Djirra to enhance IT capacity, ensuring service continuity and compliance with the Chief Health Officer's direction during the pandemic.
- \$1 million Building Works Package grants to support ACCOs to upgrade community facilities and assist with economic stimulus.
- Ongoing support for community-based justice programs totalling over \$16 million including:
 - local Justice Worker Programs in 20 ACCOs around Victoria
 - culturally appropriate family violence legal services through VALS and Djirra
 - development of Aboriginal-led family centred, restorative justice, and collaborative impact program models
 - family violence prevention programs for women and young people
 - men's behaviour change and healing programs
 - redevelopment of Baroona Youth Healing service as an alternative to remand for young people
 - three community-based diversion programs for young people
 - Aboriginal Community Justice Panels in 15 metropolitan and regional areas
 - Koori Women's Diversion Programs in four locations
 - Koori Night Patrols in two regional areas
 - independent policy and secretariat support to the Aboriginal Justice Caucus.

Key actions across 2020 include:

Youth Justice Act

DJCS is developing the *Youth Justice Act*, in partnership with the Aboriginal Justice Caucus and the *Youth Justice Act* Aboriginal Working Group, which consists of members of the Caucus and other Aboriginal community organisations. The Caucus made several legislative reform proposals that were considered by government for inclusion in the *Youth Justice Act*. In response, the following measures will be considered for the *Youth Justice Act*:

- new principles to guide all acts, decisions made and exercise of power under the legislation that impact Aboriginal children and young people, including promoting the right of Aboriginal Victorians to self-determination and supporting an Aboriginal-led youth justice system
- a statement of recognition that Aboriginal children and young people are over-represented in the Youth Justice system, and that inequality and structural racism are key drivers of this over-representation
- new obligations for the Secretary in DJCS in relation to self-determination, including requiring the Secretary to develop strategic partnerships with Aboriginal communities and to enable the progressive transfer of authority, resources and responsibilities to an Aboriginal-controlled justice system.



Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy

The Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy (Strategy) is being developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Justice Caucus (Caucus) in line with the principles of self-determination enshrined in Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja. Caucus has identified five key domains in the Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy critical to addressing over-representation and furthering self-determination to progress their vision for an end-to-end Aboriginal community-controlled youth justice system, including:

- work toward an Aboriginal-led justice response
- empower young people and community to uphold change
- protect cultural rights and increase cultural safety in the current justice system
- address intergenerational trauma and support healing
- reduce over representation and provide alternatives to custody.

Koori Youth Justice Taskforce

The Koori Youth Justice Taskforce focused on a strengths-based approach to understand how to address the systemic issues contributing to the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system. The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) conducted a parallel inquiry: *Our Youth Our Way* into the overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in the youth justice system. A combined Taskforce and Inquiry report was tabled in Parliament by CCYP on 9 May 2021.

Establishment of a new Youth Justice Budget Paper 3 (BP3) target

In 2020-21, the Minister for Youth Justice set a new BP3 target in the *2021/22 State Budget* to further reduce the number of Aboriginal children in custody on an average day. The target aims for there to be no more than 14 to 18 Aboriginal children aged 10-17 years in detention on any average day. DJCS has been working in partnership with the Aboriginal Justice Forum and communities to achieve this target.

Implementation of Community Corrections Service initiatives – Moving towards an Aboriginal community-controlled Community Corrections

Under Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja, DJCS is considering opportunities to move towards greater Aboriginal community control in community corrections and building and strengthening the compliance of Aboriginal adults on community-based orders.

Continuity of Health Care Pilot Program

The Continuity of Aboriginal Health Care pilot is an initiative under the Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Plan and a commitment under the AJA4. The program comprises two components: in-reach services within the prison health clinic and out-reach follow-up on release from prison. The aim of the program is to create stronger links between prison and community health services, increase prisoner engagement in the management of their health needs, and encourage continued health engagement on release into the community.

Decriminalising public drunkenness and implementing an alternative public health response

In December, the Summary Offences Amendment (Decriminalisation of Public Drunkenness) Bill 2020 was introduced to Parliament. As a first stage of the reform, the Bill will repeal the public drunkenness offences in the *Summary Offences Act 1966* with an effective commencement date of November 2022. DJCS is working with the Department of Health on the next implementation stage of the reforms so that by the time decriminalisation takes effect, a well-designed, collaborative and culturally safe public health model will be in place across the state. This includes working closely with the community – including the Aboriginal community and other key stakeholders – to design and implement the public health model and deliver these important reforms.

Establishing a Legislated Spent Convictions Scheme

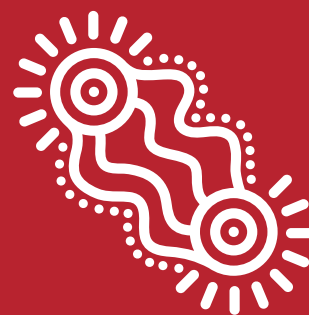
The Spent Convictions Bill 2020 (the Bill) was introduced into Parliament on 27 October 2020. The Bill implements the government response to recommendations by the Legal and Social Issues Committee's report, *Inquiry into a Legislated Spent Convictions Scheme*.

The Bill provides for an application process where serious offences can be spent after application to the Magistrates' Court. When hearing an application, among other factors, the Magistrate can take into account the unique systemic and background factors affecting Aboriginal people. This includes specific factors relating to incarceration of Aboriginal people, and the impacts of disclosure of a criminal record for Aboriginal people.

Early intervention and rehabilitation to divert children from the criminal justice system

The Victorian Government is focusing on early intervention and rehabilitation to help reduce youth crime and reoffending and is actively working to divert children from the criminal justice system. The government's Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020-2030 released in May 2020 commits to age appropriate responses for 10 to 14 year olds to keep them out of the youth justice system. DJCS is reviewing existing alternative non-justice responses for 10 to 14 year olds with the aim to analyse and understand how this cohort could be managed outside the justice system.

Domain 6: Culture & Country



Our shared commitment:

The promotion of the rights and responsibilities under section 19(2) of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Victorian Aboriginal communities and peoples are culturally diverse, with rich and varied languages, traditions, and histories. Aboriginal Victorians hold distinct cultural rights, including the right to maintain their spiritual, material, and economic relationship with their traditional lands and waters and continue to strengthen and grow with the resurgence of language, lore, and cultural knowledge.

The richness and diversity of Aboriginal history and culture in Victoria, and the resilience and strength of past and present Aboriginal communities and peoples, is something for all Victorians to acknowledge and celebrate.



Elders
Seating

SMITH STREET
DREAM

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



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

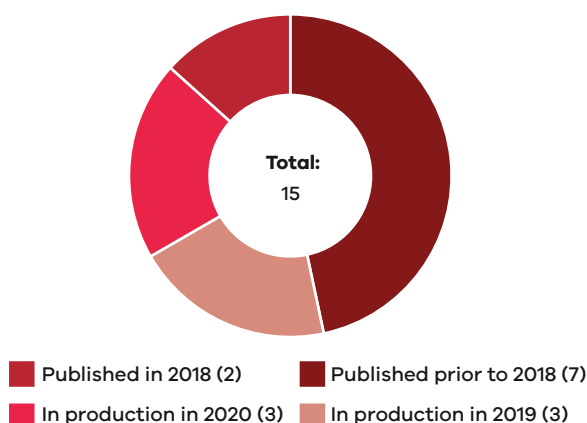
Measure 18.1.1 Area of Crown land with native title determinations and/or Recognition and Settlement Agreements

In Victoria there are three different processes through which Aboriginal people can seek the formal recognition of the State as Traditional Owners of their ancestral Country:

- Native title determination under the *Native Title Act 1993*
- Traditional Owner settlement under the *Victorian Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (TOS Act)
- Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Heritage Act).

In 2019-20, native title is recognised across 14,899 square kilometres of land. A further 50,976 square kilometres of land is recognised under TOS Act agreements, which is a significant increase from 30,766 square kilometres in 2018-19.

Number of Whole of Country plans published or in production



Measure 18.1.2 Work of the State in advancing the treaty process

The Victorian Government has committed to advancing treaty with Aboriginal Victorians as an essential step in enabling self-determination. Victoria is currently in phase two of a three-phase treaty process. In July 2020, the Victorian Government also committed to a truth and justice process to formally recognise past wrongs and address ongoing injustices experienced by Aboriginal Victorians. This work will be led by the independent Yoo-rrook Justice Commission, announced on 9 March 2021.

Measure 18.1.3 Number of Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) that have submitted a notice of intention to enter into an Aboriginal cultural heritage land management agreement

One avenue for recognising Aboriginal land, water and cultural heritage rights is through the establishment of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreements (ACHLMAs). ACHLMAs are designed to facilitate a proactive, holistic approach to managing and protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage and landscape. In 2019-20, two RAPs submitted an intention to enter an ACHLMA.

Measure 18.1.4 Number of Whole of Country Plans published

Whole of Country Plans are overarching, long-term visions, developed by Traditional Owner groups, that set out clear goals and priorities, principles of engagement and measures of success in caring for Country. There are currently a total of nine Whole of Country Plans published in Victoria.

Area of Crown land with native title determinations and/or Recognition and Settlement Agreements

	Victorian land area over which native title exists (km ²)	Victorian land area over which TOS Act agreements have been reached (km ²)
2008-09	1,707	0
2019-20	14,899	50,976

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

Case Study – Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreement

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) manages and maintains thousands of kilometres of forest roads and tracks on Gunaikurnai Country. Along this road network, there are over 500 known cultural heritage sites. GLaWAC and DELWP have entered into an ACHLMA for road and track maintenance within State Forest where DELWP is the land and road manager. Development of the ACHLMA was guided by key principles, including respect for

and recognition of GLaWAC as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of their cultural heritage, and empowering GLaWAC to be the decision makers in respect of their cultural heritage. This ACHLMA is a significant milestone for both GLaWAC and DELWP, respecting the principles of self-determination for the Gunaikurnai and meeting the operational requirements of DELWP.

Measure 18.1.5 Number of Joint Management Plans and area of land covered

There are three joint management plans with three Traditional Owner groups in Victoria, covering a total of 1225.75 square kilometres, spanning 17 parks and reserves, as follows:

- Gunaikurnai: joint management plan over ten parks and reserves in the Gippsland region
- Dja Dja Wurrung: joint management plan for six parks and reserves in the Central West
- Yorta Yorta: joint management plan for Barmah National Park in the Riverina region.



3

Joint Management Plans



1225 km²

Of land covered by Joint Management Plans

Joint management plans provide the strategic direction for the management of Country (public parks and reserves) subject to joint management arrangements between Traditional Owners and the State Government. Joint management arrangements and the development of joint management plans are delivered under Traditional Owner Land Management Agreements.

A key attribute of joint management plans is that they integrate Traditional Owner knowledge and care for Country into the management of the parks and reserves subject to the plan. The plans are developed by a Traditional Owner Land Management Board, which is established by the Minister for Environment, Energy and Climate Change, and comprises a majority of Traditional Owners. A joint management plan replaces any prior park management plans.

Joint management can involve the transfer of legal title to the land from the Government to Traditional Owners, where joint management occurs as part of a Recognition and Settlement Agreement under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*. Where this occurs, the title is a modified form of freehold title referred to as Aboriginal Title. The parks and reserves under joint management with Gunaikurnai and Dja Dja Wurrung are all Aboriginal Title lands.

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

Measure 18.1.6 Number of cultural burns conducted

Cultural burning assists in maintaining the land for future generations and reconnecting Aboriginal people with their history and culture. In the twelve months to June 2020, Traditional Owners conducted eight cultural burns with the support of Victorian Government agencies. This is a significant increase from the previous year (five in total) and highlights the critical role of Traditional Owners in fire management, particularly in light of the recent 2019-20 bushfire crisis.

Number of cultural burns conducted



* As at 30 June 2020

Case study – Biodiversity Bushfire Response – Healing Country

The 2019-20 Victorian bushfires were exceptional in size and impact, with more than 1.5 million hectares of area burnt across Victoria. \$1.75 million in Early Relief and Recovery grants were provided to Traditional Owners to undertake activities to heal Country. Activities have included: reading Country assessments to identify culturally significant species and biodiversity values and the impact of fires on these species; health of Country assessments; building Traditional Owner capacity to undertake different types of assessments; species surveys; and two-way cultural survey/monitoring of species and environment.



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

Measure 18.1.7 Number of formal partnership agreements for planning and management between Aboriginal communities and key water and catchment agencies

Traditional Owner corporations hold significant rights to the land and have cultural obligations to manage traditional lands and waters. They are equal partners in ensuring catchment health. In many cases, Traditional Owners' rights over Crown land and waterways are recognised in settlement agreements (covering more than 40 parks and reserves) and governance arrangements to ensure their perspectives, knowledge and interests are valued.

In 2016, the Victorian Government released *Water for Victoria*, a plan for a future with less water as Victoria responds to the impact of climate change and a growing population. The plan commits to recognising Aboriginal values and objectives of water, including Aboriginal values and traditional ecological knowledge in water planning, supporting Aboriginal access to water for economic development, and building capacity to increase Aboriginal participation in water management. This commitment was supported with \$9.7 million in funding to partner with Traditional Owner and nation groups to explore Aboriginal water values, and access to water for economic development. This has seen a significant increase in the number of partnerships during the reporting period.

As of June 2020, there were 90 active and ongoing partnership agreements between Traditional Owner groups and key water catchment agencies to promote Aboriginal values and traditional ecological knowledge in water planning and management.



Case study - The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Training Program (ACHMTP)

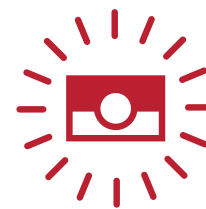
The ACHMTP supports Aboriginal Victorians with responsibilities under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* to undertake unaccredited and accredited training (Certificate IV in ACHM) in the management, protection and enhancement of Victoria's unique Aboriginal cultural heritage. A total of 177 Aboriginal Victorians hold the Certificate IV qualification in ACHM and 507 people have engaged with the program through three-day workshops delivered by Aboriginal Victoria.

The initiative has developed a workforce of professionally qualified Aboriginal people that can manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage for RAPs, Traditional Owner groups, government departments and agencies, within private consultancies and in the not-for-profit sector.

Case study - Aboriginal Water Officer Initiative

DELWP provides funding directly to Traditional Owner Corporations and Catchment Management Authorities across Victoria to recruit Aboriginal Water Officers. Between 2016 and 2020, this funding has resulted in 22.5 full time employees being provided directly to Traditional Owner corporations or their chosen host. The officers contribute to positive environmental outcomes, support economic growth for local communities, and increase involvement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians in the water sector and in making decisions about their Country.

Goal 19: Aboriginal culture and language are supported and celebrated



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

Past government policies of dispossession and assimilation have led to a decline in Aboriginal cultural practice and language transmission. Despite this, the strength and resilience of Aboriginal Victorians has helped maintain language and culture, which continue to be practiced and passed on to future generations.

Measure 19.1.1 Participation in community events which celebrate Aboriginal culture

Case study - NAIDOC online concert

National NAIDOC week was postponed in 2020 until November due to coronavirus. The Victorian Government responded to requests from the Aboriginal community to host an event to celebrate culture and bring community together during this time, despite social restrictions. The Government partnered with the Victorian NAIDOC Committee, 3KND Kool 'N' Deadly radio, VACCHO and the Arts Centre Melbourne to host the Victorian NAIDOC 2020 Always was, Always will be concert. The concert was live streamed on 11

July 2020 and featured live performances from Uncle Archie Roach, Troy Cassar-Daley, Uncle Kutcha Edwards, Lady Lash, Mau Power, Alice Skye, Scott Darlow and Allara Briggs Pattison, along with comedy performances and Aboriginal dance groups. The live streamed event received over 50,000 views across Australia and internationally. The success of the event has subsequently resulted in a request for this to become an annual event in partnership with the Victorian Government and the Victorian Aboriginal Community.



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

Measure 19.1.2 Investment in Aboriginal language and culture revitalisation programs

Connectedness to culture and community strengthens individual and collective identities, and promotes positive self-esteem, resilience and improved outcomes for Aboriginal people.

While cultural identity is central to the lives of Aboriginal Victorians, all Victorians should celebrate and take pride in Aboriginal culture and language.

The below table outlines standalone Aboriginal language and culture revitalisation initiatives supported by the Victorian Government. Significant government investment in language and culture revitalisation is also embedded in many of the foundational programs and services delivered by ACCOs, such as kinship family finding, return to Country and cultural camps.

Koori Heritage Trust (KHT)	The Victorian Government provides funding to KHT for core operations, family history services and an oral history program. KHT offers various services, including Aboriginal history and culture exhibitions, Aboriginal art galleries, cultural tours, cultural awareness training and a retail shop selling handmade cultural items.
Connecting Home Limited (CHL)	The Victorian Government provides funding to CHL for continued services to address the effects of forced removal, giving effect to the ongoing commitment to implement the recommendations of the Bringing them Home report and respond to the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.
Cultural Markers Project	The Victorian Government provides support for the Cultural Markers project which aims to increase visibility of Aboriginal people and culture in Victoria via the use of Cultural Markers. Usually, Cultural Markers are a plaque of some kind, a sign and/or statue. The project will attract cutting edge technology to create markers that are installed throughout Melbourne and regions. It is anticipated that the Cultural Markers become a standout tourist attraction and produce educational, economic and tourism partnerships that engage members of the public and bring to the forefront the wealth of Aboriginal culture that is alive, active, living and breathing in the state of Victoria.
Reconciliation Victoria (RecVic)	The Victorian Government provides funding to RecVic to deliver a range of activities that promote reconciliation within the community.
Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (LTAT)	The Victorian Government provides funding to LTAT to deliver municipal and essential services to its residents. This funding supports the management of LTAT's land, water and built environment, as well as the preservation of cultural heritage.
Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC)	The Victorian Government provided funding to TLaWC to organise and host four camps of cultural strengthening and language revival activities at Camp Jungai for Taungurung people. These activities included learning, teaching and performing cultural dance and ceremony, and cultural guidance with Men's and Women's business, guided by Elders within the community. Taungurung Elders were invited to host fireside talks, share cultural knowledge and speak about life experiences to the community including young people. The four camps held over the year sparked more interest within the community to learn Taungurung language. This was considered by the TLaWC Board which led to the formation of the Taungurung Language Reference Group, with a view of developing a language program and language revitalisation.

Goal 20: Racism is eliminated



20.1 Address and eliminate racism

The Victorian Government acknowledges that Australia, including Victoria, has its own sorry history of violence and racism, and that the structures and systems established during colonisation deliberately excluded Aboriginal people and their lore, customs and traditions. Systemic and structural racism still exist today, and have contributed to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in Victoria's justice and child protection systems. Racism continues to significantly impact Aboriginal people across many areas of their lives, including their health and wellbeing.

Measure 20.1.2 Prevalence of racist attitudes against Aboriginal Victorians held by the Victorian community

One indicator of racism experienced by Aboriginal Victorians is formal complaints made to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). In 2018-19, three complaints were made to the VEOHRC about racial discrimination towards Aboriginal Victorians. While this follows a positive trend (there were 15 reports in 2016-17 and nine in 2017-18), it is important to recognise that this data is only a measure of formal reports made to VEOHRC and does not capture unreported racism.

The Victorian Government is working with the VEOHRC to improve mechanisms for reporting racism, including through the development of a community reporting tool that simplifies reporting and is accessible through local government and community organisation websites.

Given its wide-ranging impacts, it is important that we continue to identify other ways of measuring the prevalence of racism.

Number of complaints under the *Equal Opportunity Act* and *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act* relating to Indigenous people



Victorian Government Action

The Victorian Government is committed to tackling racism in our society, including addressing and eliminating racism directed toward Aboriginal Victorians. The Yoo-rrook Justice Commission and the Anti-Racism Taskforce and Strategy are important elements of this work.

It is anticipated that the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission will investigate both historical and ongoing injustices, including racism, committed against Aboriginal Victorians since colonisation by the State and non-State entities, across all areas of social, political and economic life. Truth telling and truth listening can help non-Aboriginal Victorians to confront unconscious bias and structural racism. The Commission is expected to commence in July 2021, with its final report due three years after establishment.

In November 2020, the Victorian Government committed to establishing an Anti-Racism Taskforce to guide the development of a new Anti-Racism Strategy, due to be launched in March 2022. In 2020-21, \$1.4 million was provided to deliver this work, including \$0.065 million to support the Taskforce's establishment.

The Taskforce's membership will reflect the diversity of Aboriginal and multicultural communities and their experiences. Members will be selected on the basis of their professional

skills, experience and expertise in areas directly relevant to the scope of the Taskforce, with two positions designated for Aboriginal members. Government is working collaboratively to ensure that in the establishment of the Taskforce, membership appropriately reflects not only lived experience of racism, but an understanding of power dynamics, unconscious bias and privilege, and how these result in structural racism.

The Victorian Government is also committed to Aboriginal self-determination, cultural safety, cultural revitalisation and working in partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to manage culture and country through Pupangarli Marnmarnepu (owning our future) – DELWP's Self-Determination Reform Strategy. Pupangarli Marnmarnepu acknowledges Aboriginal Victorians have the right to make choices that best reflect them on their journey to self-determination; that it is our responsibility to partner with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to advance self-determination by committing to delivering real outcomes and following Traditional Owner leads.

Key investments in 2020-21 include:

- **\$10 million** to provide immediate support and funding for cultural strengthening and celebration through the Aboriginal COVID-19 Response Fund. The Fund was designed as part of the \$23 million COVID-19 response package to support Aboriginal Victorians through the pandemic and supports self-determination by putting decision-making power back in the hands of Aboriginal communities.
- **\$18 million** to improve recognition and management of water by Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians through the Water, Country and Community Program. Water, Country, and Community is a continuation of the Victorian Aboriginal Water Program and has been developed through learnings from the first four years. The funding will be distributed over four years (2020 to 2024), through different funding rounds and amounts. Funding is available for Aboriginal Water Officers, the Aboriginal Water Officer Network, and projects, research, and resources to start and/or continue to better understand, document and progress Aboriginal access and management requirements to water, for self-determined purposes.
- **\$1.25 million** for Advanced bushfire management: Aboriginal Cultural Fire Leadership to enable Traditional Owner groups to lead the implementation of the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy. This work directly contributes to the implementation of the VAAF and Pupangarli Marnmarnepu.
- **\$4.8 million** for the Aboriginal Water Program to support the extension of existing Aboriginal Water Officers (or their equivalents) and Traditional Owner led water related projects.
- **\$418,000** for the core environmental and Traditional Owner program Managing Country Together. Parks Victoria will deliver a range of core services for land and management services in partnership with Traditional Owners to address the increasing impact of climate change, particularly with the increased length, intensity and impact of fire seasons as well as ensuring compliance with laws to protect Aboriginal heritage.



Key actions across 2020 include:

- **Bushfire biodiversity response and recovery - maximising long term resilience**
In response to the 2019-20 bushfires, funding has been provided to nine Traditional Owner groups impacted by the bushfires to undertake activities within and adjacent to the current fire extent to read and heal Country and species of cultural significance using cultural knowledge and practices. To maximise long term resilience, \$2.05 million has been provided until June 2021 with further extension of this funding expected to June 2023.
- **The Aboriginal Access to Water Roadmap (Roadmap)**
The Roadmap delivers on the policy commitment made through Water for Victoria with funding provided to the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners Corporations to lead this work in partnership with the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations. The Roadmap contributes to self-determination by identifying opportunities for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians to access water, manage and own water for spiritual, cultural, environmental and social economic purposes.
- **Forest Modernisation Program**
Funding totalling \$1.2 million to support Traditional Owner corporations' capacity to facilitate or lead any collective and common policy and project initiatives related to the Forest Fire and Regions Groups land management portfolio.
- **Sea Country Project**
In line with a self-determination approach, funding of \$480,000 supports Traditional Owner involvement in marine and coastal planning and management, including sea and country plans, two-way capacity and capability building, and restoration of marine and coastal cultural knowledge and practice.
- **Traditional Owner Ranger Programs**
Traditional Owner Ranger Programs are tailored to the specific needs of each individual Traditional Owner Group Entity (TOGE) and their jointly managed Crown lands:
 - The Gunaikurnai TOS Act Agreement package provided \$1.031 million to fund the direct employment of eight Gunaikurnai Rangers to work on the 10 jointly-managed Gunaikurnai parks and reserves in Gippsland in 2020-21
 - The Taungurung TOS Act Agreement package provided \$1.305 million to fund the direct employment six Taungurung Rangers (seconded to Parks Victoria) to work on nine jointly-managed Taungurung parks and reserves in North East Victoria
 - The Dja Dja Wurrung TOS Act Agreement package provided \$358,000 to fund Parks Victoria's employment of three Dja Dja Wurrung Rangers to work on the six jointly-managed parks and reserves in Central Victoria in 2020-21
 - The State's Economic Stimulus Funding Program provided Parks Victoria with \$636,480 in 2020-21 for the employment of four Yorta Yorta Joint Management rangers, including salary and training costs, and an operating budget for priority on ground works. It also provided Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation with \$155,150 for a Joint Management Coordinator to act as a liaison between Yorta Yorta National Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria and oversee the new Joint Management rangers.
- **Traditional Owner Renewable Energy Program (TOREP)**
TOREP will make a total investment of \$1.1 million available as grant funding to all 11 of Victoria's current RAPs, to enable the empowerment of Traditional Owners to self-determine how they want to be part of Victoria's renewable energy transition.



Appendix A

Measures not featured in this report

This report does not include reference to the measures listed below as no new data is available since they were reported in 2019 report. The most recent data for these measures can be found on the online Data Dashboard.

Children, Family and Home

- Measure 3.2.1 – Proportion of households who had reliable access to sufficient food in previous 12 months
- Measure 3.2.2 – Proportion of households with less than 50 per cent median equivalised income
- Measure 3.2.3 – Proportion of households experiencing rental stress
- Measure 3.2.4b – Proportion of Victorians who are homeless and proportion of clients accessing homelessness services
- Measure 3.2.5 – Proportion living in overcrowded dwellings

Learning and Skills

- Measure 4.1.3 – Proportion of children vulnerable on one or more domain on the Australian Early Development Census
- Measure 5.2.5b – Number of school based Aboriginal education workers (FTE positions) (at 30 June 2018)
- Measure 6.1.1 – Proportion of young people aged 20-24 with Year 12 or equivalent
- Measure 7.1.2 – Proportion of 17-24-year-old school leavers participating in full-time education and training and/or employment
- Measure 7.1.4 – Proportion of 20-64 year old with qualifications at Certificate III level or above

Opportunity and Prosperity

- Measure 8.1.1 – Median household income and median equivalized household income
- Measure 8.2.1 – Proportion of homeowners versus other tenure types (by age bracket)
- Measure 8.3.1 – Number of Victorian business owner managers who are Aboriginal
- Measure 9.1.1 – Employment to population ratio
- Measure 9.1.2 – Proportion employed in full-time versus part-time or casual employment
- Measure 9.2.1 – Workforce participation of women
- Measure 9.3.1 – Workforce participation by age, disability status and regional versus metropolitan
- Measure 9.4.1 – Aboriginal employment by sector, industry and occupation, with analysis by growth industry
- Measure 10.1.1 – Victoria's Aboriginal income as sum of all income earned by Aboriginal workers
- Measure 10.1.2 – Opportunity cost: Aboriginal gross income at parity minus actual

Health and Wellbeing


- Measure 11.1.1 – Life expectancy at birth, by sex
- Measure 11.1.4 – Rate of hospitalisations for potentially preventable causes (vaccine preventable, acute, chronic and all)
- Descriptive Measure – 12.1.6 Services implement strategies, partnerships and campaigns, and offer care and support that is inclusive and addresses the needs of Aboriginal people who are LGBTI
- Measure 13.1.1 – Proportion of Aboriginal Victorians reporting experiences of racism in health setting
- Measure 13.1.2 – Proportion reporting positive client experience of GP services
- Descriptive measure 13.1.4 Number and proportion of Aboriginal people employed in the health or social services sector
- Measure 14.1.3 – Proportion reporting strong social networks they can draw on in times of crisis
- Measure 14.1.4 – Proportion of Aboriginal Victorians with a disability who have strong social support networks.

Justice and Safety

- Measure 17.1.2 – Proportion who feel safe/very safe walking alone at night in local area
- Measure 17.1.3 – Proportion who have experienced any violence in the last 12 months

Culture and Country

- Measure 19.1.1 – Participation in community events which celebrate Aboriginal culture
- Measure 20.1.1 – Proportion of Aboriginal people who report having experienced racism in the previous 12 months



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this document may include photos, quotations and/or names of people who are deceased.

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