

# Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2021





# Acknowledgment

**We acknowledge Victoria's First Peoples and their ongoing strength in practising 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 respect to their Elders past and present.**

We recognise that from time immemorial, First Peoples in Victoria have practised their law and lore, customs and languages, and nurtured Country through their spiritual, cultural, material and economic connections to land, water and resources.

We acknowledge the long-lasting, far-reaching and intergenerational consequences of the dispossession of First Peoples of their Country are a direct result of colonisation and the establishment of the State of Victoria. The reality of colonisation involved establishing Victoria with the specific intent of excluding Aboriginal people and their laws, cultures, customs and traditions, including through horrific violence perpetuated at individual, societal and systemic levels. This history, and the systems it gave rise to, continue to harm First Peoples today. It is only through true Aboriginal self-determination that we can begin to right the wrongs of the past.

We acknowledge the strength and resilience of First Peoples in the face of historical and ongoing injustices, and the survival of their living cultures, knowledge and traditions.

## **Language Statement**

Language is important and can change over time, and words can have different meanings for different people.

We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, communities and cultures throughout Victoria. While the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are commonly used to describe Aboriginal people of southeast Australia, we have used the term 'Aboriginal' to include all people of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent who live in Victoria.



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# Message from the Premier



As the government looks towards entering historic treaty negotiations, and as the Yoorrook Justice Commission commences its second year of operation, the 2021 Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report offers us a timely opportunity to reflect.

It's a chance to take stock of the progress we have made under the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (2018-2023), the Self-Determination Reform Framework, and for the first time, the Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2021-2023. It's an opportunity to acknowledge how much more work there is to do, to learn from what has worked, and to listen to the solutions put forward by First Peoples.

The Victorian Government is committed to justice for First Peoples, to working in partnership, and to addressing racism, discrimination and inequality. We know that to forge a stronger and fairer future, First Peoples' voices must lead the way. It is through treaty and truth that we will create change. It is through meaningful self-determination that better results will be achieved. Outcomes must be shaped and driven by First Peoples.

The Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report provides us with the data we need to learn, and to consider how we can do more, and do better.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Dan Andrews'.

**The Hon Daniel Andrews MP**  
*Premier*

# Message from the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples



I am pleased in my role as Minister for Treaty and First Peoples to present the Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report 2021. As Victoria looks to the future and prepares to negotiate treaties with First Peoples, this Report powerfully demonstrates where we are at, and how far we have to go, to ensure equity of outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

This Report is an important accountability tool. It provides an opportunity to consider how Government has tracked against our commitments in the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023, Victoria's overarching and ambitious framework for Aboriginal affairs. This Report also measures Government's progress against two key components of our overall commitments in Aboriginal affairs; the Self-Determination Reform Framework and, for the first time, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

This Report shows a range of positive outcomes, including the highest rate of Aboriginal child immunisations than ever before, enrolment of 100 per cent of Aboriginal four-year-old children in a funded kindergarten program, and significant increases in the number of Aboriginal people accessing health services. However, this Report also demonstrates that systemic injustices remain.

Colonisation, the dispossession of First Peoples of their land and waters and systemic racism continue to harm First Peoples today. This is particularly apparent in the ongoing over-representation of First Peoples in the criminal justice and out-of-home care systems. The responsibility for addressing this over-representation lies with Government, and this report documents actions being taken.

Our commitment to treaty, in partnership with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, and the establishment of Australia's first truth-telling commission, the Yoorrook Justice Commission, are central to achieving true self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians. We are also driving reform through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, with Aboriginal voices leading the way through the establishment of a new Closing the Gap Partnership Forum.

As the case studies in this Report demonstrate, the best outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians are achieved when policies and programs are led by the strengths and expertise of Aboriginal people.

While the voices of First Peoples have informed the narrative and analysis in this Report, Government recognises that research and data can be influenced by systemic racism and bias. First Peoples are often misrepresented through deficit framing that denies sovereignty and does not support agency and self-determination.

Government will be guided by First Peoples, including recommendations from the Yoorrook Justice Commission and proposals raised as part of the treaty process, when it comes to best practice Indigenous Data Sovereignty reform.

Although the past two years have presented unprecedented challenges, Government's commitment to self-determination has remained a priority. The 2022/23 State Budget invests more than \$400 million in Aboriginal affairs over the next four years. I look forward to continuing to work with Aboriginal Victorians towards treaty, truth and justice; and to realising a shared, self-determined future that First Peoples demand and deserve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabrielle Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Gabrielle Williams MP**

*Minister for Treaty and First Peoples*

# About this Report

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

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

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.

The Report also outlines ongoing work across government to progress Aboriginal self-determination in line with the Self-Determination Reform Framework (SDRF). Under the SDRF, Victorian Government departments and agencies are continuing to reform internal processes, practices and policies to enable Aboriginal self-determination. This includes the Victorian Government’s journey towards treaty, in partnership with the First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria (First Peoples’ Assembly), as well as our commitment to supporting the objectives and transformative priorities of the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

Victoria’s priorities under the VAAF and the SDRF are complimented by our commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement). For the first time, this Report includes dedicated reporting on progress in Victoria to implement the National Agreement through the Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2021-2023 (Implementation Plan). Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive outcome-focused goals under the VAAF and Victoria’s Implementation Plan, over and above targets set under the National Agreement.

The Report provides community and government with valuable information that allows for accountability of government’s actions, monitoring of outcomes, as well as highlighting the challenges that still need to be addressed.

In line with government’s commitment to self-determination, the Report was developed through a coordinated and collaborative approach with input from government departments and their relevant Aboriginal Governance Forums. This is the third annual Report against the VAAF since its release in 2018. With the current VAAF set to expire in 2023, government and Aboriginal Victorians will soon have the opportunity to consider future approaches, including how arrangements might be influenced through treaty outcomes.


























**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"> <li>• Prioritise culture</li> <li>• Address trauma and support healing</li> <li>• Address racism and promote cultural safety</li> <li>• Transfer power and resources to communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human rights</li> <li>• Cultural integrity</li> <li>• Commitment</li> <li>• Aboriginal expertise</li> <li>• Partnership</li> <li>• Investment</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Empowerment</li> <li>• Cultural safety</li> <li>• Equity</li> <li>• Accountability</li> </ul>

**Domains**

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

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

# 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 data reported provides an assessment of progress for the 2020-21 financial year, or previous years if the 2020-21 data is not available.

Data has been sourced from annual State and Commonwealth administrative collections. If this is not available, survey data has been used, which is the case 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 commonwealth survey collections. The use of survey data means the latest year of available data varies across the Report. 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.

## Crude rates

Due to the large array of data sources used to calculate progress against each measure, the majority of rate calculations used in this Report are crude rates. Where age standardised rates have been used, this has been noted in the Report.

## Closing the Gap data

Summaries of how Victoria is tracking nationally for the 17 Closing the Gap targets and outcomes are included on the overview page for each relevant VAAF goal. There is currently no new data available for eight of the 17 targets. Over time, as more data becomes available, the monitoring of the targets will provide greater insight into what progress is being made.

For some targets (such as Target 1 and Target 14), reporting is only for those jurisdictions which have adequate levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification. Future reporting aims to include additional disaggregation for all states and territories.

As Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive goals under the VAAF than those set out under the National Agreement, many VAAF goals and measures do not have a counterpoint under the National Agreement for direct comparison.

Data on Victoria's progress towards the 2031 Closing the Gap targets can be found at [www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard](http://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard). This data is released quarterly with the annual data report released in July of each year by the Federal Productivity Commission.



## Data availability for VAAF measures

Several measures do not have updated data available for inclusion in this Report because of the frequency of data collection, particularly for the Australian Census. Updated data for these measures will therefore next be reported on in the 2022 VAAAR. All measures, including measures in previous Reports, are accessible through the VAAF Data Dashboard.

## VAAF Data Dashboard

In line with the Government's commitment in the VAAF to improve data access, transparency and narration, an interactive VAAF Data Dashboard has been developed.

The VAAF Data Dashboard can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard). It offers a user-friendly platform to access detailed state level data. It also includes disaggregated data at the Local Government Area level where available. While this Report is limited to the data available during the reporting cycle, the VAAF Data Dashboard will be updated regularly to report on measures when new data become available.

## COVID-19 pandemic

Changes in performance for some measures between 2020 and 2022 may be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next iteration of reporting will likely provide a more robust picture of trends from 2020.

## Indigenous Data Sovereignty

The Victorian Government acknowledges the importance of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and is committed to working with the Yoorrook Justice Commission as well as Aboriginal communities and organisations, including the First Peoples' Assembly, to develop appropriate policies and frameworks in line with its commitment under the VAAF and National Agreement. Many departments are also continuing work to progress data sovereignty principles.



# How government is transforming to enable self-determination

**Self-determination is a right of Aboriginal people and is key to improved outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. The SDRF was developed in 2019 to embed government's commitment to self-determination across all areas of government, and to help fulfil the ambitious and forward-looking agenda of the VAAF.**

Government policies, processes and procedures can hinder self-determination, and therefore significant effort is required by government to eliminate these structural and systemic barriers and put new self-determined policies, programs and systems in place.

All government departments and agencies are required to report annually on what they are doing to action the VAAF's four self-determination enablers (Figure 1). The 2020 Report presented examples of government actions in a standalone section but in this Report the actions can be found under the relevant VAAF domain.

Despite the huge challenges faced by all during the COVID-19 pandemic, government has continued to work towards systemic and structural transformation to enable self-determination. However, some planned initiatives and commitments were put on hold whilst public sector resourcing was directed to the COVID-19 response. While this Report shows there has been significant action by government, there is still a long way to go to fully realise Aboriginal self-determination.



**Self-determination enabler (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**

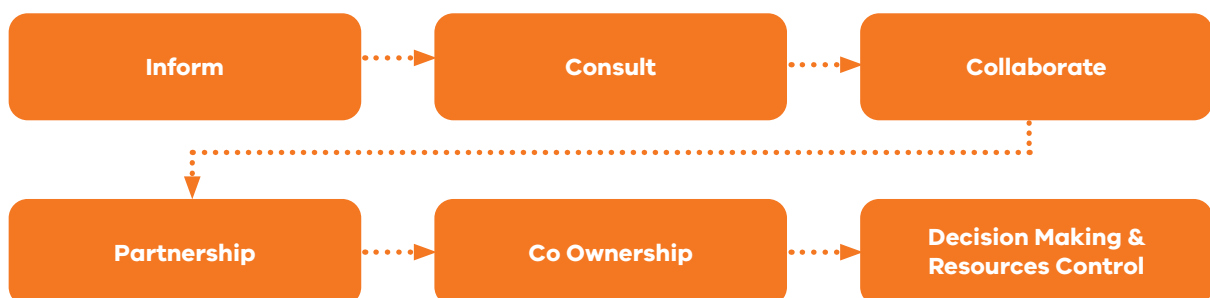
The structures and systems established during colonisation had the specific intent to exclude Aboriginal people and their laws, customs and traditions, resulting in entrenched systemic and structural racism. Governments as well as Aboriginal and mainstream organisations and services should provide mechanisms 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)**



# Government action under the four self-determination enablers

## Prioritise culture

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

Prioritising culture across government's policies, programs and services ensures Aboriginal people can continue to share pride in their identity. Prioritising culture is also key to creating culturally safe workplaces, policies, programs and services. Creating a culturally safe environment is critical to government engaging with Aboriginal Victorians in a more respectful and inclusive way. Victoria has seen first-hand that making culture a priority in policy, program and service delivery leads to better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

## Address racism and promote cultural safety

To advance self-determination, government must ensure that its systems and funded services are culturally safe, relevant, accessible and responsive. Critically, government must also acknowledge and implement initiatives to overcome racism, unconscious bias and discrimination in government laws, policy, practice, systems and institutions. Systemic racism and unconscious bias are a primary contributor to social and economic disadvantage, such as the over-representation of Aboriginal Victorians in the criminal justice and child protection systems.

Cultural safety refers to 'an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening'.

The Victorian Government is committed to services being culturally safe and responsive, whether that service is provided by an Aboriginal organisation, a government department or agency or a mainstream non-government organisation. This is a key part of transforming government organisations.

## Address trauma and support healing

Addressing past and ongoing trauma, preventing intergenerational trauma, and supporting healing processes are fundamental to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, families and communities. This begins with acknowledging past and ongoing consequences of colonisation, dispossession, forced child removal, and other discriminatory policies. However, government must also play a key role in prioritising restorative processes, embedding trauma-informed policies and programs, reforming discriminatory laws, and developing new relationships of trust between government and Aboriginal communities.

## Transfer power and resources to communities

Government must commit to self-determination by transferring power to communities and resourcing local Aboriginal organisations to lead the design, development and delivery of policies and services.

Significant governance reform is creating new approaches of working with Aboriginal Victorians. Respectful and collaborative partnerships are an important step as government continues to shift toward community-led decision-making and resourcing. 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 (see Figure 2). 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.

**Four self-determination enablers (Figure 3)**

**For government action to prioritise culture, look for actions with this symbol**



Prioritise culture

**For government action to address trauma and support healing, look for actions with this symbol**



Address trauma and support healing

**For government action to address racism and promote cultural safety, look for actions with this symbol:**



Address racism and promote cultural safety

**For government action to transfer power and resources, look for actions with this symbol**



Transfer power and resources to communities

# Victoria's approach to implementing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

## Victoria's first Closing the Gap Implementation Plan

The new National Agreement, signed in July 2020, was negotiated between all Australian Governments and the Coalition of Peaks, a representative body of over seventy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak organisations and members. It represents a shift at the national level in the approach of governments to closing the gap, one that is built upon genuine and meaningful partnerships with the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, Traditional Owner groups and the wider Aboriginal community.

The National Agreement is structured around four priority reform areas that are the mutually reinforcing enablers for achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal people. The priority reforms also broadly align with the four self-determination enablers in the VAAF (see Figure 1), which has guided the Victorian Government's efforts to improve outcomes for and with First Peoples since 2018.

The four priority reforms are:

- Priority Reform One: Formal partnerships and shared decision-making
- Priority Reform Two: Building the community-controlled sector
- Priority Reform Three: Transforming government organisations
- Priority Reform Four: Shared access to data and information at a regional level.

The National Agreement also sets out 17 socioeconomic targets across areas that have an impact on life outcomes for Aboriginal people. These targets aim to improve overall health and wellbeing for Aboriginal Victorians by closing the gap in outcomes across health, justice, education, economic and cultural areas. Summaries of how Victoria is progressing against these targets are included on the overview page of each relevant VAAF goal.

The Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2021-2023 (Implementation Plan) outlines the actions Victoria will undertake to implement the National Agreement and achieve equity for Aboriginal Victorians. Many of the Victorian actions reported under the priority reforms are progressing outside the National Agreement's formal governance, as part of Victoria's

commitment to broad self-determination reform. In 2022, the Victorian Government established a new Partnership Forum on Closing the Gap (Partnership Forum). The Partnership Forum is Victoria's formal partner for decision-making on Closing the Gap, and ensures implementation is community-led. The Partnership Forum is still in its establishment phase. In the spirit of self-determination, the Victorian Government has postponed decision-making on some implementation actions until Aboriginal representatives on the Partnership Forum confirm their readiness to make informed decisions. More detail about the Partnership Forum is outlined under Priority Reform One.

## Reprioritisation of effort and investment

The Victorian Government will work with the Partnership Forum to identify opportunities to reprioritise efforts over the next twelve months, to achieve better outcomes.

Victoria will action several commitments under the National Agreement in 2022. This includes a self-assessment of our Implementation Plan to identify any gaps in the breadth and depth of Victoria's actions.

Other examples of reprioritisation opportunities include:

- **Access to Information (Target 17(b)):** Victoria will ensure this target is reflected in our Implementation Plan and a comprehensive set of actions is committed to (see below).
- **Inland Waters (Target 15c):** If agreed by the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council) (Ministers from each jurisdiction and Coalition of Peaks), Target 15c and associated actions will also be reflected in our Implementation Plan.
- **Expenditure Review:** As noted under Priority Reform Two, work is underway to identify current spending on Aboriginal programs and services as well as reprioritisation opportunities to ACCOs. The exact number of funded ACCOs, and the relevant funding, will be determined as part of the expenditure review, which is due for Joint Council consideration in December 2022.

All key decisions regarding Victoria's implementation approach for the National Agreement will be made in partnership with the Partnership Forum.





## Updating Victoria's Implementation Plan

It will be crucial that Victoria's Implementation Plan continues to be reviewed and updated to ensure it remains relevant, transparent and ambitious. Victoria will provide an update to our Implementation Plan in coming months. This review will take place in partnership with the Partnership Forum.

## Partnership actions

The Victorian Government is committed to the establishment of policy partnerships in addition to the formal partnerships for decision-making between government and the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.

**Policy partnerships** are created between all governments and the Coalition of Peaks for the purpose of working on discrete policy areas. Under the National Agreement, parties have committed to establishing five policy partnerships by the end of 2022:

- Justice (JPP)
- Social and Emotional Wellbeing
- Early Childhood Care and Development
- Housing
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages (Languages).

The JPP was the first policy partnership to be established in late 2021. A key objective of the JPP is to develop a joined-up approach to Aboriginal justice policy between all levels of government. It will identify specific measures to reduce over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system and Aboriginal deaths in custody.

The Victorian Government is represented on the JPP by the Deputy Secretary of Aboriginal Justice at the Departments of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS). The JPP has met several times and Victoria has presented the Aboriginal Justice Caucus' reform priorities at these meetings. The JPP will shortly:

- make recommendations to Joint Council to reduce over-incarceration of Aboriginal people
- consider jurisdictional implementation plans relating to National Agreement justice outcomes
- agree on justice policy areas for JPP considerations and develop a 3-year strategic plan
- develop an Annual Report to Joint Council on the actions of the JPP and its progress and
- develop a second work plan for 2022-2023.

Victoria is participating in early consultation processes to inform the remaining policy partnerships, which will be established through a phased approach. The Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Early Childhood Care and Development policy partnerships will be considered by Joint Council in August 2022, and the Housing and Languages policy partnerships in December 2022.

**Place-based partnerships** are based on a specific region, between government and Aboriginal representatives, and others by agreement, from those specific areas.

The National Agreement requires that Joint Council consider the locations for six new place-based partnerships. As of June 2022, there are four agreed locations: Tamworth (NSW), Maningrida (NT), Doomadgee (QLD), Western Suburbs of Adelaide (SA).

The Victorian Government is seeking the views of the First Peoples' Assembly and Victoria's Partnership Forum on whether to pursue a place-based partnership. At the time of reporting, no decision had been made regarding a Victorian place-based partnership nomination.

## Victorian actions

**Treaty:** Victoria's treaty process seeks to redefine and restructure the relationship between First Peoples, the State and all Victorians. Treaty is the primary mechanism for transferring decision-making power and resources to communities in Victoria. It will provide a new foundation and resource base for Aboriginal Victorians to steer issues and decisions that affect their lives. Under the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018*, the First Peoples' Assembly is the independent and democratically elected representative body of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria, for the purpose of establishing elements necessary to support future treaty negotiations. As detailed under Domain 6 of this Report, the treaty process has achieved significant milestones. Victoria is otherwise progressing the strong partnership elements under the National Agreement through the following actions:

- **Closing the Gap Partnership Forum:** In 2022, the Victorian Government facilitated a community-based selection process to establish a new Partnership Forum on Closing the Gap (Partnership Forum), Victoria's formal partner for decision-making on Closing the Gap. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and Traditional Owner groups elected representatives from across 14 sectors to be members of the Partnership Forum, in a process run independently of government. Members of the Partnership Forum will regularly engage with their sector to ensure they are representative of, and accountable to, their sectors.
- **Continued support for Aboriginal Governance Forums:** The Victorian Government has well-established formal partnerships with Aboriginal Governance Forums across various sectors which are resourced to enable shared decision-making with Aboriginal communities and organisations. See table below.
- **Assessment of Aboriginal Governance Forums:** In 2022, departments and their relevant Aboriginal Governance Forum completed an assessment against the partnership elements in the National Agreement. All governance forums have met, to a high degree, the partnership elements. A complete assessment of Aboriginal Governance Forums can be found at Closing the Gap Data Table B.



## Priority Reform One: Formal Partnerships and shared decision-making



**Outcome:** People are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.



**Target:** There will be formal partnership arrangements to support Closing the Gap in place between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments in place in each state and territory enshrining agreed joint decision-making roles and responsibilities and where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have chosen their own representatives.

The Victorian Government is committed to building and strengthening structures that empower Aboriginal people and communities to share decision-making authority, as outlined in the National Agreement.

Shared decision-making is crucial for ensuring self-determining and culturally appropriate responses. Victoria has a long history of shared decision-making, which continues to develop and evolve to respond to the changing needs and aspirations of communities.



Partnership Forums	Summary	Approximate resourcing to support forums in 2021-22
<p><b>Aboriginal Children's Forum (ACF), DFFH</b></p>	<p>Established in 2015 to drive the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people in, or at risk of entering, out-of-home care.</p> <p>Relevant Strategy: <i>Wungurilwil Gaggapduir</i>: Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement</p>	<p>DFFH supports the ACF through internal funding.</p> <p>DFFH covers the cost of accommodation for ACCOs who attend the ACF.</p>
<p><b>Aboriginal Justice Forum, (ACF), DJCS</b></p>	<p>Established in 2000 to improve Aboriginal justice outcomes, enhance family and community safety, and reduce Aboriginal over-representation in the Victorian criminal justice system.</p> <p>Relevant Strategy: <i>Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja</i>: Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement</p>	<p>DJCS provided funding for 1 x VPS5 (1 FTE), 1 x VPS6 (0.2 FTE) and 1 x VPS4 (0.6 FTE) to support policy and secretariat functions.</p> <p>In 2021-22, DJCS provided \$80,000 to deliver the AJF. DJCS also funded members \$33,000 in sitting fees to support their participation at 1 in-person and 2 online meetings.</p>
<p><b>Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum (ASGF), DFFH</b></p>	<p>Established in 2017 as an advisory and decision-making forum used to set DFFH's strategic direction on relevant portfolios.</p> <p>Relevant Strategies: Aboriginal Governance and Accountability Framework, <i>Korin Korin Balit-Djak</i>: Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017-2027</p>	<p>DFFH provided funding for 1 x VPS6 (1 FTE) and 1 x VPS5 (0.5 FTE) to support policy and secretariat functions.</p> <p>DFFH funded members to lead/ participate in 6 meetings: Chair Koorie Caucus: \$10,000; Co-chair Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum: \$10,000; Deputy Chair Koorie Caucus: \$7,000; and Member Koorie Caucus: \$3,000.</p> <p>DFFH provided \$45-\$60 per hour for out of session contributions of ASGF Koorie Caucus members.</p>
<p><b>Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, Family Safety Victoria / DFFH</b></p>	<p>Established in 2005 to address issues of Aboriginal family violence.</p> <p>Relevant Strategy: <i>Dhelk Dja</i>: Safe Our Way - Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families</p>	<p>DFFH provided funding to the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL) for an Executive Officer and Policy Officer to support engagement.</p> <p>DFFH funded member organisations \$160,000 to participate in meetings and forums. Regional Action Groups received \$80,000 for sitting fees and engagement support.</p>
<p><b>Marrung Central Governance Committee (Marrung), DET</b></p>	<p>Established in 2016 to ensure all Koorie Victorians achieve their learning aspirations.</p> <p>Relevant Strategy: Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026</p>	<p>DET supported the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI) to participate in Marrung governance mechanisms, including delivery of Koorie Education Roundtables and sitting fees for Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Chairs on Marrung governance mechanisms.</p>

Partnership Forums	Summary	Approximate resourcing to support forums in 2021-22
<p><b>State-wide Caring for Country Partnership Forum, (SCfCPF), DELWP</b></p>	<p>Established in 2020 under <i>Pupangarli Marmarnepu: 'Owning Our Future'</i> Aboriginal Self-Determination Strategy 2020-2025 to monitor and evaluate policies and ensure accountability to Aboriginal communities.</p> <p>Relevant Strategy: <i>Pupangarli Marmarnepu: 'Owning Our Future'</i> Aboriginal Self-Determination Strategy 2020-2025</p>	<p>DELWP provided funding for 1x VPS (1 FTE) to provide a secretariat role to the Statewide Caring for Country Partnership Forum.</p> <p>DEWLP provided funding for approximately 1x FTE to the Traditional Owner Corporation Caucus (TOCC) for secretariat support and services to allow for their collective engagement and participation in the SCfCPF.</p>
<p><b>Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council (VAEEC), DJPR</b></p>	<p>Established in 2020 to improve employment and economic outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. It provides advice and guidance to government on matters affecting Aboriginal Victorians in business, employment, tourism, culture and broader economic development.</p> <p>Relevant Strategy: <i>Yuma Yirramboi: Invest in Tomorrow - Aboriginal Employment and Economic Strategy</i></p>	<p>DJPR provided funding for 1 x VPS6 and 1 x VPS4 to provide secretariat support.</p> <p>VAEEC members were provided sitting fees to support their participation, including: Chair: \$196-\$448 per day and Members: \$169-\$349 per day.</p> <p>VAEEC received approximately \$121,000 to hold hybrid meetings and workshops during 2021-2022 and 1 x VPS4 (1 FTE).</p> <p>The 2021/22 State Budget delivered approximately \$91,000 funding to undertake research, data collection and consultation.</p>
<p><b>Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum (AHWPF), DH</b></p>	<p>Established in 2021 to enable strategic collaboration between the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector, the mainstream health sector and government.</p> <p>Relevant Strategy: An Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Agreement is in development</p>	<p>DH funded the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) to provide secretariat functions.</p> <p>DH funded 3 meetings, including venue and accommodation support for ACCCHO member representatives and a Secretariat officer as determined by VACCHO.</p> <p>Future funding to VACCHO will include core policy funding in recognition of community leadership to progress actions from meetings in addition to the current deliverables.</p>
<p><b>Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework Implementation Working Group, Homes Victoria / DFFH</b></p>	<p>Established in 2021 to support actions that ensure a resourced and capable housing and homelessness system within Victoria.</p> <p>Relevant Strategy: <i>Mana-na Woorntyeen Maar-Takoort: Every Aboriginal Person has a Home - Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework</i></p>	<p>Homes Victoria provided funding to Aboriginal Housing Victoria including 2 x VPS5 equivalent (2 FTE) and 1 x VPS6 equivalent (0.5 FTE) to support policy and secretariat functions.</p>

# Priority Reform Two: Building the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Sector



**Outcome:** There is a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.



**Target:** Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

Aboriginal community-controlled services are self-determining and representative of their sectors. The Victorian Government acknowledges that ACCOs achieve better results, are culturally safe, employ more Aboriginal people, and are often preferred over mainstream services.

The Victorian Government is committed to building the capacity and capability of ACCOs. This will help drive sustainability and self-determination by empowering organisations to set the policy direction for, and independently plan, the services they provide to their communities.

## Partnership actions

The National Agreement commits parties to establish national sector strengthening plans for the four priority sectors of Health, Early Childhood Care and Development, Disability and Housing. The Health and Early Childhood Care and Development plans were agreed-in-principle by Joint Council in December 2021, and the Housing and Disability plans agreed-in-principle in August 2022.

The Victorian Government has worked closely with the Coalition of Peaks and the ACCO sector to support the development of these plans, including through our representation in sector strengthening working groups. The finalised plans identify joint national strengthening efforts. Victoria's implementation approach for these plans will be determined by the Partnership Forum.

Upon signing the National Agreement, Victoria committed \$3.3 million over four years in 2020-21 as part of a virtual funding pool to build the capacity of the ACCO sector.

## Victorian actions


Examples of key actions to strengthen the Aboriginal community-controlled sector include:

- **Expenditure review:** DPC has begun work on Victoria's approach to the National Agreement's expenditure review. The expenditure review will examine government spending on Aboriginal programs and services to determine where funding can be reprioritised towards the ACCO sector. The Partnership Forum will consider the scope of the expenditure review.
- **Funding reform for ACCOs:** The Departments of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) has launched a pilot with Djirra for a cross-sector outcomes framework to support the development of Aboriginal defined measures and outcomes. The next phase of the work will be to facilitate discussions and forums within DFFH to explore options for integrating the self-determined outcomes work of Djirra into funding and commissioning cycles.

- **Increasing self-determination through outcomes-based funding:** The Department of Health (DH) is working with Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) to progress an outcome-based approach to funding and measurement. It is intended that the outcomes-based approach commences in the 2022-23 financial year, with the aim of multi-year funding agreements and streamlined, outcomes focused reporting through an annual VACCHO impact statement.

 Transfer power and resources to communities

- **Aboriginal Workforce Fund:** The \$40 million Aboriginal Workforce Fund (AWF) managed by DFFH and DH is designed to boost the Aboriginal community, health and family violence workforce as communities recover from the pandemic. See Domain 4 for more detail.

 Transfer power and resources to communities

- **Coronavirus Aboriginal Community Response and Recovery Fund:** The \$10 million Fund supported ACCOs and Traditional Owner groups to deliver place-based responses to the impacts of COVID-19. DPC has conducted an evaluation to provide an evidence base for future flexible funding to ACCOs and Traditional Owner groups.
- **Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Program (ACIP):** The sixth round of funding under the ACIP is being delivered in 2022-23, with a record \$10 million on offer. ACIP is a competitive grants program which enables community-controlled Aboriginal organisations to build new infrastructure or to repair, refurbish or expand existing infrastructure to meet emerging needs. Alongside this, the First Mortgage and Community Infrastructure Program strengthens the economic capacity and sustainability of Aboriginal organisations to move towards self-determination. Aboriginal organisations that own a property where the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples holds a first mortgage can apply to have the first mortgage removed.

 Transfer power and resources to communities

- **Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2051:** The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) and DPC are working to respond to Recommendation 67 in Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021 -2051, about co-designing an Aboriginal community-controlled infrastructure plan. DJPR will engage a consultant to scope this work and inform a plan to guide investment in Aboriginal community-controlled infrastructure, to meet current and future social, economic and cultural needs.

- **Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja, Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement:** In 2020-21, almost 99 per cent of more than \$30 million funding administered by the Koori Justice Unit to support implementation of Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja was provided to Aboriginal organisations. See Domain 5 for more detail.

For a comprehensive list of actions government is taking to strengthen the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, please refer to Closing the Gap Data Table C.

# Priority Reform Three: Transforming Government Organisations



**Outcome:** Improving mainstream institutions: Governments, their organisations and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the services they fund.



**Target:** Decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experiences of racism.

As the provider or funder of services that benefit the entire community, it is crucial that the Victorian Government ensures its systems, institutions, and services are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.

Under the VAAF, SDRF, National Agreement and in our Implementation Plan, Victoria has committed to structural transformation of government organisations and mainstream service providers.

The findings and recommendations of the Yoorrook Justice Commission and the negotiation of treaty are central to the transformation of government, which will ultimately contribute to the outcomes required to close the gap.

## Partnership actions

The key partnership action of the National Agreement requires that by 2023, governments each identify, develop or strengthen an independent mechanism that will support, monitor and report on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions. The mechanism must be culturally safe and support mainstream agencies to embed and practice culturally appropriate service offerings. Any independent mechanism will also have to have regard to broader reform underway through the treaty process.

In addition, to fully realise the ambition of Priority Reform Three, Victoria is currently working with all parties to develop a nationally consistent understanding and approach about how to meet its goal of system level transformation. This requires our input into key data development work at the national level to better measure and report on this priority reform, as well as focusing efforts on building shared understandings and evidence of what works in improving mainstream institutions.

## Victorian actions

Victoria is continuing to focus on implementing and consolidating existing actions to transform mainstream institutions.

Examples of key actions include:

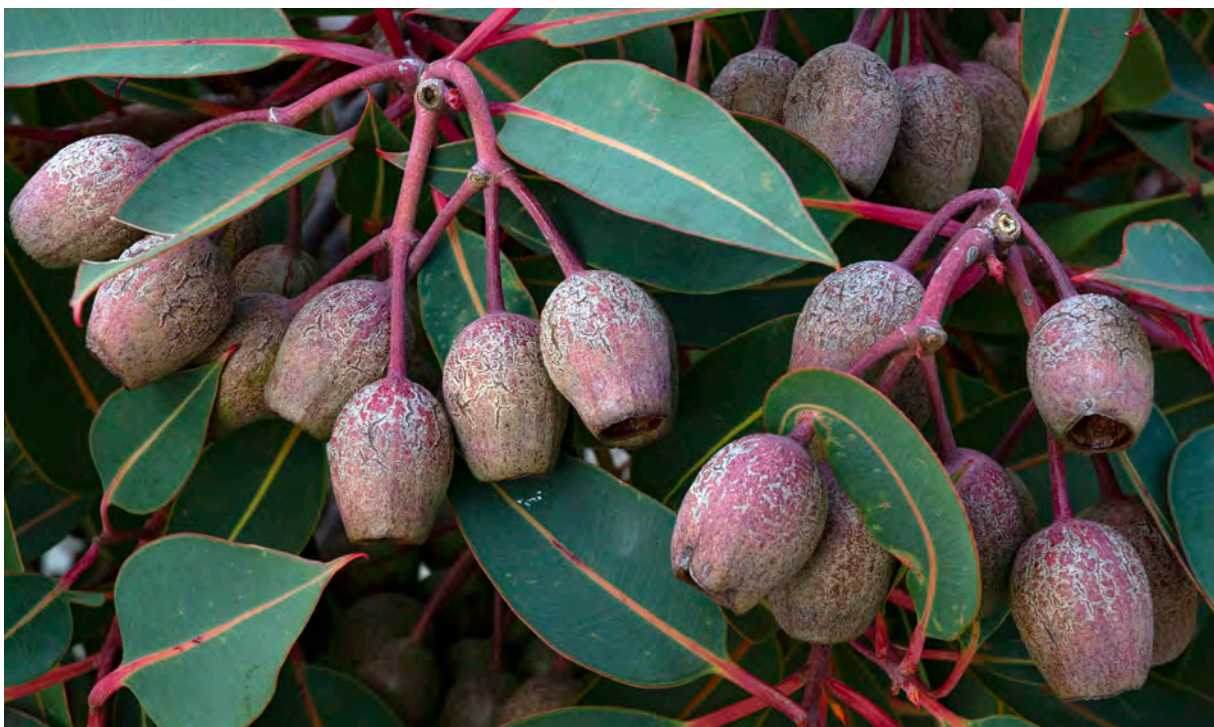
- **Self-Determination Reform Framework (SDRF):** Examples of how all departments and agencies are transforming to enable self-determination are included throughout this Report under relevant domains.
- **Cultural safety:** Initiatives include the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's (DELWP) internal Aboriginal Cultural Safety Training, and the Department of Education and Training's (DET) Community Understanding and Cultural Safety programs in government schools.



- **Statement of Recognition:** To acknowledge the role of historic and ongoing biases and racism within government service systems, Victoria has begun investigating reform options to insert a Statement of Recognition within key pieces of legislation. This would include embedding self-determination in legislation and prioritising the role of ACCOs in service delivery. For example, the Children and Health Legislation Amendment (Statement of Recognition and Other Matters) Bill 2022 seeks to introduce a Statement of Recognition in three acts: the Children Youth and Families Act 2005, Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 and the Health Services Act 1998.
- **Yoorrook Justice Commission:** On 24 March 2022, the Commission formally launched its truth-telling inquiry into past and ongoing impacts of colonisation and injustices across all areas of life. Supported by an investment of \$58.3 million over four years in the 2021/22 State Budget, the Commission will continue to hear First Peoples' experiences and make recommendations for healing, system reform and practical changes to laws, policy and education. The Commission delivered its Interim Report "Yoorrook with Purpose" on 30 June 2022, and its final report is due in June 2024. The Minister for

Treaty and First Peoples appeared as part of the first hearings in April-May 2022. The Minister's witness statement acknowledged the State's responsibility for injustices experienced across land, waters, justice and health outcomes, and its role in righting these wrongs. The Victorian Government remains committed to engaging genuinely and transparently with the Commission to support its truth-telling objectives. In 2021, the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) established the Yoorrook Justice Commission Response and Engagement Branch to support the State's engagement with the Commission. Dedicated teams to coordinate Commission-related work have also been established within many departments as well as an Interdepartmental Committee. More information about the Commission is available at [www.yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au](http://www.yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au).

For a comprehensive list of actions government is taking to transform its institutions and systems, please refer to Closing the Gap Data Table D.



# Priority Reform Four: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional level



**Outcome:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development.



**Target:** Increase the number of regional data projects to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to make decisions about Closing the Gap and their development. Victoria is working towards increasing Aboriginal ownership and control of data, as a key enabler of self-determination.

This includes shared access to local and disaggregated data and information for Aboriginal communities and organisations.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) principles recognise that Aboriginal communities and organisations should have governance, choice and control over data collected from and about their communities, and have ready access to data analytics to support strong decision-making.

Resourcing Aboriginal people and organisations to collect, analyse and own data is an act of self-determination. This is reflected in the work of the Yoorrook Justice Commission, which identified IDS as one of its strategic priorities in 2022 and has enacted strong IDS policies.

## Partnership actions

While there is already baseline data available for most socioeconomic outcomes under the National Agreement, the quality and quantity of this data varies, as has the level of access and engagement for Aboriginal people and organisations.

The Victorian Government has been working collaboratively with other jurisdictions and the Coalition of Peaks to develop the first national **Data Development Plan**. This new Data Development Plan will ensure that each socioeconomic outcome has a richer array of high-quality data sources over the life of the National Agreement.

Over 2021-22, Victoria also led scoping for data sharing work through the National Data Sharing Work Program. This work is set to continue in 2022 and align closely with the Data Development Plan.

To date, Victoria is yet to nominate a location for a **community data project** in response to the National Agreement. Locally relevant data will help to identify the differing needs and experiences between Aboriginal people in metropolitan and regional Victoria, and between regions.

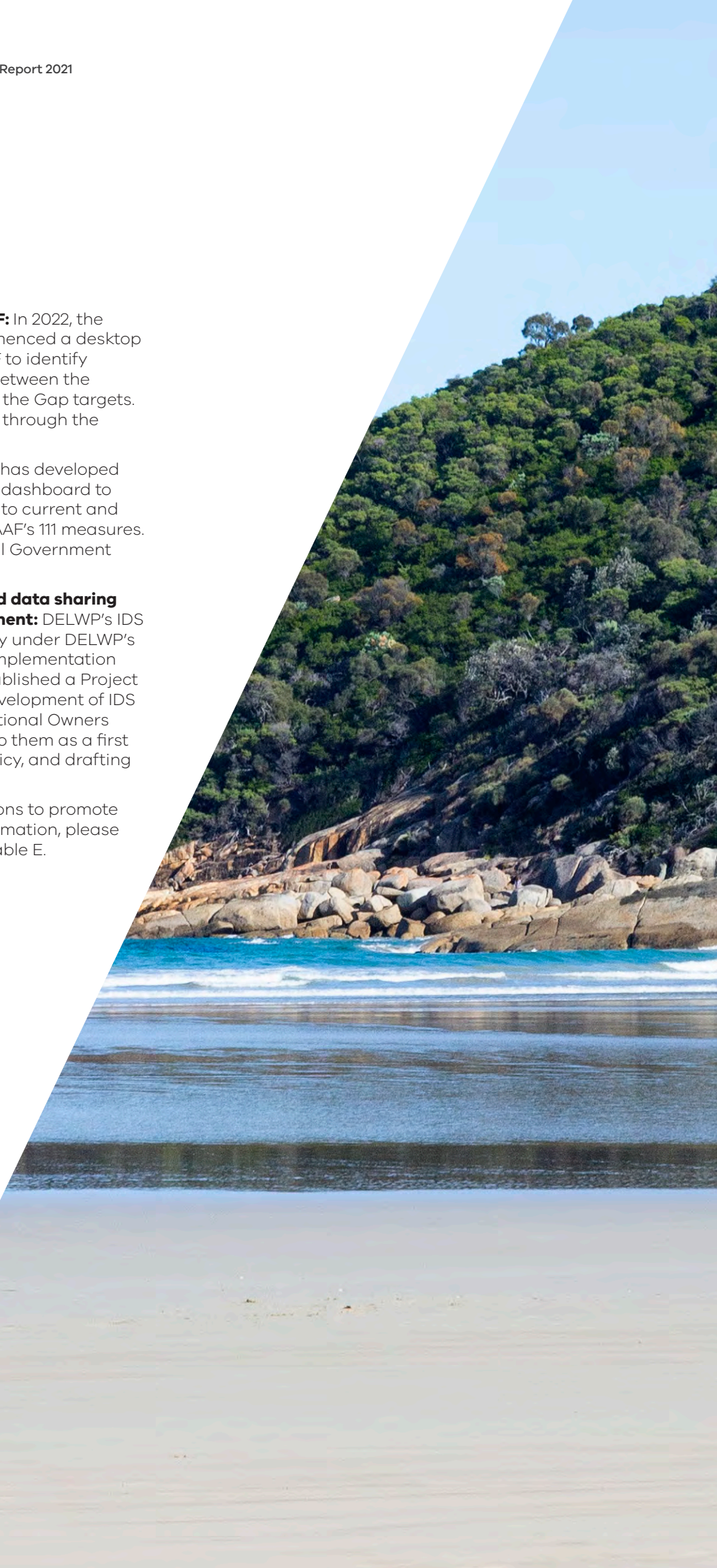
## Victorian actions

Victoria is committed to shared access to data and information at a regional level. Examples of key actions include:

- **Target trajectory modelling:** DPC is investigating options and methods to develop modelling of the trajectories for each socioeconomic target under the National Agreement alongside the anticipated year when parity will be achieved (that is, no gap between outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians). Digital Victoria is currently considering options for ensuring and agreeing designed regions for disaggregation of data and the minimum data sets available for each region.
- **Consideration of more ambitious Closing the Gap targets:** The Partnership Forum will have the opportunity to review the target trajectory modelling and consider strengthening Victorian targets to be more ambitious where Victoria is on track to achieve any targets in advance of 2031.

- **Mid-term review of the VAAF:** In 2022, the Victorian Government commenced a desktop mid-term review of the VAAF to identify alignment and differences between the VAAF measures and Closing the Gap targets. This work will be progressed through the Partnership Forum.
- **VAAF data dashboard:** DPC has developed an online user-friendly data dashboard to increase community access to current and historical data across the VAAF's 111 measures. Data is provided at the Local Government Area level where available.
- **Sector wide data access and data sharing agreements across government:** DELWP's IDS policy project is a top priority under DELWP's *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu* Implementation Action Plan. DELWP has established a Project Control Board to oversee development of IDS policy, workshops with Traditional Owners to explore what IDS means to them as a first step towards developing policy, and drafting the DELWP IDS paper.

For a comprehensive list of actions to promote shared access to data and information, please refer to Closing the Gap Data Table E.



# 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. Providing Aboriginal families with safe and effective services enables better outcomes.

Supporting 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



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 1 have continued to improve.

Supporting healthy children and families will promote long-term wellbeing and help future generations thrive. Victoria's Aboriginal population is relatively young compared to non-Aboriginal Australians. In 2020, a projected 33 per cent of Aboriginal Australians were aged under 15 (compared with 18 per cent of non-Aboriginal Australians) (ABS 2018a, 2019a).

Continued improvements to birth weight and preterm births are encouraging, as strong maternal health and infant health outcomes set Aboriginal children up for success.

Although Aboriginal children are now more widely immunised than their non-Aboriginal peers, attendance at Supported Playgroups has dropped in recent years, as has participation in facilitated playgroups and in Maternal and Child Health Key Ages and Stages consultations. This suggests more must be done to ensure children are supported to thrive in their first 1,000 days.

### Goal 1 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 2:** Aboriginal Children are born healthy and strong

**Target 2:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

In 2019, 89.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born were of a healthy birthweight across Australia, compared to 90.4 per cent in Victoria.

Nationally, based on progress from the baseline, the target shows good improvement and is on track to be met. In Victoria, based on progress from the baseline, this target shows improvement.

### Data Note



All measures under this goal are featured.

## 1.1 Improve maternal and infant health

### Measure 1.1.1 Rate of low birth weight

Health is determined by a complex interaction between biology, health behaviours, access to quality healthcare, and social and cultural determinants of health. Social determinants, which include access to quality education and housing and food security, have the largest impact on health, and are a significant cause of health inequity. Additional factors impacting health for Aboriginal people include the ongoing effects of colonisation and racism, while culture is a strong protective factor for Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing<sup>1</sup>.


In 2019, 11.7 per cent of babies of Aboriginal mothers in Victoria were born with a low birth rate, which decreased from 15.2 per cent in 2009. In comparison, 6.9 per cent of babies of non-Aboriginal mothers were born with low birth weight in 2019.

### Measure 1.1.2 Rate of preterm birth

12.1 per cent of babies of Aboriginal mothers were born pre-term in 2019 compared to 12.3 per cent in 2010. The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rates of preterm birth remained stable and was 8.2 per cent in 2019.

### Measure 1.1.3 Rate of perinatal mortality

Although considerably lower than a decade ago, perinatal mortality rates for babies of Aboriginal mothers continued to increase from a low of 30 (9 per 1,000) in 2014-16, up to 43 (12.6 per 1,000) in 2017-19. Contrastingly, perinatal mortality rates for babies born of non-Aboriginal mothers continued to decline, meaning perinatal mortality was 1.4 times more likely for babies of Aboriginal mothers than babies of non-Aboriginal mothers in 2017-19.

 Address trauma and support healing

### Measure 1.1.4 Smoking during pregnancy

In 2019, 41.2 per cent of Aboriginal mothers smoked in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy. This was slightly higher than the previous year (38.9 per cent in 2018) and 2009 (40.2 per cent).

The rate of smoking during pregnancy was over five times higher for Aboriginal women compared to non-Aboriginal women in 2018. It is important that targeted tobacco reduction strategies take account of colonial processes that have contributed to, and continue to contribute to, Aboriginal Victorians experiencing ongoing trauma and stress, racism and exclusion from economic structures - social determinants that are all associated with tobacco smoking<sup>2</sup>.



1 Victorian Agency for Health Information, The health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians: Findings from the Victorian Population Health Survey, 2017, p.15. <https://vahi.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/Aboriginal%20Health%20Wellbeing.pdf>

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Determinants of health: Tobacco use', <https://www.indigenouphpf.gov.au/measures/2-15-tobacco-use>.



### Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program

The MCH Program aims to maximise the health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal children, mothers and families. This includes key ages and stages developmental assessment, early detection, referral, and intervention. Aboriginal self-determination is a core principle of MCH service delivery and offers families choice and flexibility around how they access MCH services. This recognises the importance of Aboriginal organisations in delivering services to meet the health, wellbeing, cultural and safety aspirations of their local Aboriginal communities.

## Aboriginal mothers and babies were generally far healthier in 2019 than 2009

### Babies born to Aboriginal mothers

	Babies born with low birth weight (Measure 1.1.1)	Babies born preterm   (Measure 1.1.2)	Perinatal deaths (Measure 1.1.3)*	
2009	15.2%	14.5%	21.7 per 1000	40.2%
2019	11.7%	12.1%	12.6 per 1000	41.2%

### Babies born to non-Aboriginal mothers

	Babies born with low birth weight (Measure 1.1.1)	Babies born preterm   (Measure 1.1.2)	Perinatal deaths (Measure 1.1.3)*	Maternal smoking during first 20 weeks of pregnancy (Measure 1.1.4)
2009	6.5%	7.7%	10.4 per 1000	11.1%
2019	6.9%	8.2%	8.7 per 1000	7.2%

\*Includes perinatal mortality data from 2009–11 and 2017–19 rather than 2009 and 2019 alone.



## 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 in Key Ages and Stages Consultations has generally increased year-to-year. As with recent years, participation at the first home visit consultation was near universal for Aboriginal families, with participation declining for all families over time, particularly after the four-month visit. Note that this finding is based on preliminary data. It is subject to change and should be used with caution.

### Measure 1.2.2 Attendance at Koori Maternity Service

Attendance at Koori Maternity Services declined from 485 in 2018-19 to 430 and 405 in 2019-20 and 2020-21 respectively. Work continues with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and Koori Maternity Services (KMS) service providers to understand the changing participation rates.

#### Supporting the Koori Maternity Services workforce

The Maternity Services Education Program (MSEP) based at the Royal Women's Hospital, continues to work in partnership with VACCHO and KMS to improve health outcomes for Victorian Aboriginal women and families. The partnership aims to strengthen connections of the KMS workforce, update clinical skills, enhance the cultural competency of the non-Aboriginal workforce, and build upon collaborative relationships with external experts.

Continuing professional development updates for KMS Midwives and Aboriginal Health Workers are delivered face-to-face or as online forums (during COVID-19 restrictions). Topics are informed by recommendations from the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity Mothers Babies and Children report 2019, and input from the KMS teams, the KMS project leads at VACCHO, and the MSEP team.

### Attendance at Koori Maternity Service has continued to decline

#### Measure 1.2.2



An update of the Koori Maternity Service minimum dataset in 2018 means that data for this indicator is not comparable to previously reported data (before 2018-19).

### Measure 1.2.3 Immunisation rates at 24 months and 60 months

Immunisation rates for Aboriginal children have increased substantially in recent years, with the proportion of immunised Aboriginal children aged 2 and 5 years old now being higher than across all Victorian children of the same age. Between 2008 and 2020, there was a substantial increase in immunisation rates for Aboriginal children at 1 and 5 years old (increasing to 94.3 per cent and 97.4 per cent respectively), while immunisation at 2 years old increased slightly to 93.9 per cent.

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

Supported Playgroups use evidence-based strategies to assist parents to develop their skills and confidence to improve the quality of the early home learning environment. Considerably fewer Aboriginal children participated in Supported Playgroups in 2020 (436 children) than 2019 (668 children). Contrastingly, there was a slight increase in participation in Koorie Supported Playgroups (236 children in 2020, up from 229 in 2019). Koorie Supported Playgroups are an early intervention initiative to improve the wellbeing and developmental outcomes of Aboriginal children specifically. They provide a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal families to gather, and strengthen the developmental skills, wellbeing and cultural connectedness of Aboriginal children, individuals and families in their community. Many groups stopped operating for large parts of 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic.

## Goal 2: Aboriginal children are raised by Aboriginal families



### Overview

#### Measures under Goal 2 have remained stable.

Aboriginal children continue to be removed from their families and placed in the out-of-home care system at rates significantly higher than non-Aboriginal children. In 2020-21, the rate of Aboriginal children placed in out-of-home care was 20.1 times higher than for non-Aboriginal children, highlighting that reducing over-representation must continue to remain a key focus.

Importantly, in 2020-21, 80.6 per cent of Aboriginal children in the out-of-home care system were placed with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relatives/kin or other Aboriginal carers. However, the proportion of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care with a cultural plan has decreased in recent years, despite Cultural Plans becoming a legislative requirement in 2016. This suggests that the system is not working as it should to properly support Aboriginal children and keep them connected to culture, and community.

Similarly, while more Aboriginal children are now exiting the out-of-home care system, and the proportion being reunited with their parent(s) or not returning to care within 12 months has remained stable over recent years, it has nonetheless decreased since 2007-08.

#### Goal 2 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 12:** Aboriginal children are not overrepresented in the child protection system

- **Target 12:** By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent.

#### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

In 2021, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-17 years in out-of-home care was 57.6 per 1,000 children across Australia, compared to 103.0 per 1,000 children in Victoria.

Nationally and in Victoria, these rates are worsening based on the baseline.

#### Data Note



All measures under this goal are featured.

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

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

In 2020-21, 134.9 per 1,000 Aboriginal children in Victoria were removed from their families and placed in the out-of-home care system (2,572 total children). This represents a substantial and concerning increase since 2008-09, when 37.7 per 1,000 Aboriginal children were in the out-of-home care system (734 total children). This differs significantly to the rates for non-Aboriginal children, at 6.7 per 1,000 (6,574 total children) in 2021, increased from 3.8 per 1,000 (4,549 total children) in 2008-09. This means that almost 30 per cent of children in the out-of-home care system are Aboriginal, despite Aboriginal people representing less than 1 per cent of the Victorian population.

Consequently, Aboriginal children are 20.1 times as likely to be removed from their families and placed in the child protection system compared to their non-Aboriginal peers – a substantial and concerning increase from a rate ratio of 9.9 in 2008-09. A broad range of systemic and socioeconomic factors contribute to these trends.

### 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 decreased from 1,450 in the 2018-19 reporting period to 1,017 in 2020-21. This followed the trend for non-Aboriginal children, which decreased from 10,986 to 8,585 in the same period. DFFH experienced data collection system issues in 2020-21 that are known to have resulted in under-reporting of the number of children commencing in intensive family support services.

### The number and rate of Aboriginal children and young people in care continues to increase, along with non-Aboriginal children and young people

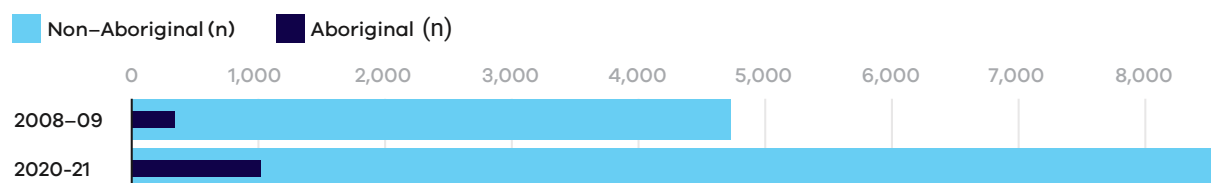
#### Measure 2.1.1

##### Aboriginal Children

	Number of children in out of home care	Rate of children in out of home care per 1,000 children
2008-09	734	37.7
2019-20	2,450	99.8
2020-21	2,572	134.9

### More Aboriginal families engaged family support and intensive family support services in 2020-21 than 2008-09

#### Measure 2.1.2



Source : Report on Government Services 2022 - Table 16A.34

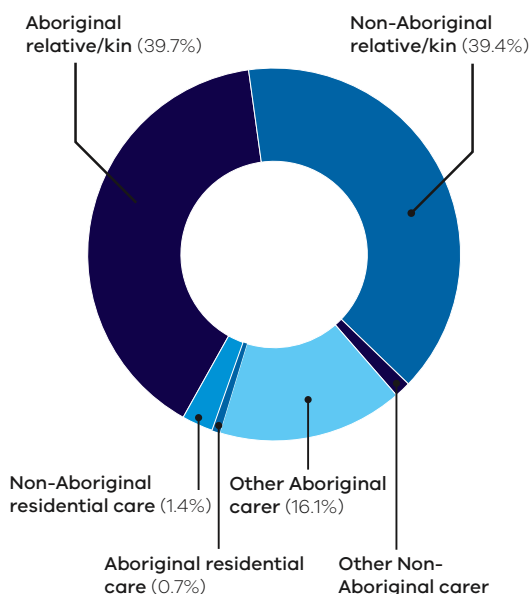
## 2.2 Increase Aboriginal care, guardianship and management of Aboriginal children and young people in care

### 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 2020-21, 80.6 per cent of Aboriginal children in the out-of-home care system were placed with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relatives/kin or other Aboriginal carers. This is a considerable improvement on the 57.7 per cent in 2008-09. 3.4 per cent of Aboriginal children were placed in residential care in 2020-21, with 0.7 per cent in Aboriginal Residential care.

### Aboriginal children in care are generally placed with relatives/kin

#### Measure 2.2.1



Data excludes children on third party parental responsibility orders.

### Measure 2.2.2 Number and proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in care with a cultural plan

A Cultural Plan must be approved for an Aboriginal child within 19 weeks of them entering the out-of-home care system. In 2020-21, 63.5 per cent of Aboriginal children in the out-of-home care system had an approved Cultural Plan. This is a decrease of 4.8 per cent since 2019-20. A new model for cultural planning was implemented in 2017 meaning that 2016-17 and 2018-19 figures have been updated. They are included here for completeness. Due to the way cultural planning data is reported in the Client Relationship Information system, data is considered preliminary for the reporting period. Final data is released a year after the reporting period and is a more accurate measure of the number of cultural plans.

***“Having an Aboriginal case manager has increased trust in the process because there is an understanding of their experience both historical and present”***

Client - Mutjang Bupuwingarrak Mukman

***“The case managers are educated in understanding us. Not just in a mainstream sense in a cultural way”***

Aboriginal Carer -Mutjang Bupuwingarrak Mukman

**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)

A case contract is a formal arrangement in the form of a written agreement, between Child Protection and another agency for the provision of case management for a child subject to a protection order. Contracting arrangements are designed to enable the most appropriate agency to support implementation of the case plan.

In line with Aboriginal self-determination, the Aboriginal Children’s Forum set a target for the progressive increase in the proportion of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care system on contractible orders to be case managed by an ACCO.

In 2020-21, 42.6 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people in the out-of-home care system on contractible orders were managed by ACCOs. The rate remains steady since the previous reporting period.

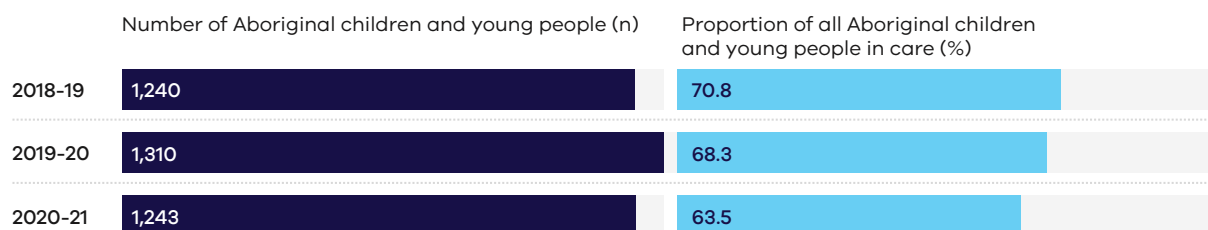
**Measure 2.2.4** Number and proportion of Aboriginal children and young people on protection orders under the direct authority of an ACCO (Section 18)

6.9 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people on protection orders were under the direct authority of an ACCO (Section 18) in 2020-21 compared to 5.7 per cent in 2019-20.

This is in addition to the number of Aboriginal children contracted to an ACCO, as outlined in measure 2.2.3.

**Aboriginal children and young people are far more likely to be placed on a contractible order managed by ACCOs**

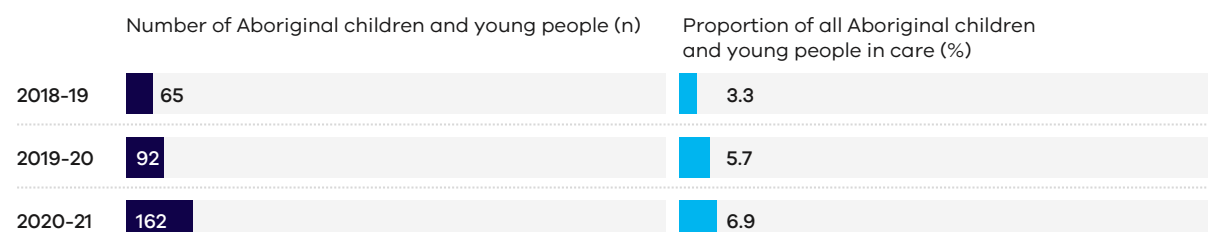
**Measure 2.2.2:** Aboriginal children and young people in care with a cultural plan



**Measure 2.2.3:** Aboriginal children and young people in care on contractible orders managed by ACCOs



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



## 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

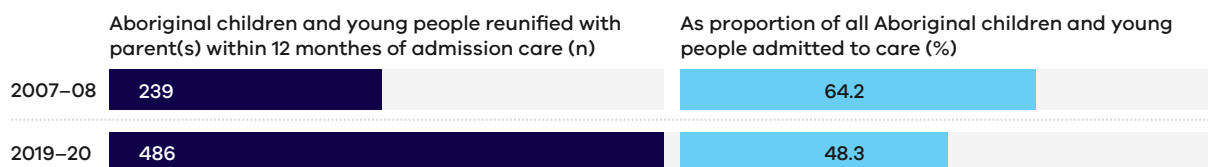
In 2019–20, 48.3 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people were reunified with parent(s) within 12 months of admission to the out-of-home care system. This rate remains stable since the previous reporting period.

**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

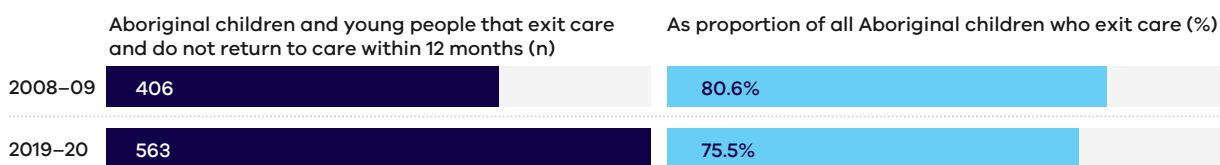
In 2019–20, 75.5 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people who exited the out-of-home care system did not return to the system within 12 months. Importantly, this is higher than the 2018–19 rate of 69.5 per cent but remains lower than the 2008–09 rate of 80.6 per cent.

### Aboriginal children and young people are exiting care, but the proportion being reunited with parent(s) and not returning has dropped

#### Measure 2.3.1 - Aboriginal children and young people reunited with parent(s) within 12 months of admission to care



#### Measure 2.3.2 - Aboriginal Children and young people who exit care and do not return within 12 months



# Goal 3: Aboriginal families and households thrive



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 3 have worsened

Family violence has a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal people in Victoria, particularly women and children. Concerningly, reports of family violence incidents involving Aboriginal people have increased considerably in recent years, as have notifications to child protection. Over the same period, rates of family violence incidents in the wider population have not increased to the same extent. Family violence experienced by Aboriginal people is perpetrated by people from all backgrounds.

The increase in family violence incident reports may not solely indicate increased prevalence of family violence, and may in part reflect policy and practice changes as well as improved reporting and recording. Aboriginal women have faced and continue to face unique barriers to reporting family violence with historic and ongoing discrimination by police creating deep distrust.

The latest data shows that Aboriginal Victorians were 13.8 times more likely to access homelessness services in 2020-21 than their non-Aboriginal peers, with 16.5 per cent of all Aboriginal Victorians having accessed those services during 2020-21.

### Data Note



The following measures have not been featured in the Report, as 2021 Census data was unavailable at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 3.2.2** Proportion of households with less than 50 per cent median equivalised income
- **Measure 3.2.3** Proportion of Aboriginal people in rental or mortgage stress.
- **Measure 3.2.5** Proportion of Aboriginal Victorians living in over-crowded dwellings.

Data for these measures is available on the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).

### Goal 3 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 9:** Aboriginal people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and needs.

- **Target 9:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent.

**Outcome 13:** Aboriginal families and households are safe

- **Target 13:** By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50 per cent, as progress towards 0.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

**Target 9:** In 2016, 78.9 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing across Australia, compared to 87.6 per cent in Victoria.

This target relies on Census data. No new data was available, since the baseline year of 2016, at the time of reporting.

**Target 13:** In 2018-19, 8.4 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 15 years and over experienced domestic physical or threatened physical harm across Australia, compared to 7.5 per cent in Victoria.

This target relies on National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey data. No new data is available since the baseline year of 2018-19.

### 3.1 Reduce the incidence and impact of family violence affecting Aboriginal families<sup>3</sup>

#### Measure 3.1.1 Number and proportion of family violence incident reports involving an Aboriginal other party<sup>4</sup>; and proportion of those who were the subject of a previous family incident report

Aboriginal Victorians are disproportionately involved in family violence incidents. Reports of family violence incidents by Aboriginal other parties have continued to increase, with 6,037 incidents being reported in 2021, representing 6.6 per cent of all incidents reported. 87.0 per cent of those were repeat incidents.

#### Measure 3.1.2 Number and proportion of family violence incident reports involving an Aboriginal affected

4,936 family violence incidents against an Aboriginal affected family member were reported in 2021, representing 5.4 per cent of all incidents. 83.1 per cent of those were repeat incidents. This was a slight increase on 2020, with incidents against Aboriginal affected family members also increasing slightly as a proportion of all incidents (to 5.42 per cent) due to a decrease of incidents involving non-Aboriginal affected family members.



### The number of family incident reports involving Aboriginal people remains disproportionately high

#### Measure 3.1.1 - Reports of family incidents by Aboriginal other parties

	Number of reports (n)	Proportion of repeat incidents (%)	Proportion of all incident reports (%)
2011	2,439	72.98	5.7
2021	6,037	86.96	6.6

#### Measure 3.1.2 - Reports of family incidents involving an Aboriginal affected family member

	Number of reports (n)	Proportion of repeat incidents (%)	Proportion of all incident reports (%)
2011	2,069	68.9	4.7
2021	4,936	83.1	5.4

As 0.9% of the Victorian population identify as Aboriginal, it would be expected that the proportion of all incident reports involving Aboriginal people was close to 0.9%. These figures suggest that Aboriginal Victorians continue to be disproportionately involved in family violence incidents.

Source: Crime Statistics Agency (CSA)

<sup>3</sup> The overall increase in the number of recorded family incidents over time has in part been due to improved recording of incidents. Since 2011, initiatives such as the Family Violence Code of Practice have been put in place by Victoria Police to improve the recording of family incidents, the individuals involved and the offences committed. Comparisons over time should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>4</sup> The 'other party' refers to the alleged perpetrator involved in a family incident. The other party could be a current partner, former partner or a family member.



### Measure 3.1.3

	Aboriginal (n)	Non-Aboriginal (n)	Incidents involving Aboriginal children, as a proportion of all incidents involving Aboriginal Victorians (%)
2011-12	3,123	23,940	50.1
2021-21	5,121	46,518	44.1

Source: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Internal Data – Client Relationship Information System

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

In 2020-21, 5,121 reports to child protection were recorded for Aboriginal children or young people where family violence was identified – a substantial increase from 3,123 in 2011-12. This represented 44.1 per cent of all notifications involving Aboriginal Victorians<sup>5</sup>, which was considerably lower than the 50.1 per cent in 2011-12.



**Aboriginal Access Points (AAP)** are being established as a complementary service model to work alongside The Orange Door, providing a culturally safe referral pathway for Aboriginal people impacted by family violence.

Consistent with the Victorian Government's commitment to self-determination, the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum endorsed the draft Aboriginal Access Points concept model in January 2020 along with the locations of the first three Aboriginal Access Points (Barwon, Bayside Peninsula and Mallee).

A series of workshops with key Aboriginal stakeholders informed the AAP's service model which was endorsed by the Dhelk Dja members at the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum in May 2021.

The first Aboriginal Access Point is expected to be operational by December 2022.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

## 3.2 Increase income and housing security for Aboriginal households

### Measure 3.2.1 Proportion of adults who ran out of food in the previous 12 months and couldn't afford to buy more

Food and housing security is a basic need for all people. A person is considered to be food insecure if, in the previous year, they experienced at least one occasion where they ran out of food and could not afford to buy more.

Aboriginal adults in Victoria were three times more likely to have experienced food insecurity in 2020-21 than non-Aboriginal adults.

84 per cent of Aboriginal adults had reliable access to sufficient food — statistically significantly lower than non-Aboriginal adults, where 94 per cent of adults had reliable access to sufficient food

Victoria's Aboriginal people; through the ongoing systemic process of violent dispossession, displacement, and colonialism; have been locked out of their rightful access to secure food, housing, and the economy. Aboriginal people have lower rates of home ownership, earn lower wages, and are largely excluded from equitable participation in the economy. The higher rates of food and housing insecurity we see today among Victorian Aboriginal people are an enduring legacy of stolen lands, resources, and wages.

Source: Minister Gabrielle Williams' Yoorrook Justice Commission witness statement. <https://yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-05-03-Minister-for-Aboriginal-Affairs-Witness-Statement.pdf>

### Measure 3.2.4 Proportion of Victorians accessing homelessness services

More Aboriginal Victorians accessed homelessness services in 2020-21 than in the past decade (10,760), despite the number of non-Aboriginal Victorians accessing these services being the lowest since 2015-16 (83,068). This means that Aboriginal Victorians are 13.1 times more likely to access homelessness services than their non-Aboriginal peers, with 17 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians accessing homelessness services in 2020-21.

**The From Homelessness to a Home (H2H) program** was a significant investment in ending homelessness and rough sleeping for many people in Victoria.

In July 2020, the Victorian government committed over \$150 million to provide 1,845 housing and support packages to people who were experiencing homelessness and were placed in emergency accommodation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The program incorporates property services, support services, and flexible brokerage to deliver the program.

As of 8 April 2022, 376 Aboriginal Victorians are supported through the H2H program. Of these, 264 moved into their new homes totalling 17 per cent of total program participants. Fourteen Community Partnerships deliver H2H across Victoria. These partnerships are led by a Community Housing Provider who partner with a range of specialist supports, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

## The number of Aboriginal Victorians accessing homelessness services continued to increase in 2020-21

### Measure 3.2.4

	Aboriginal (n)	Non-Aboriginal (n)	Aboriginal status not stated (n)	Aboriginal (%)	Non-Aboriginal (%)
2011-12	5,481	62,763	17,905	10.2	1.1
2015-16	8,077	82,082	15,128	14	1.3
2020-21	10,760	83,068	11,682	16.5	1.2

Counting rules: Clients are counted once only in each jurisdiction Estimated residential population (ERP) denominators used to calculated percentages are sourced from ABS (2020) National, state and territory population, Table 5, Cat. no. 31010do001\_202006; ABS (2019) Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2001 to 2031, Cat. no. 3238.0

Source: Source: Table 2, Supplementary tables - Historical tables SHSC 2011-12 to 2020-21; Specialist homelessness services (SHS) 2020-21. AIHW Cat. No. HOU 299

# Domain 1 - Victorian Government Investment and Action

*The Victorian Government is working to drive improved outcomes for children and families*

The key Aboriginal Governance Forums for realising outcomes in this Domain are: the Aboriginal Children's Forum, Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum, Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum, and Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework Implementation Working Group.

## Health

Key investments in 2021/22 include:

- \$2 million to support Aboriginal people to be strong and healthy through:
  - continued support for maternal, child and family health services delivered in Aboriginal organisations.
  - funding for the Aboriginal Metropolitan Ice Partnership, which helps improve access to services for Aboriginal people affected by methamphetamine and other drugs.
- A share in \$11.3 million to ACCOs to deliver targeted case management for children, families and diverse communities that need to access practical support and further information about COVID-19 vaccines. Funding will provide more case management capacity for organisations working with Victorians with complex needs, such as victim survivors of family violence, people facing housing instability, and children in foster and kinship care.

## Family Violence

### Aboriginal Family Violence Industry Strategy

The Aboriginal Family Violence Industry Strategy 2021-2023 (the Strategy) has been informed, developed and underpinned by Aboriginal self-determination. The Final Draft was presented to the Dhelk Dja Koori Caucus for endorsement in June 2021 and endorsed at the August 2021 Partnership Forum.

- The Strategy's vision is for an Aboriginal family violence workforce that is self-determining, valued, empowered, supported, skilled and equipped to prevent and respond to family violence
- This will mean that Aboriginal people can access specialist family violence services where workers have the cultural knowledge, experience and expertise to meet their needs in culturally safe and relevant ways
- The Strategy's aim is to strengthen and build the capacity, specialisation and infrastructure of the Aboriginal family violence workforce and sector
- It will be the first of three, 3-year plans aligning with Building From Strength and its First Rolling Action Plan 2019-22.


## Preventing the Cycle of Violence Aboriginal Fund

The Fund was established in 2018 and supports Aboriginal-led family violence prevention and early intervention initiatives. \$2.7 million was invested over two years (2018-2020) to support 11 projects in the inaugural grant round of the fund. Additional funding was allocated in 2020-21 via the Dhelk Dja Aboriginal Family Violence Fund. The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) commissioned an independent evaluation of the funded projects which found that the range of prevention projects reached at least 50,000 people across Victoria. The evaluation, which was completed in September 2021, also highlighted the factors that enabled the projects to achieve their intended outcomes, including the involvement of Elders and respected community members.

## Aboriginal Family Violence Fund

The Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund was established as a flexible pool of funding streams for eligible Aboriginal organisations and community groups to enable a range of Aboriginal-led tailored responses for victim survivors and people who use violence. Over 45 Aboriginal-led initiatives and services share in the \$18.2 million Dhelk Dja Family Violence funding pool, enabling Victorian Aboriginal organisations to deliver culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal victim survivors and people who use violence. Support includes regionally based healing and change camps and weekly yarning sessions, financial counselling support for Aboriginal women wanting to leave unsafe homes, and the delivery of therapeutic services and programs to support Aboriginal children.

The fund provides Aboriginal organisations with funding over two years, giving them greater certainty in planning how they deliver family violence services that are tailored to the needs of their communities.

 Address trauma and support healing

## 2021 Community Initiatives Fund funded activities

Through the annual \$1.1 million Victorian Aboriginal Community Initiatives Fund, the 2021-22 funding round supported 25 culturally appropriate, place-based community-led projects. These initiatives are dedicated to preventing and responding to family violence in Victorian Aboriginal communities and will be delivered by Victorian Aboriginal organisations and community groups.

## Children and family services

Funding has been committed to the below initiatives:

- \$7.587 million in 2021-22 and \$8.375 million ongoing for transferring case management of Aboriginal children to ACCOs.
- \$1.542 million in 2022-23 and \$1.572 million in 2023-24 for the Innovation and Learning Fund.
- \$1.176 million in 2022-23 and \$1.613 million in 2023-24 for Senior Cultural Advisors.
- \$557,598 in 2022-23 and \$712,604 in 2023-24 for Aboriginal Cultural Support and Awareness Advisors.

DFFH has continued to strengthen funding for family services delivered through ACCOs:

- \$43.7 million per annum in 2020-21
- \$47.5 million per annum in 2021-22
- \$52.1 million per annum in 2022-23

Funding will increase again in 2022-23 as ACCOs share in a \$7 million funding increase for family services delivered through the 2022/23 State Budget.

Under the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) program, DFFH is supporting Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative (BDAC) and VACCA to implement the Aboriginal Children in Care response to child protection reports pilot. This approach aims to deliver culturally informed investigation of child protection reports and offer culturally appropriate support for families. Two pilot teams will be established with decision-making responsibility.

 Transfer power and resources to communities

Separate to this, VACCA, BDAC, Njernda Aboriginal Corporation and Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-Operative consortium are undertaking a trial of three different models of ACCO-led, collaborative intervention following the child protection intake.

### Transfer power and resources to communities

## Housing

DFFH is committed to empowering Aboriginal communities to implement *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort, Every Aboriginal Person Has a Home: The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework*. DFFH is working with Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) and representatives of the Aboriginal community on options to improve access to homelessness services for Aboriginal households.

Core initiatives are underway across Homes Victoria, Community Housing Industry Association Victoria and the Council of Homeless Persons to support the housing and homelessness system to deliver culturally safe service responses and enable implementation of culturally safe practices.

### Address racism and promote cultural safety

## Increasing Aboriginal housing sector capacity

Homes Victoria has commissioned a project to conduct feasibility assessments of 8 ACCOs to understand their capacity to deliver long-term housing. The project will assess their land assets and determine the financial sustainability requirements to maximise opportunities through Victoria's Big Housing Build to deliver long-term housing for Aboriginal communities.

### Transfer power and resources to communities

## Homes for Aboriginal Victorians Round (HfAVR)

Department of Treasury and Finance, with Homes Victoria, is leading the delivery of the Homes for Aboriginal Victorians Round (HfAVR) of the Social Housing Growth Fund. This is expected to provide more than \$150 million in grant funding to build around 350-400 new social housing dwellings for Aboriginal Victorians, in partnership with ACCOs.

This initiative contributes to Victoria's \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build commitment for 10 per cent of new social housing dwellings to be for Aboriginal Victorian households. It also includes measures that help build the capacity and capability of a community housing sector for Aboriginal Victorians. The funding round adheres to a set of First Order Principles, using self-determination as the guiding principle. The tender is aimed at ensuring that social housing dwellings funded through the Social Housing Growth Fund will be owned and operated by ACCOs as Registered Community Housing Agencies (CHAs) or transitioned to ACCOs once appropriately registered with the assistance of CHAs.

The initiative further supports ACCO ownership of social housing by:

- providing funding for ACCOs to become RHAs
- using a long-term procurement model that allows proposals to be developed within timeframes that suit the organisation
- dedicating personnel outside of the evaluation team to provide feedback on proposals ahead of the lodgement to support organisations to put forward strong proposals.

## Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program

Homes Victoria is working with ACCOs to open doors to private rental housing for Aboriginal Victorians through the Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program (APRAP). APRAP is a preventative intervention that provides private rental brokerage and holistic support to households experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The program is intended to prevent or end homelessness and housing crisis by rapidly rehousing people and supporting households to sustain affordable and appropriate housing in the private rental market.

The program was initially rolled out to six ACCOs in five areas in 2020. In 2022-23, the program will be expanded to cover four additional areas.

# Domain 2: Learning & Skills



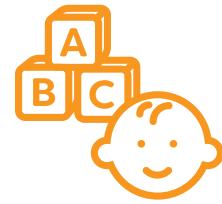
## **Our shared commitment:**

*All 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.



# Goal 4: Aboriginal children thrive in the early years



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 4 have continued to improve.

High quality early childhood education gives children the best start in life and provides important opportunities to learn and develop.

An estimated 100 per cent of eligible Aboriginal four-year olds are enrolled in kindergarten and there has been a steady increase in eligible children participating in Early Start Kindergarten.

### Data Note



Kindergarten participation rates for Aboriginal children are based on relatively small population estimates with a margin for error.

The following measure relies on datasets that are infrequently collected. No new data was available at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 4.1.3** Proportion of children vulnerable on one or more domain on the Australian Early Development Census.

Data for this measure is available on the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).

### Goal 4 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 3:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years

- **Target 3:** By 2025, 95 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are enrolled in preschool in the year before full time schooling.

**Outcome 4:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years.

- **Target 4:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55 per cent.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

**Outcome 3:** Nationally in 2021, 96.7 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Year Before Full time Schooling (YBFS) age cohort were enrolled in a preschool program.

Nationally, based on progress from the baseline, the target shows good improvement and is on track to be met. Victoria is now focused on improving preschool attendance rates.

**Outcome 4:** In 2021, 34.3 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Australia commencing school were assessed as being developmentally on track in all five Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains, compared to 35.6 per cent in Victoria.

Nationally, based on progress from the baseline, the target is worsening. In Victoria, based on progress from the baseline, this target shows improvement.



## 4.1 Optimise early childhood development and participation in kinder

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

In 2020, an estimated 100 per cent of Aboriginal four-year-old children were enrolled in a funded kindergarten program. This is higher than the enrolment rate for all children.

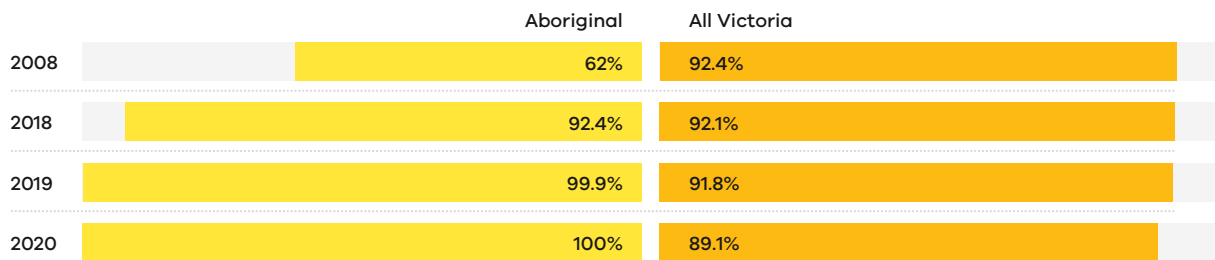
### Measure 4.1.2 Number of children funded to participate in Early Start Kindergarten

There has been a steady increase in the number of Aboriginal children participating in the Early Start (three-year old) Kindergarten program.

In 2020, 977 Aboriginal children were participating in Early Start Kindergarten, up from 952 in 2019.

### Aboriginal participation in four-year-old kindergarten is now at least comparable to all children

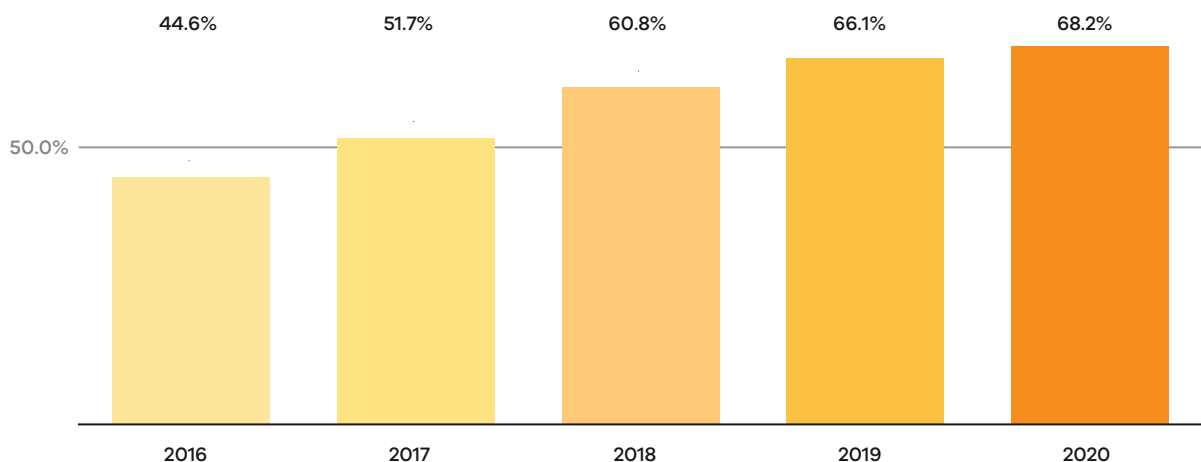
#### Measure 4.1.1



Data Quality Statement: 2018-2020 rates are calculated using ABS estimated resident population estimates which are based on the 2016 census data, while the historical figures (i.e. 2013-2017) are based on 2011 census estimates. Prior to 2013 the calculation of the total kindergarten participation rate was based on different assumptions to the Aboriginal participation rate. The figures in the above table may differ to those in previous reports.

### Participation in Early Start Kindergarten has continued to increase

#### Measure 4.1.2



Data quality statement: Note - No 'all Victoria' comparison rate or number is available 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



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 5 have continued to improve.

Safety and connection to school are critical to increasing engagement and outcomes for all learners. While positive trends are emerging in relation to several of the below measures, there is a need for continued focus to accelerate improvement.

### Closing the Gap – Relevant Outcomes and Targets for Goal 5

The National Agreement does not contain outcomes and targets that align with this VAAF goal. Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive goals under the VAAF, which are reported on in this chapter and the Data Dashboard.

### Data Note



The following measures rely on data from the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. No new data was available at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 5.1.1** Percentage of students in top three bands – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in Year 3, 5, 7 and 9
- **Measure 5.2.2** Student attendance rates in government schools.

Data for these measures is available on the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard.improvement](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard.improvement).

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Not applicable.

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

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

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic there was no NAPLAN conducted in 2020, and therefore data is unavailable for this year's Report.



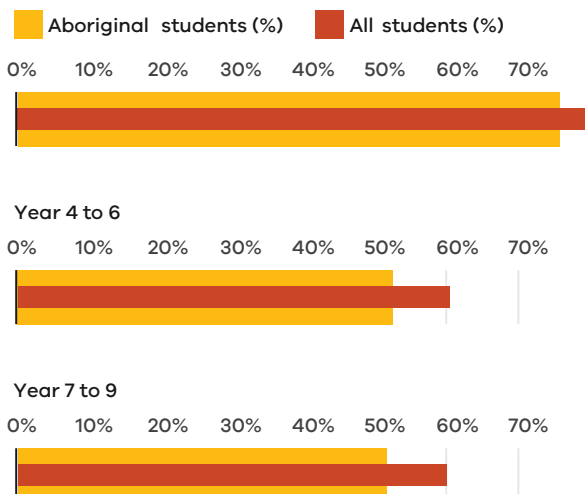
## 5.2 Increase the proportion of Aboriginal students who feel safe and connected at school

### Measure 5.2.1 Proportion of students who feel connected to their school

Although slightly improved on 2019 outcomes for most year levels, connectedness to school varies substantially across year levels for Aboriginal students, as it does for all students. Students feel more connected in primary school than they do in secondary school.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Students are more connected in primary school than in secondary school

#### Measure 5.2.1



### Measure 5.2.2 Student attendance rates in government schools

Due to the different arrangements for schooling across the country that were put in place in response to health advice, attendance data was inconsistent across states and territories. As a result, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) did not publish student attendance data in 2020.

### Measure 5.2.3 Number of Aboriginal people on school councils

The available data indicates that 264 Aboriginal people were on school councils in 2020. This data cannot be reliably compared to previous years due to differences in completion rates. In 2020, a much lower number of Victorian government schools participated in the School Survey than in previous years with only 77 per cent (1,187) of schools providing a complete response in 2020, compared to 95 per cent (1458) in 2019 and 99.7 per cent in 2018.

### Measure 5.2.4 Proportion of students who report bullying at school

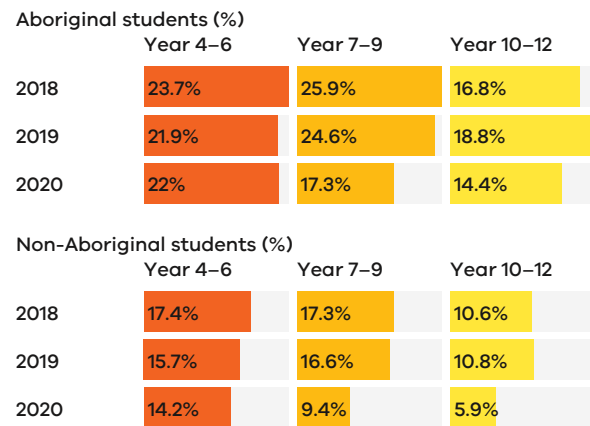
As with non-Aboriginal students, reports of Aboriginal students experiencing bullying are more frequent in primary school, with 22.0 per cent of Aboriginal students in Years 4-6 reporting they experienced bullying in 2020. These numbers decrease in secondary school, however Aboriginal students continue to report significantly higher rates of bullying than their non-Aboriginal peers.

### Measure 5.2.5 Number and proportion of school-based Aboriginal education workers across all schools

As at 30 June 2021, 0.4 per cent of all school based education workers identify as Aboriginal.

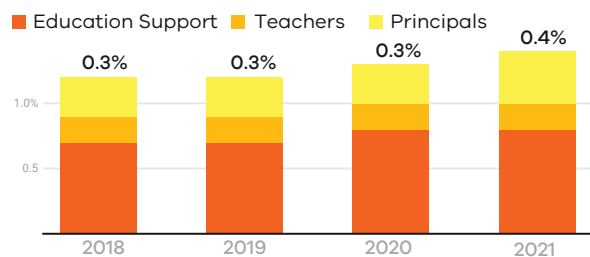
## Aboriginal students continue to report experiencing bullying at school at higher rates

### Measure 5.2.4



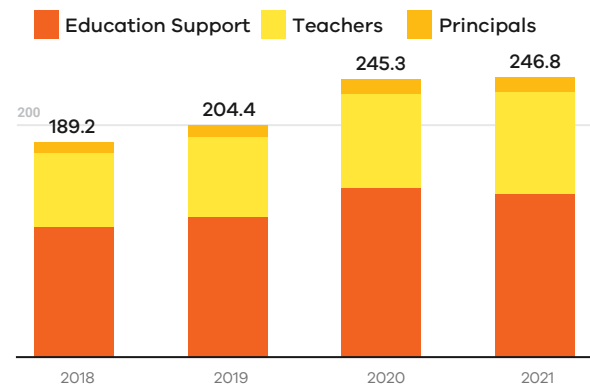
## The proportion of school-based education workers who identify as Aboriginal is increasing

### Measure 5.2.5



Note: Education Support include the Koorie Engagement Support Officers which are positions that are not based inschools. Counting: Full Time Equivalence (FTE) positions.

Source: Department of Education and Training, Victoria



Note: Education Support include the Koorie Engagement Support Officers which are positions that are not based in schools. Counting: Full Time Equivalence (FTE) positions.

Source: Department of Education and Training, Victoria

**Measure 5.2.6 Number of schools teaching an Aboriginal language**

The number of Aboriginal language programs in Victorian schools has grown significantly since 2008, with particularly strong numbers since the launch of Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan in 2016. New Aboriginal language training courses introduced as a commitment under Marrung will increase the availability of Aboriginal language teachers to meet the demand of schools interested in offering an Aboriginal language program.

**The number of schools teaching an Aboriginal language decreased slightly**

**Measure 5.2.6**



**Measure 5.2.7 Number of government schools having undertaken Community Understanding and Safety Training (CUST)<sup>6</sup>**

In 2020, 137 campuses received Community Understanding and Safety Training (CUST). CUST continued to be delivered virtually in this period if existing relationships ensured the training fidelity was not compromised. However, face-to-face delivery of CUST is considered the best model to achieve the program aims, including the fostering of relationships. As at February 2022, 77 per cent of all Victorian Government school campuses had undertaken CUST.

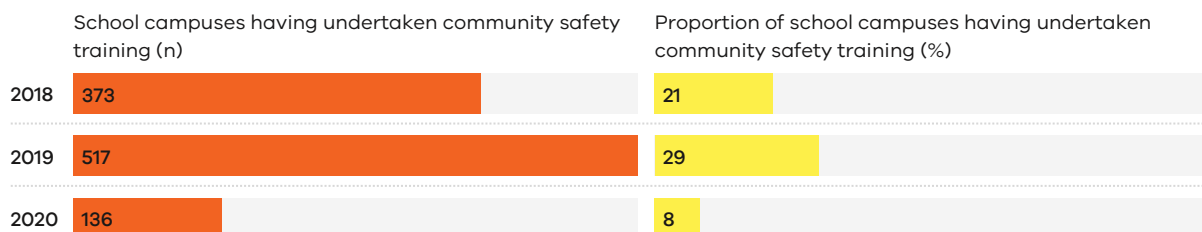
CUST builds the capacity of Victorian Government school staff to better support Aboriginal students, including through developing more culturally inclusive practices. Programs such as CUST are an important first step to ensure that schools provide a safe and welcoming learning environment.

**Strengthening Professional Capability of Principals in Koorie Education**

‘Strengthening Principals’ Professional Capability in Koorie Education’ program (SPPIKE) was successfully piloted to 108 school staff in 2019-2021. SPPIKE equips school leaders to have challenging conversations, actively engage the school community and promote positive cultural identity and excellence in schools. The program supports school and systems transformation that includes and promotes Koorie culture as a fundamental element of the Victorian education system. It seeks to develop school leaders’ capacity to incorporate traditional knowledge and perspectives into ways of being and use them to enhance all students’ learning experiences. Through this professional development program, school leaders are supported to develop the tools to enhance their leadership capacity, challenge their assumptions and contribute to the critical mass of leaders, creating a positive climate for change in education.

**CUST continued to be delivered virtually during the shift to remote learning**

**Measure 5.2.7**



6 Formerly ‘Cultural’ Understanding and Safety Training.

### Wimmera Murrung Project

In the Wimmera Area in central-western Victoria, on Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagalk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali Country, the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Co-Operative and the Department of Education and Training have established a partnership in response to the significant issue of chronic school absence among the Aboriginal cohort in the Wimmera.

To gain the perspective of families, Goolum Goolum surveyed parents and carers of four schools. The project partners reviewed the survey findings against attendance data across the area.

It was identified that, while symbolic actions such as flying the flag and acknowledging Traditional Owners were seen as important, this was not sufficient to make Aboriginal families feel welcomed and respected. Rather, schools that held regular informal meetings, morning teas and other events specifically for Aboriginal families to connect with each other and with school leadership, had Aboriginal absence rates of just over 20 per cent, compared to nearly 60 per cent in schools without these informal engagement opportunities. Families reported that, at schools with more informal engagement opportunities, they felt comfortable contacting the school when issues arose, Aboriginal culture was more likely to be embedded in the curriculum, and staff were more likely to contact families with positive stories about their children.

Schools actively worked to improve relationships with Aboriginal students and their families based on the feedback from the community. In 2021, the partners began working with four focus schools to review the survey findings and develop a logic model that focuses the work of each school on students absent more than 20 per cent of the time. The approach is showing promise, with measurable improvement for several individual students.

Options to engage a full-time facilitator in 2022 are being explored to enable the impact of this work to be scaled up by working intensively with schools to embed the approach.

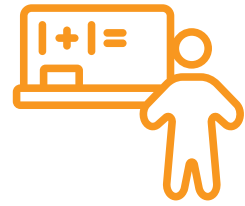
### Side by Side Partnership Addressing Disadvantage program

The Side by Side Partnership Addressing Disadvantage program aims to improve attendance, engagement and educational outcomes for disadvantaged children in the early years of primary schools at participating schools. It provides intensive support including tutoring for students to improve their capacity to engage with learning and improve literacy skills, and intensive outreach services for families. The program also provides professional development and whole of school training for participating schools, focusing on supporting schools to provide a culturally sensitive, trauma aware model of education. An innovative partnership model between Berry Street, DET, the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF), Social Ventures Australia and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) delivers the program.



Address trauma and support healing

# Goal 6: Aboriginal learners are engaged at school



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 6 have continued to improve.

Education is well recognised as a key social determinant of health. Higher education levels also support increased access to safe and healthy housing; healthy lifestyle choices such as regularly eating fruit and vegetables; and lower likelihood of smoking.

Aboriginal people who complete Year 12, or a higher qualification, are more likely to be employed, to work full-time, and have higher skilled jobs than early school leavers.

Apparent retention rates for Aboriginal young students in Years 10 to 12 continue to improve, however there was a slight decrease in the number of Aboriginal students who completed a VCE, VCAL or VET Schools Certificate compared to 2019.

### Data Note



The following measure has not been featured in the Report, as 2021 Census data was unavailable at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 6.1.1** Proportion of young people aged 20-24 with Year 12 or equivalent

This measure is reported through the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).

### Goal 6 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 5:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential.

- **Target 5:** By 2031, 96 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (aged 20-24) attain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

In 2016, 63.2 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–24 years had attained Year 12 or obtained a non-school qualification at Certificate III or above across Australia, compared to 69.6 per cent in Victoria.

This target relies on Census data. No new data was available at the time of reporting.

## 6.1 Increase Year 12 or equivalent attainment

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

While more Aboriginal young people are completing Year 12, there remains a disparity in apparent retention rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners, with the gap in 2020 being 18 per cent.

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

In 2020, 677 Aboriginal students completed a VCE, VCAL or VET Schools Certificate compared to 688 Aboriginal students in 2019.

#### Koorie Outreach Support Program

An example of Aboriginal-led service design and delivery, the Koorie Outreach Support Program (KOSP), was instigated and implemented by the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI). This was in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated periods of remote learning on Aboriginal learners and families. VAEAI identified the community need, and the Department of Education and Training provided a lump sum payment to fund the delivery for six months, with high engagement and successful outcomes. The department funded the continuation of the KOSP during 2021 after VAEAI identified ongoing community need.

In delivering the program, VAEAI engaged additional Aboriginal staff to provide outreach services to Aboriginal community members across Victoria. The additional staff determined local needs and facilitated access to essential supports required for continued engagement or re-engagement with education across early childhood education, schools and adult education.

This work was complemented by direct funding of selected kindergarten services with high numbers of Aboriginal children in 2021 to support the re-engagement of Aboriginal children in kindergarten and their transition to school. VAEAI was a key partner in the design of this initiative.

### The number of Aboriginal students who completed VCE, VCAL or VET in Schools Certificate fell slightly

#### Measure 6.1.3





# Goal 7: School leavers achieve their potential



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 7 have continued to improve.

The proportion of Aboriginal Year 12 completers going on to work, higher education or training has continued to grow over the past decade.

### Data Note



The following measures have not been featured in the Report, as 2021 Census data was unavailable at the time of reporting.

- **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-olds with qualifications at Certificate III level or above

These measures are reported through the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).

### Goal 7 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 6:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways.

- **Target 6:** By 2031, 70 per cent of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above).

**Outcome 7:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education.

- **Target 7:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15–24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67 percent.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

**Target 6:** In 2016, 42.3 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years had completed non-school qualifications of Certificate III or above) across Australia, compared to 56.5 per cent in Victoria.

**Target 7:** In 2016, 57.2 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15–24 years were fully engaged in employment, education or training across Australia, compared to 65.4 per cent in Victoria.

These targets both rely on Census data. No new data was available at the time of reporting.

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

### Measure 7.1.1 Destinations of Year 12 completers

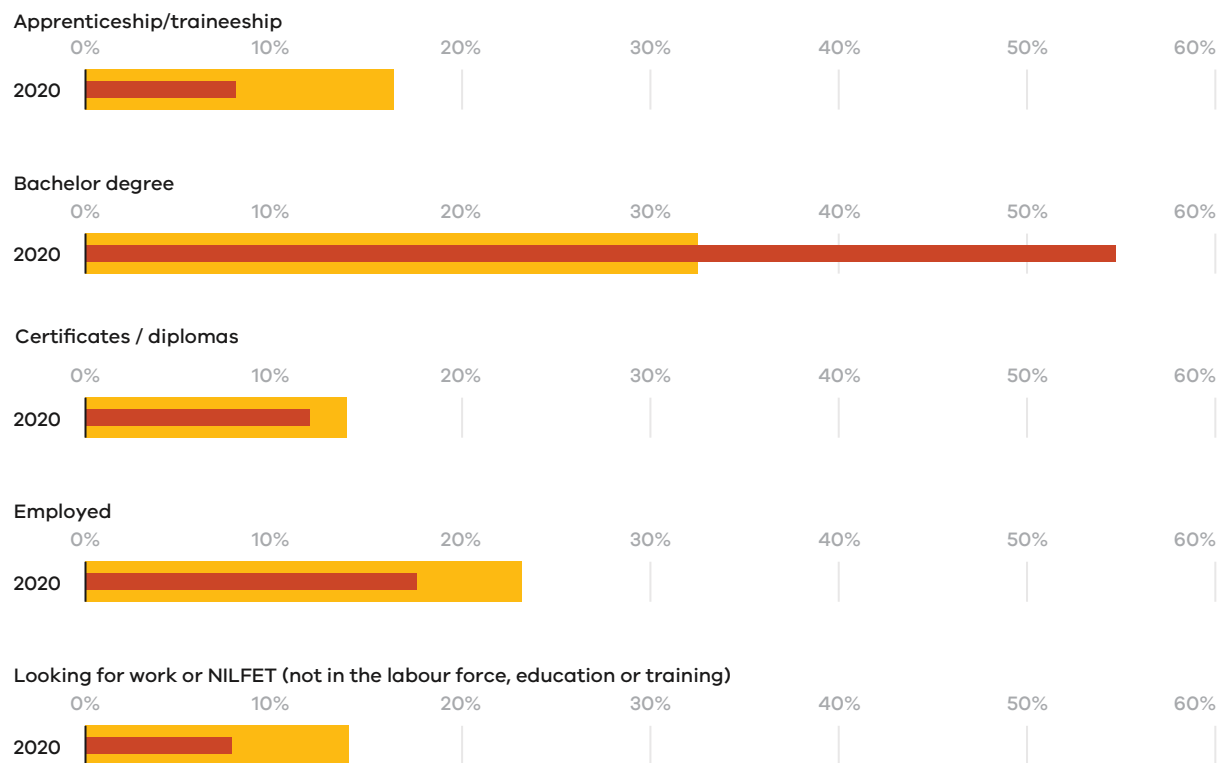
The proportion of Aboriginal Year 12 completers in education or training remained at a high in 2020. 32.5 per cent of Aboriginal Year 12 completers were undertaking a Bachelor degree at university, 16.4 per cent were undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship and 13.9 per cent were completing a certificate or diploma. This is a total of 62.8 per cent of Aboriginal Year 12 completers undertaking further education or training in 2020.

Of those not pursuing education or training, the majority of people were employed (23.2 per cent). However, 14 per cent of Aboriginal Year 12 completers were looking for work or not in the labour force in 2020 – an increase on both 2018 and 2019. Of this 14 per cent, 12.1 per cent were looking for work and 1.9 per cent were not in the labour force, education or training.

### The proportion of Aboriginal Year 12 completers in education or training remained high

#### Measure 7.1.1

■ Aboriginal ■ Non-Aboriginal



### Promote uptake of apprenticeships

Apprenticeships Victoria provides opportunity for people of all backgrounds to find their path to a rewarding career, targeting groups that are traditionally under-represented in transport and construction industries, including Aboriginal people.

Big Build Apprenticeships is Apprenticeships Victoria's flagship program to create high-quality skills pathways for apprentices and trainees. Currently 25 Aboriginal apprentices are supported, working across major projects, comprising 17 men and 8 women. Qualifications include business, civil construction, plumbing, electrical and carpentry, on sites such as North East Link Project and the new Footscray Hospital.



### Measure 71.3 – Proportion of 18–24-year olds participating and completing tertiary education

VET participation and completion rates remain steady for Aboriginal students.

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

#### Measure 71.3

Aboriginal		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 (%)
2016	2020					
3,706	596	16.08%	43.16%	6.94%		
4,215	567	13.45%	49.09%	6.6%		

Non-Aboriginal		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 (%)
2016	2020					
177,683	38,672	21.76%	28.28%	6.16%		
134,938	27,229	20.18%	21.48%	4.33%		

\*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 Non-university providers

### Measure 7.1.3

Aboriginal		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 (%)		
Year	Enrolments (n)	Completions (n)	2016	2020	2016	2020	2016	2020
2016	234	51	21.79%	14%	2.73%	3.49%	0.59%	0.49%
2020	300	42						
Non-Aboriginal		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 (%)		
Year	Enrolments (n)	Completions (n)	2016	2020	2016	2020	2016	2020
2016	20,327	6,740	33.16%	22.26%	3.24%	3.41%	1.07%	0.76%
2020	21,415	4,766						

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

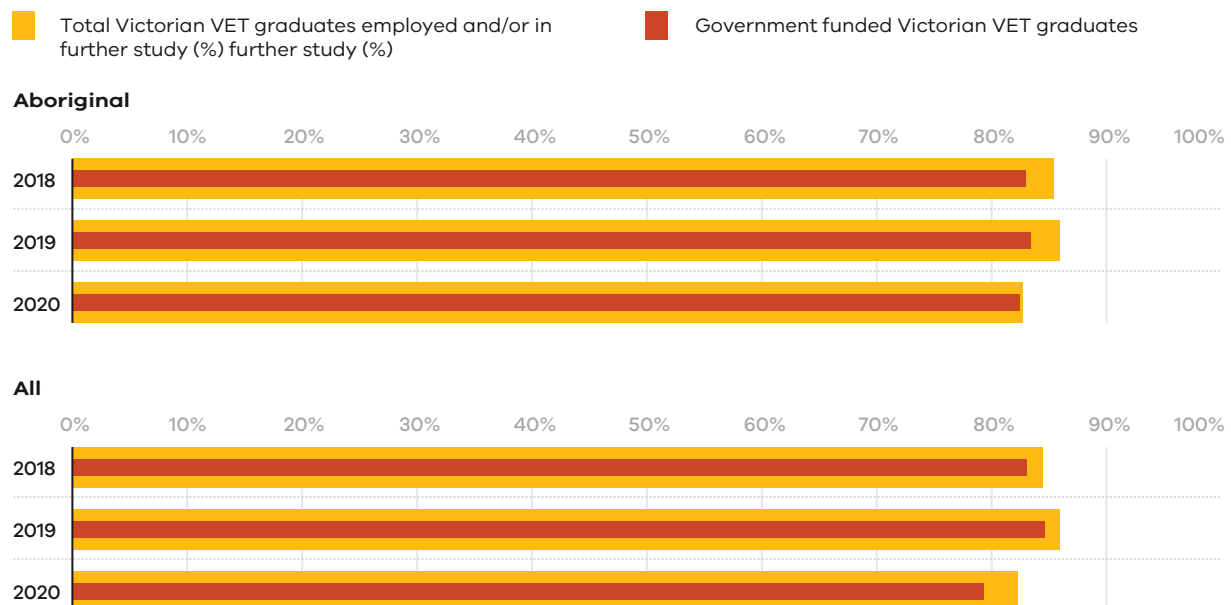
Although slightly fewer Aboriginal VET graduates were employed and/or pursuing further study in 2020 than 2019 (82.7 per cent in 2020, compared to 85.9 per cent in 2019), more Aboriginal VET graduates were employed and/or pursuing further study than their non-Aboriginal peers.

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

The Victorian Public Service (VPS) provides a key employment pathway for Aboriginal Victorians. Between 2017 and 2021, 350 Aboriginal Victorians were employed in the VPS as graduates or cadets. Of these, 318 (90.8 per cent) completed or are on track to complete their respective program.

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

### Measure 7.1.5



## Domain 2 - Victorian Government Investment and 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.*

**The key Aboriginal Governance Forum for realising outcomes in this Domain is the Marrung Central Governance Committee**

The 2021/22 State Budget funding supported six initiatives across the early childhood, schools, and training and skills sectors.

### **Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program**

- The Koorie Literacy and Numeracy Program funds schools to provide additional support for Koorie students in Prep-Year 6 who are below expected reading and numeracy benchmarks.
- 2021/22 State Budget funding increased the ongoing envelope enabling the program to meet increased demand due to the growing number of Koorie learners in schools.

### **Koorie Pre-school Assistants Program**

- Koorie Pre-School Assistants (KPSAs), based in ACCOs, provide support to services on cultural inclusivity and engagement of Koorie children and families.
- 2021/22 State Budget funding provided for an ongoing increase of support in 15 locations (including four new locations) across the state. This increase was originally funded for one year through the 2020-21 State Budget.

### **Balert Gerrbik: Koorie Families as First Educators**

- Balert Gerrbik, delivered by ACCOs in five locations, is an evidence-based, culturally safe parenting support program that seeks to build a positive home learning environment for Koorie children.
- 2021/22 State Budget funding enabled the ongoing provision of this initiative, which was originally funded for four years through the 2017-18 State Budget.
- Locations were selected based on need, including consideration of the out-of-home care system admission rates and access to other early childhood and parenting programs.

### **Aboriginal Self-determination in Education**

- Following the Victorian Government's commitment to progressing Aboriginal self-determination, this initiative acknowledges that Aboriginal people are best placed to advise on the reforms required to make the education system more inclusive and responsive to Aboriginal learners.
- 2021/22 State Budget provided funding for an 18-month state-wide consultation and co-design process to develop reform options that progress Aboriginal self-determination in education.
- This includes speaking to Aboriginal community members and organisations, students, families, and schools, including options for schools to formally partner with Aboriginal community organisations through:
  - Conversations hosted by ACCOs and/or Traditional Owner groups.
- 100 conversations hosted by schools and service networks in partnership with their local community, students, and families.
  - Specific workshops for Aboriginal students and young people.
  - Marrung Area Forums on self-determination in education in all DET Areas.
  - 45 Koorie Education Roundtables led by VAEAI.

### Koorie Engagement Support Officer Program

- Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) work with families, communities, education and service providers to support Aboriginal learners to participate fully in education.
- 2021/22 State Budget funding provided for an ongoing increase of 16 KESOs, in areas identified by need. This increase was originally funded for one year through the 2020-21 State Budget.
- These roles are in addition to the approximately 111 ongoing KESO and 9 Koorie Education Coordinator positions that operate throughout Victoria.

### Aboriginal Languages Training Initiative

- 2021/22 State Budget funding supports the licensing and contextualisation of two new nationally accredited courses, Certificates II and III in Learning an Australian First Nations Language and ongoing delivery of the Certificates to a cohort of up to 20 students per year.

In addition to the above 2021/22 State Budget initiatives, a number of other key initiatives are contributing to improved engagement and outcomes for Koorie learners:

- Community Understanding and Safety Training (CUST) continues to be rolled out to all government schools, delivered by the Koorie Education Workforce, to ensure a positive learning environment for Koorie students and promote the vibrant living cultures of First Nations People.

#### Address trauma and support healing

- The Victorian Curriculum F-10 embeds Aboriginal perspectives across all learning domains.
- Koorie Education Children's Court Liaison Officers support Koorie students who appear before the Children's Koori Court to better engage or re-engage with education.

- Thirty-two new Koorie Student Support Officer roles, two in each Victorian TAFE/ Dual Sector Institute, commenced in 2021, providing direct support to Koorie students. These roles are in addition to the existing 17 Koorie Liaison Officer (KLO) positions within the Victorian TAFE network. These positions provide additional targeted support to Koorie students and allow the KLO the opportunity to concentrate on strategic support to TAFEs.

The following system-wide reforms and initiatives also provide important support for Aboriginal staff and learners:

- Funded three-year-old-and-four-year-old kindergarten is continuing to support Aboriginal children to attend kindergarten by providing access to 15 hours of free or low-cost kindergarten a week.

The Tutor Learning Initiative is reaching Koorie students that need support to catch up on their learning.

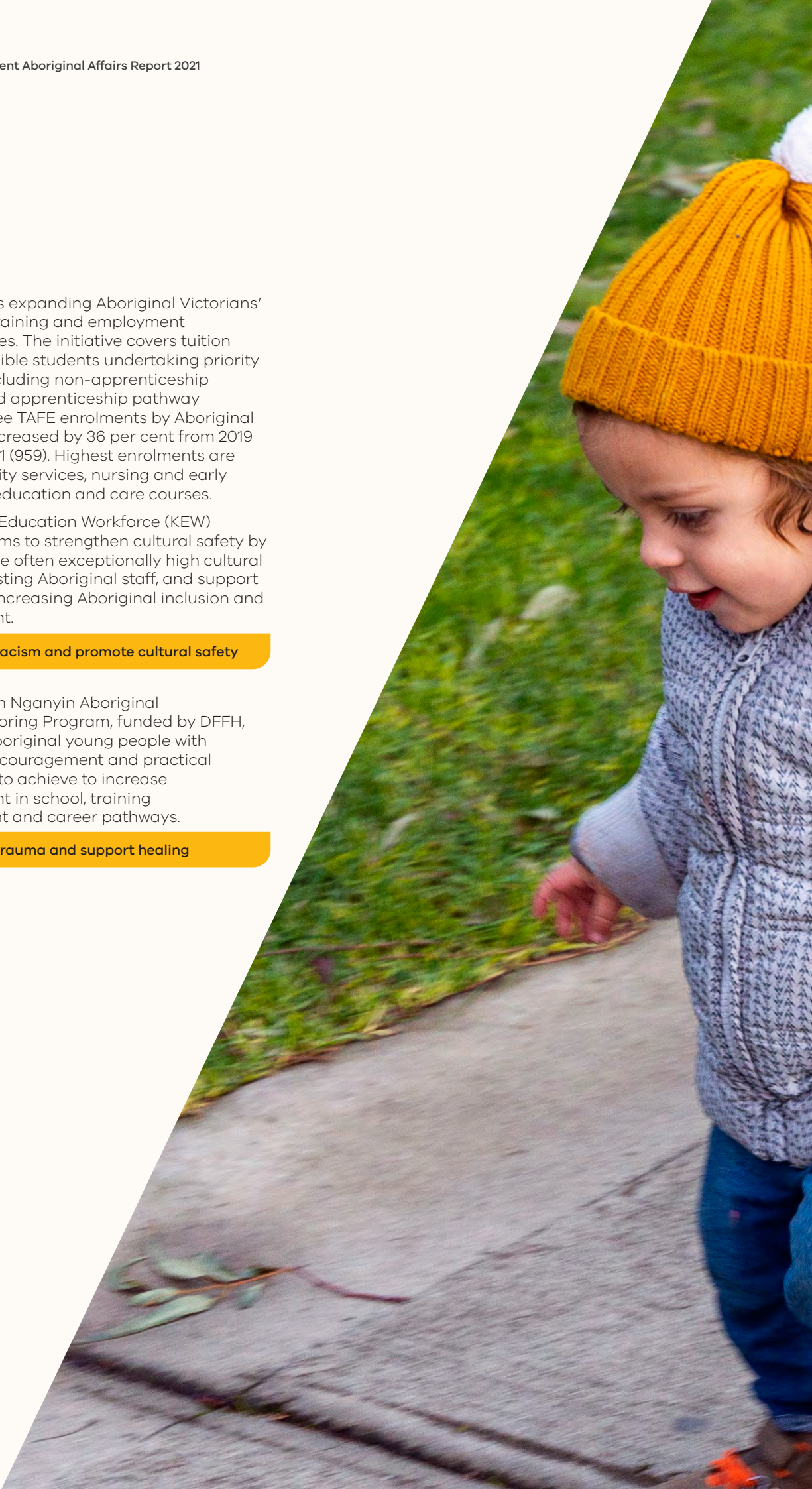
- The Schools Mental Health Fund and Menu is a new support for schools, ensuring mental health and wellbeing is a core part of a student's experience at school. The menu will include an option for schools to engage with registered ACCOs regarding culturally appropriate and evidence-based mental health support for Aboriginal learners.
- Disability inclusion reform is strengthening how children and young people with disability are welcomed and engaged in school. It introduces a tiered funding model for students with disability, with additional funding for schools to help these young people achieve their full potential at school and in life.
- LOOKOUT provides support to children in the out-of-home care system to access and engage in kindergarten and school.
- Navigator helps students at risk of or who have disengaged from school to continue their education.

- Free TAFE is expanding Aboriginal Victorians' access to training and employment opportunities. The initiative covers tuition fees for eligible students undertaking priority courses, including non-apprenticeship courses and apprenticeship pathway courses. Free TAFE enrolments by Aboriginal students increased by 36 per cent from 2019 (705) to 2021 (959). Highest enrolments are in community services, nursing and early childhood education and care courses.
- The Koorie Education Workforce (KEW) program aims to strengthen cultural safety by reducing the often exceptionally high cultural load on existing Aboriginal staff, and support schools in increasing Aboriginal inclusion and engagement.

 Address racism and promote cultural safety

- The Marram Nganyin Aboriginal Youth Mentoring Program, funded by DFFH, provides Aboriginal young people with support, encouragement and practical assistance to achieve to increase engagement in school, training employment and career pathways.

 Address trauma and support healing



# 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 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 and people living with disability those in regional areas, and ensuring Aboriginal Victorians are represented at all levels, across all sectors and in all pursuits.





RAJOO...  
SUPER...  
FOO...



# Goal 8: Aboriginal workers achieve wealth equality



## Overview

### The only featured measure for goal 8 has remained stable.

As part of the State-sanctioned dispossession of Aboriginal Victorians from their lands and waters, Aboriginal Victorians were not recognised as having pre-existing rights and were not considered in legislation or policy until very recently.

The Government acknowledges that silence in legislation reinforced the exclusion of Traditional Owners from important decisions, prevented the practice of culture, and led to loss of economic opportunities.

Government can directly contribute to wealth equality for Aboriginal workers by increasing the amount of goods and services it procures from Aboriginal businesses.

Victoria's steady increase in the proportion of goods and services it procures from Victorian Aboriginal businesses signals progress in this space. However, this falls short of Victoria's commitment to a one per cent Aboriginal business procurement target by 2019-20 under Tharamba Bugheen: Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017-2021, suggesting there is still work to be done.

### Data Note



The following measures have not been featured in the Report, as 2021 Census data was unavailable at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 8.1.1** Median household income and median equivalised 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.

Data for these measures is available on the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).

### Closing the Gap – Relevant Outcomes and Targets for Goal 8

The National Agreement does not contain outcomes and targets that align with this VAAF goal. Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive goals under the VAAF, which are reported on in this chapter and the Data Dashboard.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Not applicable.

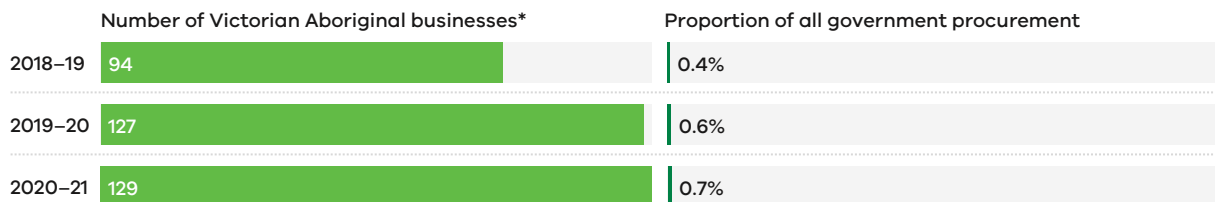
**Measure 8.3.2** Aboriginal businesses that government enters into a purchase agreement with as a proportion of small to medium enterprises.

**Partnership with Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce**

DJPR entered a new two-year partnership with Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce (Kinaway) to enhance Victorian Government engagement with Aboriginal businesses. Kinaway is the lead Victorian organisation dedicated to supporting Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait business owners. With a dedicated Government Relationship Manager, Kinaway is providing tailored support to identify opportunities for member businesses to be engaged for goods and services procurement. Kinaway is also providing government buyers access to their database of businesses and building capability within Victorian Government departments to meet the Aboriginal procurement target and objectives of the Social Procurement Framework.

**Government is procuring from more Aboriginal businesses than ever before**

**Measure 8.3.2**



\*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



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 9 have continued to improve.

More Aboriginal Victorians were supported into work via Jobs Victoria in 2021 than ever before. However, there is still a gap between placements and sustainable employment outcomes. In 2020, there were more Aboriginal people working in the VPS and in VPS management roles than ever before while the proportion of Aboriginal people participating on Victorian Government boards was at an all-time high.

### Goal 9 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 8:** Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

- **Target 8:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 who are employed to 62 per cent.

### Data Note



The following measures have not been featured in the Report, as 2021 Census data was unavailable at the time of reporting.

- **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

These measures are reported through the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

In 2016, 51.0 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 years were employed across Australia, compared to 57.3 per cent in Victoria.

This target relies on Census data. No new data was available, since the baseline year of 2016, at the time of reporting.

## 9.1 Increase Aboriginal workforce participation

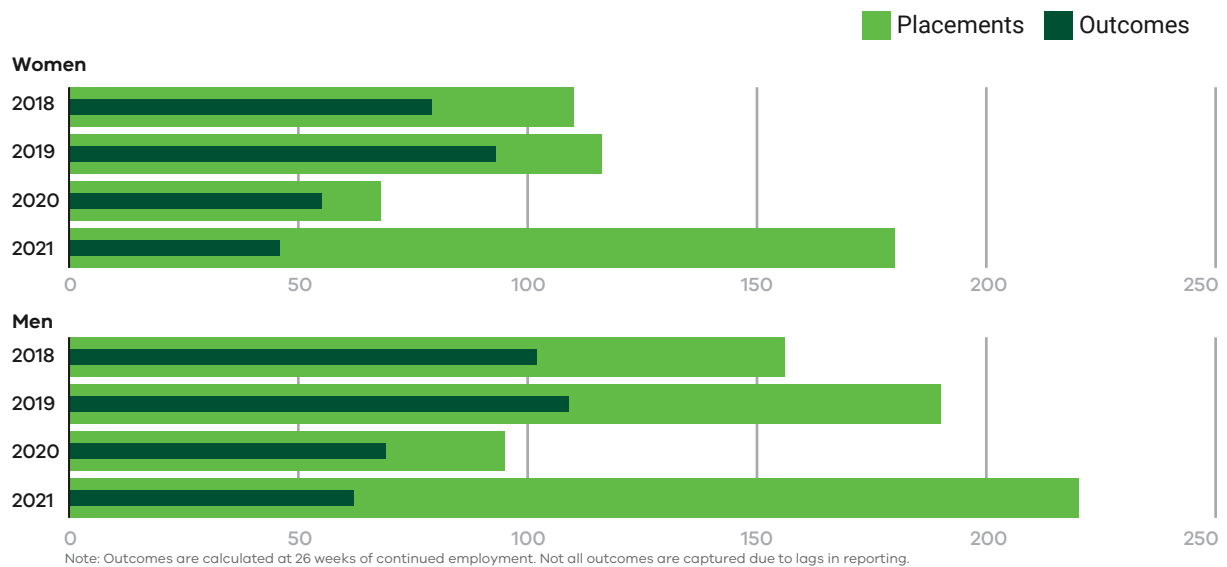
### Measure 9.1.3 Aboriginal jobseekers supported into work

More Aboriginal Victorians were supported into work via Jobs Victoria in 2021 than ever before. The number of placements increased in 2021 reflecting the expansion of the Jobs Victoria mentor service in the second half of the year. However, the percentage of placements that converted into sustainable employment outcomes (six months of employment) in 2021 reduced for both men and women. This reflects the time lag between when the work placement commenced (in the second half of 2021) and six months of employment being realised (in 2022). It is expected that further sustainable employment outcomes will be reflected in 2022 data.



### More Aboriginal job seekers have been supported into work via Jobs Victoria than ever before

#### Measure 9.1.3



### Algabonyah Business Development Unit

DJPR is partnering with Aboriginal organisations to reduce structural and systemic barriers experienced by Aboriginal jobseekers in the Victorian labour market. For example, working with the Kaiela Institute to drive improved employment outcomes for local Aboriginal young people in the Goulburn Murray region. This involves communities, their local leaders, and government working together to increase economic participation for people experiencing complex and multiple barriers to employment.

Community Revitalisation funding has enabled Kaiela Institute to facilitate culturally safe environments in partnership with key local employers. Kaiela Institute's Algabonyah Business Development Unit (ABDU) worked with Greater Shepparton City Council and Goulburn Valley Water to support increasing their Aboriginal staff by 2 per cent, and subsequently increase their Aboriginal employment targets to 5 per cent.

The ABDU successfully negotiated with Lend Lease to engage Aboriginal apprentices at entry level for the Goulburn Valley Health Hospital site build, and labouring positions with LS Precast concrete batching plant for the West Gate Tunnel Project.

In partnership with Rumbalara Football Netball Club, jobseekers were linked to opportunities via Jobs Victoria services and supported to sustain employment after placements.



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

The number and proportion of Aboriginal employees in the VPS has continued to grow, reaching 620 employees, or 1.2 per cent of VPS staff in 2020. This is a considerable increase from just three years prior in 2017, where 478 employees or 1.1 per cent of the VPS identified as Aboriginal.

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

As with the total number of Aboriginal employees in the VPS, there are also more Aboriginal staff at VPS level 6 and above (leadership roles) than before – 62 employees in 2020. Although a substantial increase on previous years, the greater number of Aboriginal staff in the VPS more generally has led to a reduction in the proportion of all Aboriginal staff in leadership roles from a high of 10.7 per cent in 2018 to 10 per cent in 2020.

### Measure 9.4.4 Number of Aboriginal people participating on Victorian Government boards

The proportion of Aboriginal people participating on Victorian Government boards is at an all-time high, reaching 1.3 per cent in 2020. While this slightly exceeds the proportion of the Aboriginal population in Victoria, some individual departments still have a way to go in increasing the participation of Aboriginal people on boards.

### Barring Djinang Aboriginal Employment Strategy

The Strategy is 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 (VPSC) drives the roll out of initiatives across the public sector and partners with ACCOs to remain responsive. For example, a Cultural Capability Toolkit developed in partnership with VACCA is available through the VPSC website.

 Address racism and promote cultural safety

### Metropolitan Partnerships Program – Aboriginal Partnership Members

The Metropolitan Partnerships bring together experts and leaders from all levels of government, business and the community to identify and progress issues that matter in their region of Melbourne. Their collective advice provides government with rich insights that inform the delivery of projects, programs and services to better meet the specific needs of their communities.

Each of the six Metropolitan Partnership regions includes representatives from the Victorian Aboriginal community, encouraging leadership and shared decision-making across this work. In particular, representatives have identified priorities areas of Cultural connection and inclusion; Economic inclusion, health and wellbeing; and Learning and the early years.

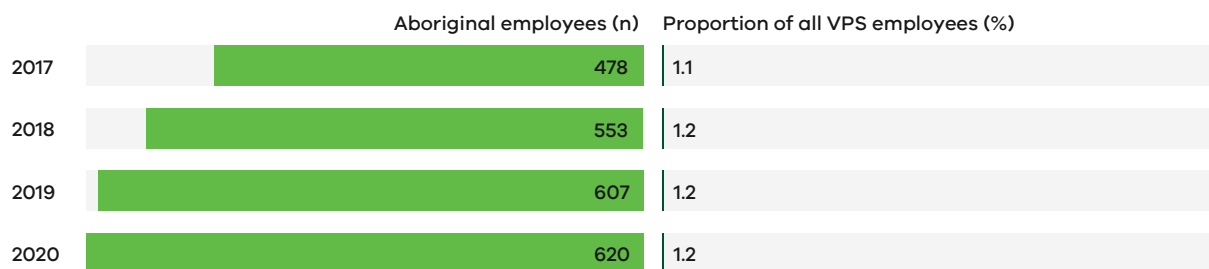
In 2021, the Office for Suburban Development supported bringing the Aboriginal members of the six partnership regions together as a collective voice to discuss issue relating to their communities on a metro wide level. This group will now provide advice to the Victorian Government in addition to the broader regional advice of their respective partnerships.

The Aboriginal Partnership members also led the Elders Health and Wellbeing project that engages Aboriginal Elders across metropolitan Melbourne through phone interviews and yarning circles, to better understand the needs of Aboriginal communities and help address social isolation, loneliness and cultural wellbeing.



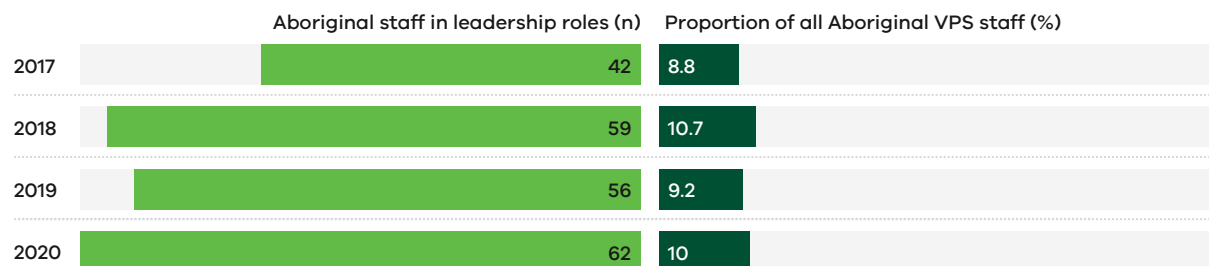
## The number of Aboriginal employees in the Victorian Public Service has continued to grow

### Measure 9.4.2



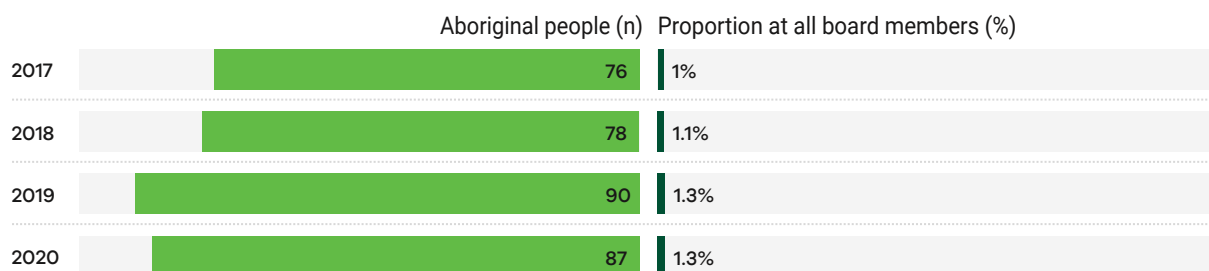
## More Aboriginal staff are in leadership roles in the Victorian Public Service than ever before

### Measure 9.4.3



## The proportion of Aboriginal people participating on Victorian government boards stabilised in the past year

### Measure 9.4.4





# Goal 10: Aboriginal income potential is realised



## Overview

### Data Note



All measures under this goal rely on 2021 Census data which was not available at the time of reporting.

- **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.

Data for these measures is available at the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).

### Closing the Gap – Relevant Outcomes and Targets for Goal 10

The National Agreement does not contain outcomes and targets that align with this VAAF goal. Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive goals under the VAAF, which are reported on in this chapter and the Data Dashboard.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Not applicable.

### Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council (Council)

The Council was established in partnership with the Aboriginal community in October 2020. The Council is co-chaired by the DJPR Secretary and the Kinaway Chamber of Commerce Chairperson and comprises of Aboriginal members together with DJPR Executive Board members. The Council provides a platform where the Aboriginal community and DJPR can work together as equal partners to deliver on our commitment to self-determination and the creation of opportunity and prosperity for all Aboriginal Victorians.

### Ngali: First Peoples Fashion and Textile Program & Trade Routes

Global Victoria and DJPR's Aboriginal Economic Development Group have jointly funded the RMIT Trade Routes program to deliver tailored Aboriginal co-designed business mentoring and support. (Global Victoria contributed \$100,000 and DJPR contributed a further \$250,000).

Ngali was in the first tranche of 15 Aboriginal businesses supported through the Trade Routes program. Ngali was subsequently supported through the First Peoples Fashion and Textiles Program and was able to feature their designs at the Milan Fashion Week in February of this year.

*"Ngali is a sustainable fashion label that works with First Nations' artists to translate world renowned artworks onto premium-quality clothing and collectibles. Some of Australia's most talented Indigenous artists live in places you've never heard of and maybe you'll never see. We help bring their unique artwork to the world by taking it beyond wall display and onto garments to walk the streets and show up in a myriad of places around the world".*

— Founder and Designer: Denni Francisco



*Pictured above is Deni Francisco, Founder and Designer with her model – featuring her beautiful and sustainable design.*



*Collaboration between Global Victoria, RMIT University, Kinaway and two Aboriginal businesses Ngali and Wild Blak Arts who were featured at the Milan Fashion Show in February 2022.*

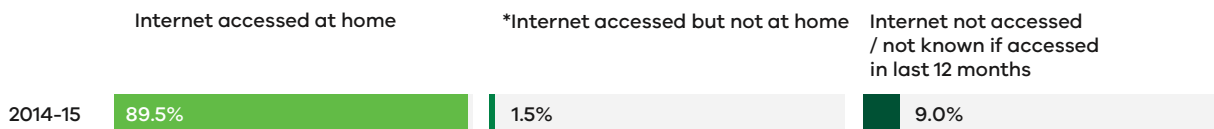
## Digital inclusion

The National Agreement includes a socioeconomic outcome and target for digital inclusion. This is relevant to Domain 3 of the VAAF but does not align directly to any VAAF goals or measures.

**Outcome 17: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives.**

**Target 17: By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion.**

### Proportion of Aboriginal people who accessed the internet in the last 12 months, 15+ years old, Victoria



\*Estimate has a relative standard error (RSE) between 25 per cent and 50 per cent and should be used with caution  
Source: <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard/socioeconomic/outcome-area-17>

#### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

In 2014-15, 73.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over across Australia accessed the internet in their home, compared to 89.5 per cent in Victoria.

There are no comparable data on home access to the internet for non-Indigenous people.

This outcome relies on data from National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey. No new data is available since the baseline year of 2014-15.

## Domain 3 – Victorian Government

*The Victorian Government is committed to building a strong and competitive economy that provides opportunity, choice and prosperity for Aboriginal Victorians.*

The key Aboriginal Governance Forum for realising outcomes in this Domain is the Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council.

### Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Strategy

In November 2021, the Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council endorsed the Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Strategy (Yuma Yirramboi: Invest in Tomorrow). The strategy has no end date. It is underpinned by 6 Strategic Pillars:

- Culture – Aboriginal culture as our greatest asset
- People – Nurture a strong and ready talent pool
- Business – Grow in size, scale, diversity and maturity of Aboriginal businesses
- Wealth Creation – Accelerate the growth of the Aboriginal Estate and opportunities for wealth creation
- Jobs – Generate jobs and careers to reach employment parity
- Accountability – Transparent reporting against commitments.

Along with existing investments, the strategy empowers Traditional Owner Corporations to continue to harness their land and water-based assets, their knowledge of land management and their cultural practices to grow and prosper. Treaty will strengthen and amplify these opportunities.

### Geelong Aboriginal Employment Taskforce

Co-chaired by Christine Couzens MP and Aboriginal community member, Sharelle Mcguirk, the Taskforce brings together local Aboriginal community members and organisations, employers, government departments and agencies, businesses, service providers and institutions to enhance employment and career outcomes for Aboriginal people living in Geelong.

DJPR has supported the Taskforce to generate strong buy-in across the public, private and community sectors to drive localised Aboriginal employment and procurement efforts.

As part of this work, the Victorian Government is providing \$400,000 to support a longer-term culturally safe Aboriginal employment model for Geelong including:

- \$100,000 for Secretariat support for the Taskforce, and
- \$150,000 for a Geelong Aboriginal Employment Partnership Program connecting employers and Aboriginal communities, and \$150,000 for a Geelong Aboriginal Employment Action Research project delivered by Deakin University to inform the Aboriginal employment model.

The Taskforce also supports a Geelong Aboriginal Public Sector Employment Strategy, to be delivered from July 2022.

### Key investments in 2021 include:

- \$18.5 million to each the 11 Traditional Owner Corporations in Victoria and 2 ACCOs identified as Jobs Victoria Employment Partners. These funds support economic participation as a key to self-determination by providing Traditional Owners Corporations with the opportunity to implement their economic development agenda and grow their aspiration for prosperity.
- \$545,108 provided to Eastern Maar and Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporations as part of the Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan's industry strengthening initiatives, to build their workforce and develop a self-determined Visitor Economy Plan.
- Over \$2 million across two tranches in the provision of The First People's Business Support Fund and First People's Business Support Fund Extension. The first tranche (late 2020) provided \$10,000 business support grants to 129 Aboriginal businesses. The second tranche (late 2021) provided \$6,000 business support grants to over 131 Aboriginal businesses.
- The Aunty Mary Atkinson Scholarship Program - a partnership with DJPR and Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc- commenced in 2021. The program will assist up to eight undergraduate and postgraduate Victorian Aboriginal students, with up to \$30,000 annually for up to four years, to undertake full-time study in a broad range of fields to open up employment pathways.
- The Jobs Victoria Aboriginal Employment Service (AES) program. The model will support Aboriginal communities to design and operate their own employment services. It is expected to roll out in 2022.
- Two rounds of funding for the Gippsland Aboriginal Advocacy and Support Services Aboriginal employment pathways project:
  - First People Business Support Fund: \$10,000 in 2020 and \$6,000 in 2020, and
  - Latrobe Valley Economic Growth Zone: \$2,659 in 2020 and \$5,000 in 2021.

# 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, 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.



# Goal 11: Aboriginal Victorians enjoy health and longevity



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 11 have worsened.

While Aboriginal people are living longer<sup>7</sup>, rates of cancer, hospitalisations for potentially preventable causes, and emergency department presentations for alcohol or drug-related harm remain higher for Aboriginal Victorians compared to their non-Aboriginal peers. In many cases, these rates have increased. While the increased uptake of specialist alcohol and other drug treatment services suggests these services are becoming more accessible, it is clear there is still work to be done to improve outcomes.

Several systemic issues may have contributed to these outcomes, including:

- funding and workforce issues characterised by limited core funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and an overstretched Aboriginal workforce
- limited equitable access to mainstream services due to cultural safety being an issue
- health data and evidence contributing to a focus on deficit narratives rather than Aboriginal holistic understandings of health
- current investment/funding models prioritising tertiary/acute services over early intervention and prevention models
- the difficulty of capturing/monitoring the longer-term outcomes of delivering prevention activities.

### Data Note



The following measures rely on datasets that are infrequently collected. No new data was available at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 11.1.1** Life expectancy at birth, by sex
- **Measure 11.1.2** Proportion reporting 'excellent or very good' health status, by sex
- **Measure 11.1.3** Rate of daily smoking, by sex.

### Goal 11 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcome and Target

**Outcome 1** People enjoy long and healthy lives

- **Target 1** Close the gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males born in 2015–2017 are expected to live to 71.6 years and females to 75.6 years, and non-Indigenous males and females to 80.2 years and 83.4 years respectively.

Nationally, based on progress from the baseline, the target shows improvement but is not on track to be met for males or females.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander estimates of life expectancy are currently not produced for Victoria due to the small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths reported.



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

### **Measure 11.1.4 Rate of hospitalisations for potentially preventable causes (vaccine preventable, acute, chronic and all)**

The rate of hospitalisations for potentially preventable causes has increased across both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians, but far more markedly for Aboriginal Victorians. In 2018-19, 6.1 Aboriginal Victorians per 1,000 were hospitalised due to vaccine preventable conditions, 21.1 per 1,000 for acute conditions and 35 per 1,000 for chronic conditions. By contrast, rates for non-Aboriginal Victorians were 2.3 per 1,000, 11.6 per 1,000 and 13.2 per 1,000 respectively.

### **Measure 11.1.5 Incidence of selected cancers**

Aboriginal Victorians are 71 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with cancer than their non-Aboriginal peers. In the period 2015-19, on average 251 cancers were diagnosed in Aboriginal Victorians each year, 126 in males and 125 in females. There were 581 new cases of cancer among Aboriginal males and 507 among Aboriginal females per 100,000 people. By comparison, non-Aboriginal Victorian males experienced 349 new cases and women experienced 286 new cases per 100,000 people.

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

The rate of Aboriginal Victorians presenting at emergency departments for alcohol or drug related harm have more than doubled since 2008-09, reaching 26.4 per 1,000. Contrastingly, the rate of non-Aboriginal Victorians presenting at emergency departments for the same causes has only slightly increased to 4.5 per 1,000. There has been an even more substantial jump in the presentation of Aboriginal young people (aged 15-24) at emergency departments, with 26.3 presentations per 1,000 in 2019-20 (up from 11 per 1,000 in 2008-09).

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

Closed episodes for specialised alcohol and other drug treatments services provided to Aboriginal Victorians have increased substantially. This may be due to increased rates of emergency department presentations leading to increased use of specialist services. Increases in closed episodes pleasingly suggest that once treatment is sought, it is often effective at reducing the need for future treatment.

### **Key Victorian Government initiatives**

#### *Victorian Cancer Screening Framework*

Under the Victorian Cancer Screening Framework, VACCHO receives ongoing funding to lead all Aboriginal cancer screening initiatives including partnering with mainstream health services to embed cultural safety practices. The partnership with BreastScreen Victoria through the Beautiful Shawls initiative is an example of an Aboriginal community-led approach which has led to more Aboriginal women screening, including lapsed screeners. This model will be scaled up and applied across the cervical and bowel screening programs.

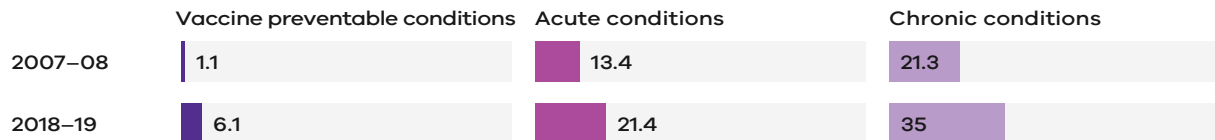
#### *Victorian Aboriginal Cancer Journey Strategy*

The Victorian Government has invested in more than \$1 million to provide extra staff, support and resources to VACCHO to develop the Victorian Aboriginal Cancer Journey Strategy. The long-term planning will advance self-determination by developing local approaches which combine culturally appropriate ways to improve cancer outcomes with the best available evidence. The Victorian Aboriginal Cancer Journey Strategy will incorporate a 5-year Implementation Plan, and a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework.

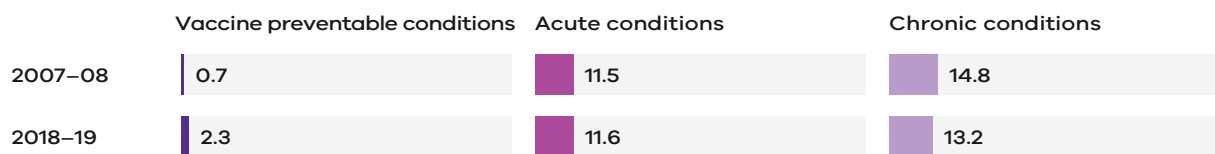
## Rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations have increased considerably

### Measure 11.1.4

#### Aboriginal (per 1000)

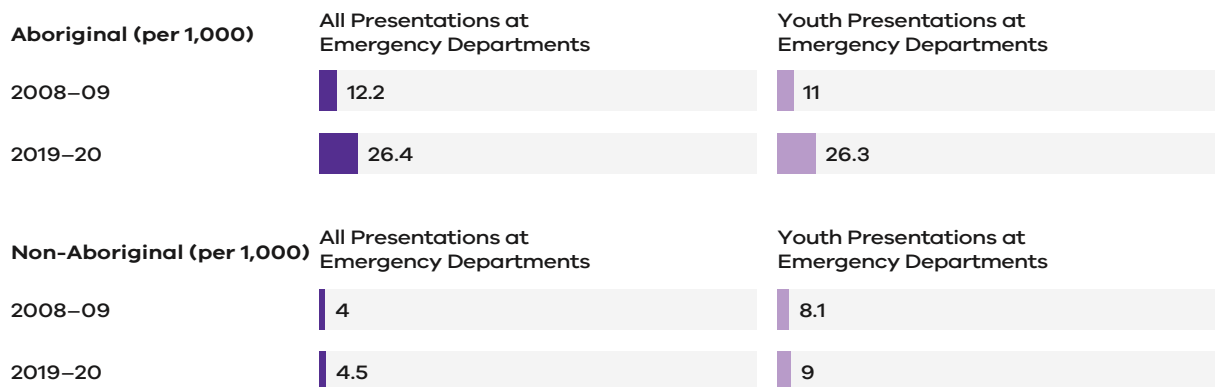


#### Non-Aboriginal (per 1000)



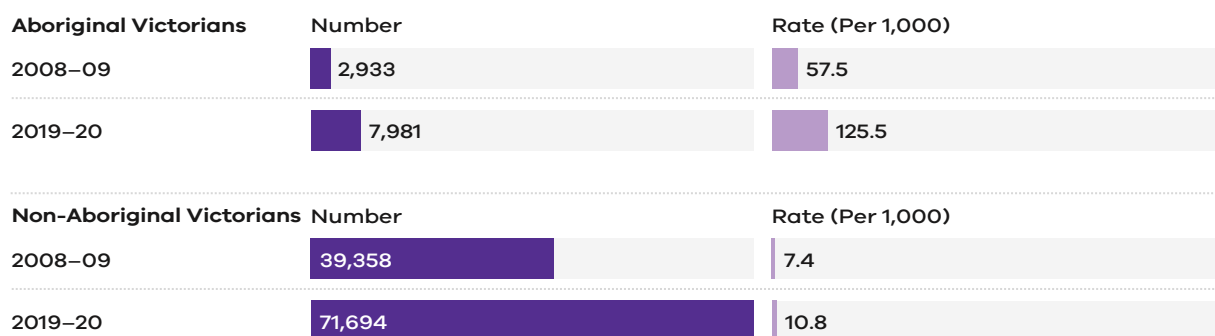
## The rate of emergency department presentations for alcohol or drug related harm has increased

### Measure 11.1.6



## Closed episodes for alcohol and other drug treatment services have increased substantially

### Measure 11.1.7



# Goal 12: Aboriginal Victorians access the services they need



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 12 have continued to improve.

There have been significant increases in the number of Aboriginal people accessing health services across all ages. This includes both younger and older Aboriginal Victorians accessing health checks or assessments and cancer screening services. A greater proportion of Aboriginal Victorians are accessing aged care services than before, despite an increase in the number of Aboriginal Victorians aged over 55. This signals strong progress towards improving outcomes in this goal.

### Data Note



All measures under this goal are featured.

### Goal 12 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcome and Target

The National Agreement does not contain outcomes and targets that align with this VAAF goal. Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive goals under the VAAF, which are reported on in this chapter and the Data Dashboard.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Not applicable.

### **Community, Unity, Immunity Campaign**

A community-led initiative was developed in partnership between VACCHO and the Department of Health to encourage vaccinations and provide information on keeping community safe.

Victoria undertook a range of targeted strategies to support the vaccine rollout amongst Aboriginal communities. This included diverting doses from the state supply to ACCHOs, delivering community-based information sessions, creating a youth-specific communications campaign, and establishment of a dedicated Aboriginal COVID-19 Infoline to facilitate uptake.

In addition, to remove barriers to getting vaccinated, VACCHO and ACCHOs offered vaccinations through mobile vaccination vans and culturally sensitive popups across key metropolitan and regional areas with large Aboriginal communities which had lower uptake due to vaccine access and engagement issues.

### **VACCHO Vaccination Vans**

Victoria reached an 80 per cent vaccination mark in October 2021 which led to most public health orders being eased.

VACCHO played an important role in increasing access to vaccinations for member organisations and Aboriginal communities. VACCHO delivered an immediate response through the Victorian Aboriginal Mobile Vaccination Program. The Vaccination Program supported regional communities and member organisations who had limited capacity to provide vaccination programs and identified communities where there was no local Aboriginal community-controlled organisation that provided clinical health services.

VACCHO delivered the Mobile Vaccination Program to help elevate the demand on ACCOs' workforce, provide COVID-19 clinical services, and support community to access the vaccine. In 8 weeks, this Vaccination Program delivered over 700 vaccines to Aboriginal communities, statewide.

### **Koorie Pride Victoria**

Historically, LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal Victorians have seen a lack of diversity in LGBTIQ+ leadership. They describe the disruption of Aboriginal knowledge of sexuality and gender as a result of colonisation. This disruption has – at times – perpetuated the violence, racism, classism and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal people in social settings and places. This means the full cultural spectrum of their identities is excluded.

Koorie Pride Victoria was established with Victorian Government funding in 2019 to build the visibility, strength and connection for 'Rainbow Mob' – Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ people across Victoria. It works to ensure the protection and continuation of Aboriginal cultural heritage through storytelling with Koorie communities, as well as LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal communities.

Koorie Pride Victoria also upholds Aboriginal Victorians' right to self-determination and celebrates their values and diversity by advocating and supporting culturally safe inclusive practices for Aboriginal peoples identifying lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer, questioning, Sistergirl and Brotherboy living in Victoria.

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

More Aboriginal Victorians of all ages received health checks or assessments in 2019-20 than in 2008-09. Over 3 times as many Aboriginal Victorians aged 15-54 years received health checks or assessments in 2019-20 than in 2008-09, with almost 6 times the number of adults over 55, and over 6 times the number of children 0-14 years receiving checks or assessments.

#### **Measure 12.1.2 Participation rates for cancer screening**

Over twice as many Aboriginal women over 40 years of age accessed breast cancer screening in 2019-20 compared to 2008-09. Although screening rates remain lower than for non-Aboriginal women, this is still a significant improvement.

#### **Measure 12.1.3 Proportion and number accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**

As of March 2022, 4,509 Victorians identifying as Aboriginal had transitioned to the NDIS with an approved plan. A further 289 Victorians identifying as Aboriginal were in pathway to transition to the NDIS. 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<sup>8</sup>.

#### **Measure 12.1.4 Number and proportion accessing aged care services**

More Aboriginal Victorians aged over 50 accessed aged care services than in 2019-20 (788 people) than in the past decade (only 244 in 2007-08). However, this represented a lower proportion of all Aboriginal Victorians over 50 than the previous year (6.97 per cent in 2019-20 compared to 7.1 per cent in 2018-19), likely due to people living longer. For the second year in a row, the proportion of Aboriginal Victorians accessing aged care services was higher than that of their non-Aboriginal peers.

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

The number of Aboriginal people aged over 55 having an annual health assessment increased almost six-fold in the past decade, reaching 1,588 in 2019-20. Consequently, the proportion of Aboriginal people aged over 55 who received health assessments reached 20.8 per cent. This is a slight decrease on 2018-19 (21.1 per cent), despite a higher raw number of assessments. This is due to higher levels of engagement with Aboriginal communities regarding health checks and increased assessments by ACCHOs.

#### **Measure 12.1.6 Services implement strategies, partnerships and campaigns, and offer care and support that is inclusive and address the needs of Aboriginal people who are LGBTIQ+**

Pride in our future: Victoria's LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32 is Victoria's first whole-of-government LGBTIQ+ strategy. It provides the vision and plan to drive equality and inclusion for Victoria's diverse LGBTIQ+ communities within all aspects of government work over the next ten years.

The strategy recognises that a focus on Aboriginal self-determination will need to be standard to create LGBTIQ+ friendly services. For example, LGBTIQ+ services should be culturally suitable for Aboriginal communities. Likewise, Aboriginal services should be LGBTIQ+ inclusive.

<sup>8</sup> Please note these are cumulative figures from the start of transition

## More Aboriginal Victorians of all ages are receiving health checks or assessments

### Measure 12.1.1

#### Children 0–14 years



#### Adults 15–54 years



#### Adults 55 years or over

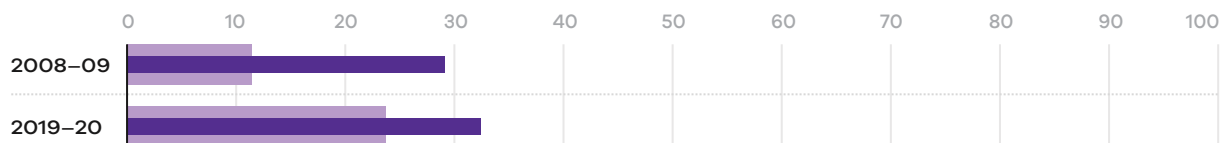


## More Aboriginal women are now accessing breast cancer screening

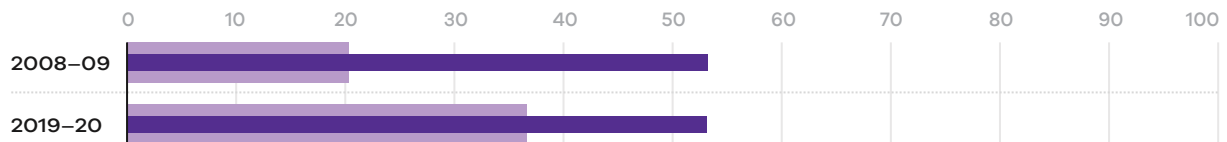
### Measure 12.1.2

Aboriginal Victorians (per 100)    Non-Aboriginal Victorians (per 100)

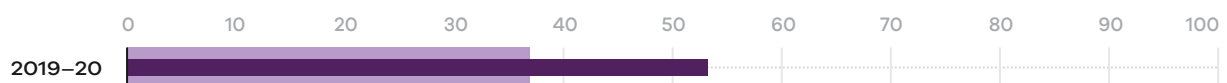
#### 40+ years



#### 50–69 years

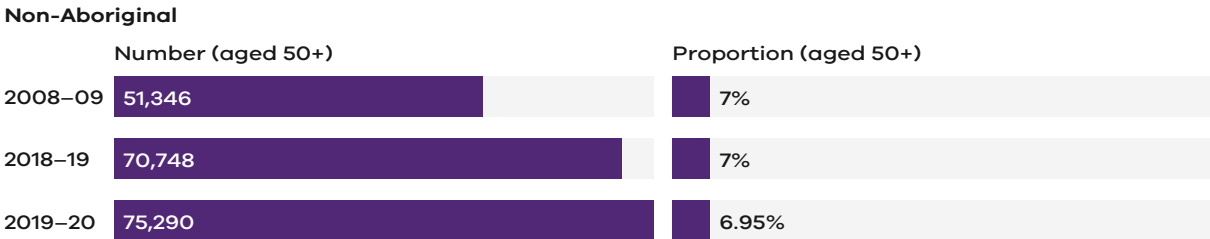
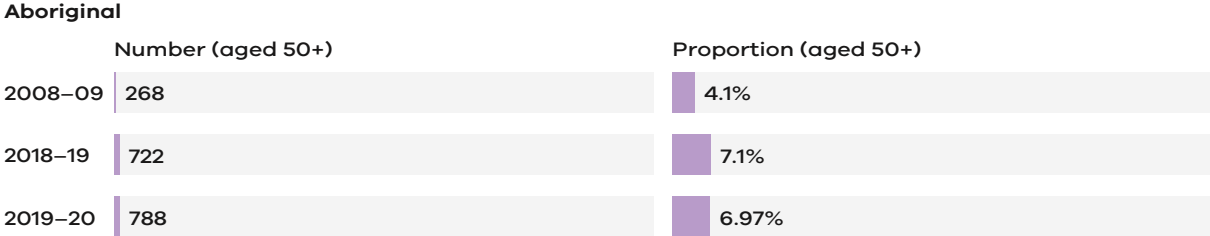


#### 50–74 years



**More Aboriginal Victorians are accessing aged care services than ever before**

**Measure 12.1.4**



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



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 13 have worsened

In Australia, there has been increasing recognition that improving cultural safety for Aboriginal health care users can improve their access to health care and the quality of the health care they receive (AHMAC 2016)\*. This in turn is likely to improve health outcomes and help to address gaps in health and wellbeing between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Culturally safe and responsive health services ensure Aboriginal Victorians feel supported and safe when seeking healthcare.

The increase in Aboriginal Victorians being discharged from hospital against medical advice or at their own risk highlights the need for culturally safe and responsive mainstream services. ACCOs and ACCHOs provide many such services, but further work must be done to ensure mainstream services build cultural safety into service delivery.

\* Source: AHMAC (Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council) 2016. Cultural Respect Framework 2016–26 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health: a national approach to building a culturally respectful health system. Canberra: AHMAC.

### Data Note



The following measures rely on datasets that are infrequently collected. No new data was available at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 13.1.1** Proportion reporting experiences of racism in the health system
- **Measure 13.1.2** Proportion reporting positive client experience of GP services
- **Measure 13.1.4** Number and proportion of Aboriginal people employed in the health or social services sector

Data for **Measure 13.1.4** relies on Census data.

Data for these measures is available on the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).

### Closing the Gap – Relevant Outcomes and Targets for Goal 13

The National Agreement does not contain outcomes and targets that align with this VAAF goal. Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive goals under the VAAF, which are reported on in this chapter and the Data Dashboard.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Not applicable.



## 13.1 Increase the cultural safety and responsiveness of services

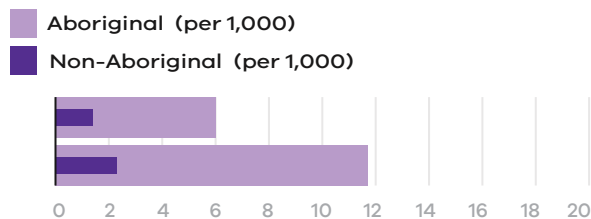
### Measure 13.1.3 Hospitalisations where patients left against medical advice/ were discharged at own risk

747 Aboriginal patients left hospital against medical advice or were discharged at their own risk in 2019-20 – 11.7 people per 1,000. This is a considerable increase from 324 Aboriginal Victorians in 2011-12 (6 per 1,000) and remains substantially higher than non-Aboriginal Victorians (15,581 non-Aboriginal Victorians or 2.3 per 1,000 in 2019-20).

There may be many reasons for Aboriginal patients leaving hospital against medical advice. Aboriginal adults in Victoria are 47 per cent more likely to experience racism in a healthcare setting than non-Aboriginal Victorians<sup>9</sup>. The impact of intergenerational trauma, distrust, Western models of care and remoteness are additional factors. Family and community obligations may be an additional reason.

### Hospital discharges against medical advice have increased substantially

#### Measure 13.1.3



Source: Victorian Admitted Episodes Data collection

### Strengthening Aboriginal cultural safety in mainstream health services

Aboriginal people are 47 per cent more likely to experience racism in a healthcare setting in Victoria than non-Aboriginal adults. This is a key barrier to closing the gap in Aboriginal health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Department of Health (DH) is committed to strengthening Aboriginal cultural safety in Victoria's mainstream health services as it is critical to improving health equity. Leadership across the health system is required to make the change.

Progress in 2021-22 has included improving mainstream health service accountability for Aboriginal cultural safety through the Statement of Priorities for hospitals. DH has also funded VACCHO for a 'cultural safety tick' accreditation feasibility study, and cultural safety tools and resources. Next steps will focus on increasing accountability through improved data collection and cultural safety measures in health services' Performance and Monitoring Framework. Consideration will also be given to expanding accountability across the whole system, including Health Service Partnerships, Local Public Health Units and other health services.



9 The health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians. The Department of Health, 2021 (Findings from the Victorian Population Health Survey 2017) p 37.

# Goal 14: Aboriginal Victorians enjoy social and emotional wellbeing



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 14 have worsened

Aboriginal concepts of social and emotional wellbeing recognise that many factors contribute to holistic wellbeing, including connection to Country, culture, family and community. Mental health is a key component, as well as social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing.

Racism is another key determinant of health for Aboriginal people. The physical and mental health of Aboriginal people is adversely impacted by ongoing racism. There is an abundance of high-quality scientific studies that show that racism is not just harmful to mental health, it is also harmful to physical health.\*

Concerningly, while many Aboriginal Victorians enjoy excellent social and emotional wellbeing, and mental health, levels of psychological distress and rates of self-harm have risen substantially in the past decade, especially for Aboriginal young people. These issues are reflected in the findings of the Coroner's Court of Victoria report - Suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Victoria 2018-2021. Government must do more to address this.

\* Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Racism in Victoria and what it means for the health of Victorians, 2017, 16-17, <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/migrated/files/collections/research-and-reports/r/racism-in-victoria.pdf>

### Data Note



The following measures rely on datasets that are infrequently reported on. No new data was available at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 14.1.1** Proportion reporting 'high or very high' levels of psychological and psychosocial distress
- **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 that have strong social support networks.

### Goal 14 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 14** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing

- **Target 14** Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Nationally, based on progress from the baseline, progress towards the target is worsening.

Current reporting is only for jurisdictions which have adequate levels of Indigenous identification in line with national reporting guidelines (NSW, QLD, WA, SA and NT). Future reporting aims to include additional disaggregation for all states/territories.

## 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)

37.5 of every 1,000 Aboriginal Victorians that presented to emergency departments in 2019-20 did so in relation to self-harm. This is a concerning increase from 5.6 per 1,000 in 2008-09, and is a considerably higher rate than for non-Aboriginal Victorians. These rates reflect the significantly poorer mental health, wellbeing and safety outcomes experienced by Aboriginal people. The legacy of intergenerational trauma and experiences of systemic racism and discrimination are key drivers of these outcomes, which must be addressed holistically through integrated, culturally safe and responsive services.

### Measure 14.1.5 Number of Aboriginal Victorians receiving clinical mental health services

Aboriginal people were 3.9 times more likely to access community mental health care services than their non-Aboriginal peers in 2019-20. 1190.7 Aboriginal people per 1,000 accessed these services in 2019-20, compared to 302.0 non-Aboriginal Victorians per 1,000<sup>10</sup>.

### Self-harm-related emergency department presentations have increased substantially

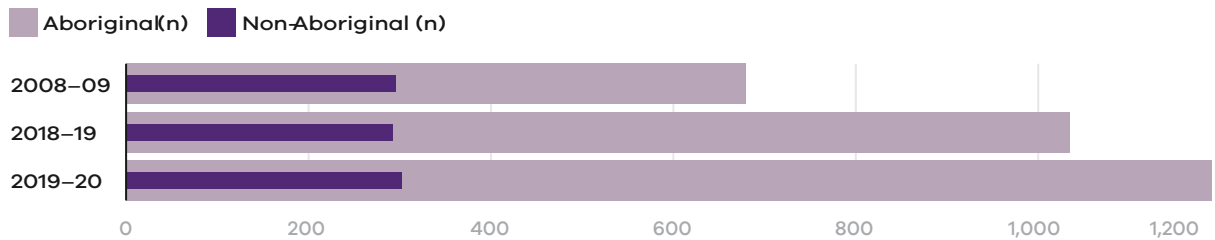
#### Measure 14.1.2

Aboriginal (15-24 years)		Number	Rate (per 1,000)
2008-09		58	5.6
2019-20		456	37.6
Aboriginal (all years)		Number	Rate (per 1,000)
2008-09		159	3.1
2019-20		1,199	19.3
Non-Aboriginal (15-24 years)		Number	Rate (per 1,000)
2008-09		2,313	3.1
2019-20		8,579	10
Non-Aboriginal (all years)		Number	Rate (per 1,000)
2008-09		6,617	1.3
2019-20		24,022	3.7

<sup>10</sup> Contacts over 1,000 per 1,000 reflect that patients may have multiple contacts in each reporting period, and that contacts may be with both the patient themselves, or with a third party such as a carer, family member or mental health worker.

## Aboriginal people continue to access community mental health services far more often than non-Aboriginal people\*

### Measure 14.1.5




#### Embedding healing practices in social and emotional wellbeing services

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health and Wellbeing System (the Royal Commission) held in 2019 recognised the urgent need to address mental health issues in Aboriginal communities and the central role of self-determined Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing services in improving Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing outcomes.

Aboriginal organisations and witnesses called on the Royal Commission to promote and embed healing practices in social and emotional wellbeing services in Aboriginal communities. In response to the Royal Commission's recommendations, the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation launched the Balit Durn Durn Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Balit Durn Durn Centre) in May 2022. The Balit Durn Durn Centre coordinates best practice in Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing that draws on healing and the protective role of culture, identity and connection to Country for Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing.

The Balit Durn Durn Centre has also commenced a co-design process with Aboriginal communities and organisations to develop an Aboriginal-led service model to inform the establishment of two Aboriginal healing centres by 2026, a key recommendation of the Royal Commission. The focus on healing marks a further shift away from the crisis-driven care that characterises much of the state's current response to mental illness.

 Address trauma and support healing

#### Working in partnership with VACCHO to support Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Division (MHWD) within the Victorian Department of Health has established a very strong and collaborative partnership with VACCHO to jointly deliver key recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

The partnership involves shared decision-making and bi-monthly meetings. A working group between VACCHO and MHWD meets weekly to progress the work and decisions of the partnership. This is a collaborative and unique way of working that leads to better progress and keeps partners informed at every step of the way.

Key work that has been achieved through the partnership is the development and delivery of a scholarship program to assist Aboriginal people to complete further education in clinical and therapeutic mental health qualifications. In the first round of scholarships, 13 scholarships were awarded across social work (with a specialisation in mental health), mental health nursing and other related degrees. This will build an increased Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing workforce.

## Domain 4 - Victorian Government Investment and Action

*The Victorian Government is working with service providers, Aboriginal organisations and communities to ensure that all Aboriginal Victorians have access to high-quality, culturally safe and responsive health and wellbeing services.*

The key Aboriginal Governance Forums for realising outcomes in this Domain are the Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum and the Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum.

### Disability

#### Key investment in 2020-2021 included:

- Targeted engagement for Inclusive Victoria delivered by partner First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) Australia (\$15,000).
- Self Help Grants Program 2019- 2021 – Aboriginal focused grants (\$15,000).
- COVID-19 pandemic Outreach Funding (\$150,000).
- Funding to improve the cultural safety of the Forensic Disability Program (\$150,000 annual recurrent funding)
- Funding of \$300,000 was allocated to VACCHO in 2021-22 to help develop a workforce that more fully reflects the diversity of Victoria's NDIS participants. Strong ACCOs Our Way will support organisations to adapt their processes to meet the operational requirements of NDIS service delivery and provide more choice to Aboriginal NDIS participants.

#### COVID-19 pandemic Aboriginal disability outreach program

In May 2022, three regional cooperatives received funding through the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program to provide practical outreach in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, by building on their local partnerships to support people with disability from Aboriginal communities and their families.

In one case, a woman with disability was referred to an advocacy organisation by her local Cooperative for assistance in claiming the Disability Support Pension (DSP). The advocacy organisation connected her with its Aboriginal advocate.

The advocate's support allowed the woman to secure the DSP, access more appropriate, specialised care from a clinical psychologist and to address various issues with Centrelink. The woman is now confident to contact her advocate for support and is looking at accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which will slowly allow her to access her community more.

### Aboriginal Liaison Officer position within the Forensic Disability Program

Aboriginal people are over-represented amongst forensic disability clients, with about 25 percent of all clients identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The Forensic Disability Program provides treatment and support for people with cognitive disability who are involved in the criminal justice system, reducing their likelihood of reoffending and helping them improve their lives.

The program's new Aboriginal Liaison Officer has worked to amplify residents' voices and improve cultural safety within forensic residential services. This was achieved by a range of activities, including engaging with Elders, developing a Gathering space/yarning circle, building a healing garden and acquiring Aboriginal artwork for shared spaces.

### Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022-2026 (Inclusive Victoria)

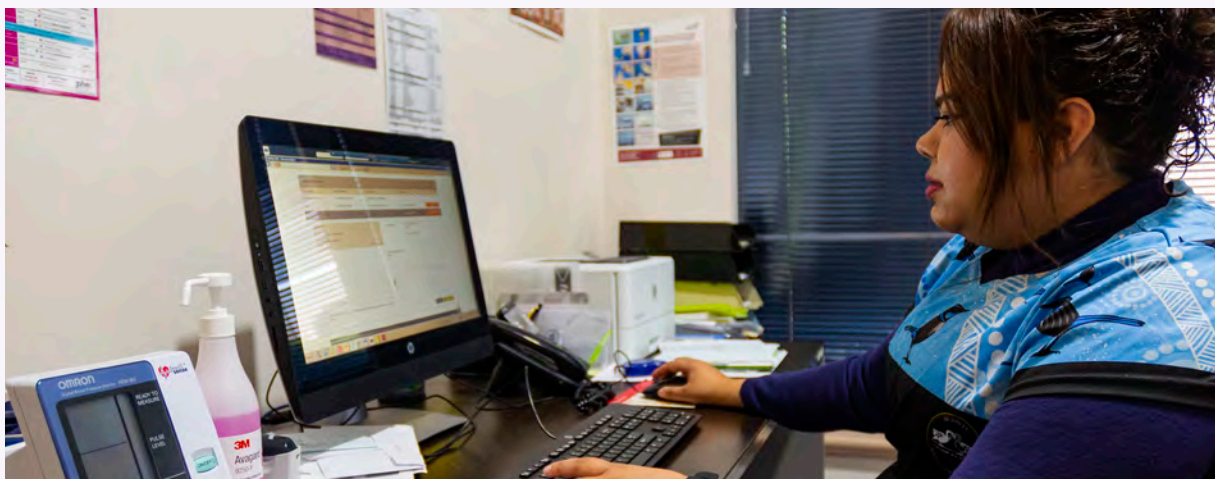
In 2021, the Office for Disability engaged First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) Australia, a national peak run by and for Aboriginal people with disability, to undertake targeted engagement to help shape the next state disability plan. FPDN hosted two workshops and 11 interviews in Ballarat and Horsham with 64 people from Aboriginal communities with lived experience of disability either as a person with disability or as a family member of a person with disability. This feedback, along with other targeted engagement, informed development of the commitments and actions in *Inclusive Victoria*.

As well as Aboriginal portfolio-specific actions across housing, justice and children and families, *Inclusive Victoria* includes a focus on Aboriginal self-determination as one of six systemic reforms to drive whole-of-government long-term change for people with disability.

This reform area commits government to working in partnership with Aboriginal communities to drive action and improve outcomes for Aboriginal people with disability underpinned by principles of Aboriginal-led collective action, Aboriginal self-determination and systemic change. This includes:

- continuing the government's commitment to work closely and in good faith with Aboriginal stakeholders to ensure Aboriginal people with disability have power, control and decision-making and are able to co-design policies, programs and services that affect them
- Aboriginal representation on the Victorian Disability Advisory Council and related government working groups, as well as engagement with any self-determined representative body for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians established through treaty
- further developing the capacity for the Aboriginal community-controlled sector to deliver disability support services
- strengthening the Aboriginal disability workforce.

*Inclusive Victoria* also commits to working to address Indigenous data sovereignty and incorporation of Aboriginal-defined evidence and measures of success.



## Health and wellbeing

### Strategies to support improved eye health within Aboriginal community

This includes but is not limited to recurrent funding for supporting the Aboriginal Spectacle Subsidy Scheme through the Australian College of Optometry and, through the Victorian Eyecare Scheme and participation in the Victorian Eye Health Strategy Committee

### Strategies to support cancer care

Strategies have been established, including:

- implementation of the Victorian Cancer Agency Collaboration Research Grant
- implementation of the Optimal Care Pathway
- investment in VACCHO to support development of strategic direction, capacity building, early decision and screening, and development of data and evidence to ensure cancer care and journey for Aboriginal community is culturally safe
- continued focus on reducing high rates of smoking through delivery of culturally safe and accessible information and promotional programs, investment in VACCHO to support capacity building, training and resources for the community-controlled sector, and delivery of place-based events and programs.

### Keeping Aboriginal Victorians during COVID-19 safe, supported and connected program

The Program assists ACCOs to support COVID-19 positive patients and to strengthen primary health care to address to reduce the need for hospital admissions and emergency department presentations through a flexible, needs-based funding approach.

Efforts were focussed on increasing vaccination rates with the community-led response including mobile vaccination vans, bespoke culturally sensitive vaccination pop-up clinics and spaces in vaccination sites, surge workforce support and the establishment of a dedicated Aboriginal COVID-19 information line.

Place-based responses through partnerships with Local Public Health Units were also a focus, including communication and engagement activities, supporting COVID-19 positive community members and supporting vaccination and testing activities.

### Aboriginal Workforce Fund

The \$40 million Aboriginal Workforce Fund (AWF) is designed to boost the Aboriginal community, health and family violence workforce as communities recover from the pandemic. The design of the fund aligns with the *Korin Korin Balit-Djak* system transformation strategy and focuses on embodying Aboriginal world views, respecting Aboriginal systems and ways of working, and delivering greater agency and control.

Government's commitment to the AWF was focused on providing funds to Aboriginal organisations to support their needs and priorities based on consultation with the sector, rather than prescribing focus areas. This created an opportunity for priority setting and decision making around the fund to be more sector-led.

An AWF Steering Committee made up of Aboriginal community stakeholders was established to guide direction and decision-making of the fund. Committee members brought a range of interests and perspectives to the table. As well as advancing self-determination, the Steering Committee is guided by the principles of promoting cultural safety, minimising reporting burden and supporting Aboriginal-specific measures of success.

From the beginning of the AWF process, sector representatives called for an inclusive, straightforward, non-competitive process that would help maximise access for smaller organisations, and focus on self-determined outcomes. The AWF demonstrates a good step towards a more self-determined approach to supporting the sector – in this case, its workforce development needs. Lessons and reflections from the AWF can be built on to progress funding reform, drive the sustainability of Aboriginal organisations, and continue to transfer more power and control to communities.



Transfer power and resources to communities

## Mental health and wellbeing

### **Continued funding of the Yarning SafeNStrong 24-hour Aboriginal helpline**

The helpline provides counselling support to callers experiencing anxiety, distress and mental health challenges. It provides outbound referrals to local ACCOs who provide social and emotional wellbeing and mental health services as well as referrals to other support services (state-wide and local services).

### **Growth in Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing workforce**

The Aboriginal mental health workforce was also supported by the establishment of 8 Aboriginal Mental Health Traineeships within Adult Area Mental Health Services, and the significant expansion of the Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) workforce in Victoria with recurrent funding to progressively establish 25 multi-disciplinary SEWB teams in ACCOs over the next five years. The multi-disciplinary SEWB teams are providing social and emotional wellbeing supports and services that are holistic, culturally safe and healing focused. This includes continued funding for 10 clinical and therapeutic positions.







# 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.



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



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 15 have improved.

Systemic racism, unconscious bias in the application of the law, and the criminalisation of social and economic disadvantage all contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system\*.

For example\*\*:

- changes to bail legislation have led to an increase in the number of Aboriginal people who are unsentenced being remanded
- delays in court processing have contributed to Aboriginal people being held in remand for longer
- police processing Aboriginal people for minor offences at high rates.

The history of Aboriginal Victorians being discriminated against by police has created deep distrust. Aboriginal communities' concern about abuse of power is compounded by deaths in custody, high imprisonment rates and the detrimental role of Victorian justice agencies in the lives of Aboriginal people, including the forced removal of children, high arrest rates and instances of inadequate checks for people in police custody\*.

Since the last reporting period, there have been slight improvements to all the measures under this goal, and notably in the reduction in young people under youth justice detention and community-based supervision.

The Victorian Government continues to invest in initiatives to address offending and improve outcomes for over-represented people caught in the justice system.

\* Minister Gabrielle Williams' Yoorrook Justice Commission witness statement.

\*\* Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja, Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 4.

### Data Note

All measures in this goal are reported on.



### Goal 15 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 10:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

- **Target 10:** By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15 per cent.

**Outcome 11:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

- **Target 11:** By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30 per cent.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

**Target 10:** At 30 June 2021, the age-standardised rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners was 2,222.7 per 100,000 adult population across Australia compared to 1,816.4 per 100,000 in Victoria. In Victoria, there has been some improvement since the baseline year of 2019.

**Target 11:** In 2020-21, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 10-17 years in detention across Australia was 23.2 per 10,000 children compared to 9.6 per 10,000 in Victoria. There has been improvement nationally and in Victoria since the baseline year of 2018-19.

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

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

Most Aboriginal young people will never have any engagement with police. Furthermore, only a small proportion of Aboriginal young people who come into contact with police progress to formal involvement with the courts and youth justice system.

The number of Aboriginal young people (10-17 years) processed by police continues to fall over time. In 2020-21 there were 589 unique young Aboriginal alleged offenders processed by police – the lowest number in 14 years. However, Aboriginal young people remain over-represented among youth alleged offenders processed by police.

In 2020-21, 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.



### The proportion of alleged Aboriginal youth offenders processed by police remains high

#### Measure 15.1.1

##### Aboriginal

	Young people aged 10–17 years (n)	Young people aged 10–17 years (rate per 10,000)	Young people aged 10–14 years (n)	Young people aged 10–14 years (rate per 10,000)	Young people aged 15–17 years (n)	Young people aged 15–17 years (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	708	745.6	299	506.1	407	1,146.5
2018-19	604	594.5	251	386.4	353	963.7
2019-20	623	606.9	231	346.8	392	1,087.4
2020-21	589	568.1	208	310.5	381	1,038.4

	Young people aged 10–17 years (n)	Young people aged 10–17 years (rate per 10,000)	Young people aged 10–14 years (n)	Young people aged 10–14 years (rate per 10,000)	Young people aged 15–17 years (n)	Young people aged 15–17 years (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	11,314	213.9	3,658	112.1	7,656	377.7
2018-19	6,035	103.9	1,633	44.3	4,402	182.3

**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 2020-21, there were 10 Aboriginal young people and 92 non-Aboriginal young people in detention. When looking at detention rates per 10,000 people, Aboriginal young people were about six times more likely to be detained than their non-Aboriginal peers. This has nearly halved since 2018-19.

The reduction in young people under youth justice detention and community-based supervision is due to increasing accessibility to diversion programs. This reduction reflects that police are increasingly diverting young people from the youth justice system.

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

Police cautioning is an important method of diversion, particularly for young people.

In 2020-21, more than half (58.6 per cent) of Aboriginal first-time alleged offenders aged 10-17 years received a caution from police. This was a slight increase (0.7 percentage point higher) in the proportion of Aboriginal first-time alleged youth offenders since the previous year. Over the past two years, a higher proportion of Aboriginal first-time alleged offenders have been cautioned than non-Aboriginal first-time alleged offenders.

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

In 2020-21, the proportion of Aboriginal young people in detention on remand decreased slightly. As in previous years, the proportion of Aboriginal young people on remand (67.7 per cent) was lower than the proportion of non-Aboriginal young people (82.3 per cent).

**Youth Cautioning**

After the successful trial of the Aboriginal Youth Caution Program, and continued advocacy from the Aboriginal Justice Caucus, the Chief Commissioner announced in August 2021 changes to Victoria Police cautioning policy that gives police greater opportunity to issue cautions to young people wherever appropriate.

These changes apply to all young people between 10 and 17 years of age:

- There is no longer a requirement to admit the offence to be eligible for a caution
- The person must still consent to the caution
- Prior criminal history does not exclude a person from being eligible for a caution
- A child can be cautioned on more than one occasion and there is no limit to the number of cautions a child can receive
- Cautions are based on individual circumstances and must rely on the circumstances of offending to decide on the appropriate action
- The minimum (least severe) action must be chosen that achieves the purposes of taking that action against the person.

Aboriginal young people issued with a caution can opt to participate in the Aboriginal Youth Caution Program (AYCP) and meet with a panel of Aboriginal community leaders to discuss their support needs. Victoria Police Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers also assist in this process.

The AYCP has been trialled in partnership with local Aboriginal co-operatives in Bendigo, Echuca and Greater Dandenong since 2019. It resulted in an increase in the number of young Aboriginal people diverted from the courts and connected to support services. It also supported school attendance and engagement with Aboriginal cultural activities and community events alongside police.

The AYCP is being rolled out to additional sites across the state including Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Barwon South West, Darebin, Fawkner, Footscray, Horsham, Mildura, Morwell, Shepparton, Swan Hill and Wodonga. Victoria Police will work with Aboriginal communities to identify opportunities to expand the program to additional sites.

## Aboriginal young people were about six times more likely to be detained than their non-Aboriginal peers

### Measure 15.1.2

#### 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	133.3	18	19.3	273	80
2018-19	83.1	82.4	19	18.5	173	84
2019-20	68.7	67.3	16	15.9	159	79
2020-21	61.2	59.2	10	9.6	133	49

#### Non-Aboriginal

	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	15.3	67	1.3	1,676	404
2018-19	397.8	6.8	93	1.6	916	477
2019-20	370.3	6.2	103	1.7	883	548
2020-21	289.8	4.8	92	1.5	694	464

## The proportion of young people (10-17 years) in detention on remand increased for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people

### Measure 15.1.4

#### Aboriginal young people

	Number of young people in detention (n)	Proportion of those in detention that are on remand (%)
2007-08	14	50%
2019-20	18	66.7%
2020-21	9.6	67.71%

#### Non-Aboriginal young people

	Number of young people in detention (n)	Proportion of those in detention that are on remand (%)
2007-08	53	54.72%
2019-20	95	70.5%
2020-21	89.3	82.31%

\* For 2019-20, the age calculation for the average nightly population has been changed. Age is now calculated based on the age a young person is each night that they are under supervision. If a young person changes age during a period of supervision, then the average nightly number under supervision will reflect this. Due to this change in methodology, average nightly data with an age breakdown or selection will not be comparable to previous Youth detention population in Australia releases.

### Wirkara Kulpa Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy 2021- 2031

Wirkara Kulpa, launched in February 2022, is the first Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy in Victoria. It was developed with the wellbeing and voices of Aboriginal children and young people at its heart, with five domains:

- 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 overrepresentation and provide alternatives to custody.

Development of Wirkara Kulpa was led by the Aboriginal Justice Caucus as a key initiative under the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA4) and Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020-2030. It was also informed by and responds to the Koori Youth Justice Taskforce led by the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in partnership with the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS).

Caucus envisions an end-to-end Aboriginal community-controlled youth justice system. Central to this approach is the progressive transfer of authority, decision-making, resources and responsibilities to an Aboriginal controlled approach.

Wirkara Kulpa's vision is that no Aboriginal child or young person is in the youth justice system because they are strong in their culture, connected to families and communities, and living healthy, safe, resilient, thriving and culturally rich lives.

However, for those young Aboriginal Victorians caught in the youth justice system, it is important that these spaces are made culturally-safer. In the Parkville Youth Justice Centre, the Jaara Jaara (Koori garden) has been developed as a cultural space. Alongside this, a room has been dedicated where Aboriginal young people can involve themselves in cultural programs and meet with their Community Based Aboriginal Youth Justice workers or the Aboriginal Liaison Officer.

Victoria has made significant progress toward addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in youth justice, and is currently ahead of the 2023 AJA4 target of reducing the number of Aboriginal children under youth justice supervision on an average day to fewer than 89 young people by 2022-23.

From 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021, there were 59 Aboriginal children and young people aged 10-17 under youth justice supervision on an average day. There were four Aboriginal children (aged 10-13 years) under youth justice supervision over the same period, a 33 per cent decrease from six children during the same period in the previous year<sup>11</sup>.

Wirkara Kulpa aims to continue the progress made to date and identifies the actions and effort required to close the gap by 2031.

<sup>11</sup> This data has been sourced from previously unpublished Youth Justice Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) sources. As such it is potentially subject to change.





## 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

In 2020-21, Aboriginal women were nearly ten times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be processed by police for an alleged offence.

Although this is a lower ratio than recent years, the rate of Aboriginal women per 10,000 is at an all-time high.

### Wadamba Prison to Work Program

The Wadamba Prison to Work Program, delivered by Wan Yaari Consultancy Services, provides a supported pathway to employment for Aboriginal men and women aged 18 to 35 who are on remand at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre or the Metropolitan Remand Centre.

The program provides access to employment services, career guidance and cultural support for offenders in custody as well as post release support. Funding through the 2021/22 State Budget will enable continued service delivery for a further two years, as well as a formal evaluation of the program.

The program's focus is to support Aboriginal young adults on remand to access and undertake qualifications and meaningful work experience to better assist participants in entering into meaningful employment upon release. Participants are offered information regarding employment opportunities out in the community. This will help identify relevant short courses to engage in while they are in custody which will increase chances of employment post release.

Since 2020, 129 Aboriginal people have been engaged under the Wadamba Prison to Work Program, 42 of whom were supported while in custody to gain employment at their location. A further 22 participants have received employment in the community upon release from custody.

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

In 2020-21, the average daily rate of Aboriginal women under corrections supervision in community corrections was around 18 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. This is an improvement since 2019-20.

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

In 2020-21, the rate of Aboriginal women returning to prison within two years of release was 46.2 per cent. While this is still a significant increase from 2007-08, it is an 8.6 percentage point decrease since 2018-19. This reduction can be attributed to changes in crime and criminal justice system activity throughout the COVID 19 pandemic. This included fewer prisoners being received on remand, more prisoners being discharged to bail, or time served and an overall decrease in the prison population.

### Measure 15.2.4 Proportion of women in prison on remand

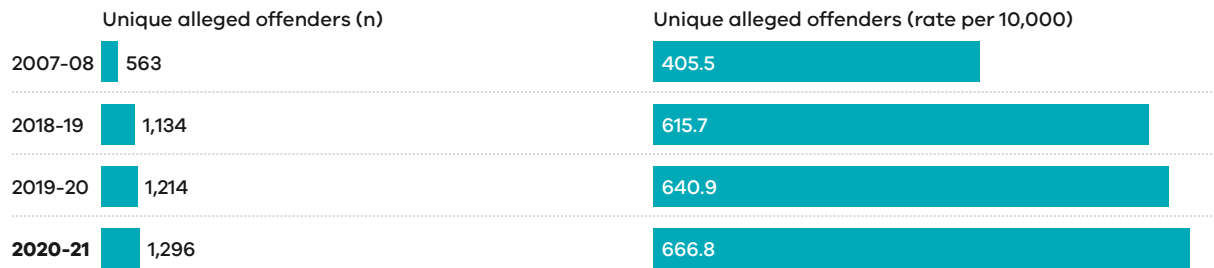
While Aboriginal women represent a relatively small group in the justice system, they remain significantly and increasingly over-represented. Changes to bail legislation in particular have had a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal women who are unsentenced being remanded.

In 2020-21, 58.8 per cent of Aboriginal women in prison were there on remand, higher than the proportion of non-Aboriginal women in prison on remand (43.9 per cent). To decrease rates of remand for women in prison, DJCS continues to implement programs and services that aim to divert women from custody, such as the Koori Women's Diversion program (see the 2019 Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report). DJCS also delivers programs in custody that aim to support individuals on remand to obtain improved education and employment skills and transitional housing that may assist them in their reintegration back into the community.

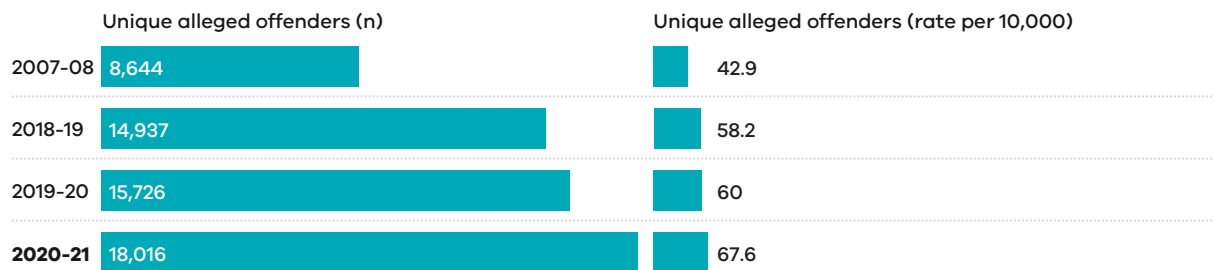
## The rate of adult female unique alleged offenders processed by police is at an all time high

### Measure 15.2.1

#### Aboriginal



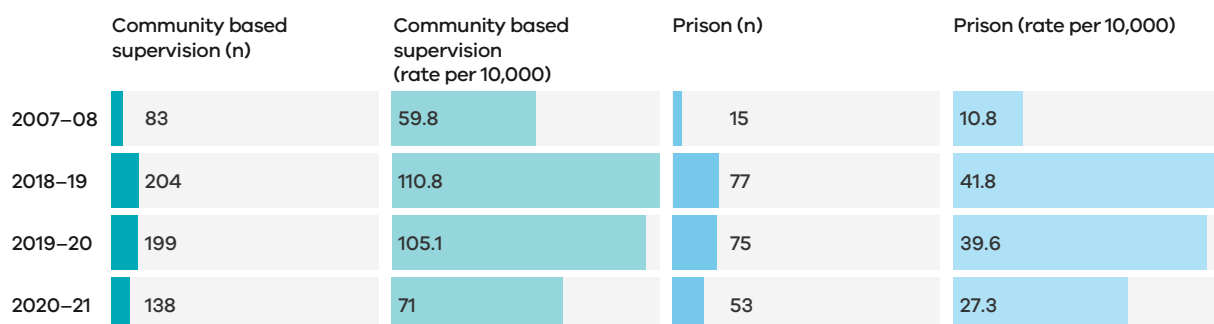
#### Non-Aboriginal



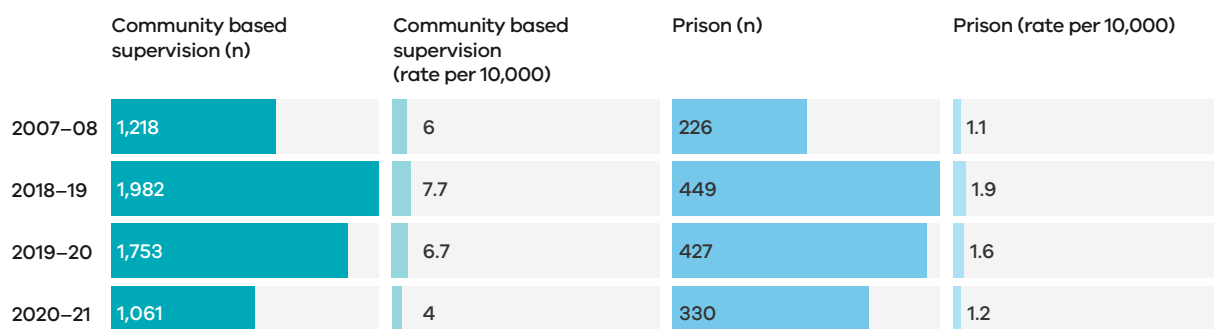
## The average daily rate of Aboriginal women under corrections supervision in community corrections remains high

### Measure 15.2.2

#### Aboriginal women



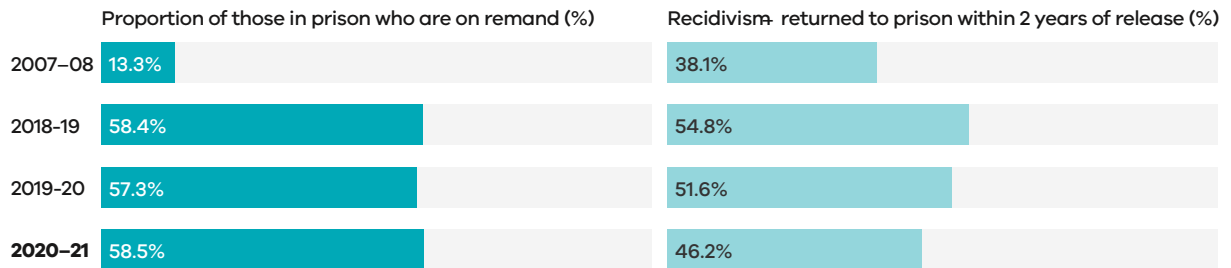
#### Non-Aboriginal women



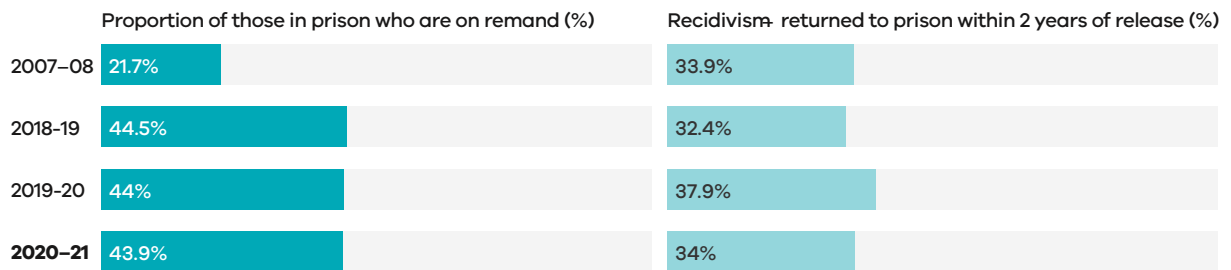
## The proportion of adult Aboriginal women in prison who are on remand remains high

### Measure 15.2.3

#### 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 2020-21, as in previous years, Aboriginal men were over-represented as alleged offenders, and 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

The average daily number of Aboriginal men under corrections supervision decreased between 2019-20 and 2020-21. However, in 2020-21, Aboriginal men were around 15 times more likely to be under corrections supervision in prison and nearly 11 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 rate of return for Aboriginal men continues to be higher than that for non-Aboriginal men (in 20

20-21, 53.1 per cent of Aboriginal men returned to prison under sentence within two years of release compared to 43.3 per cent of non-Aboriginal men).

### Measure 15.3.4 Proportion of men in prison on remand

Similar to the experiences of Aboriginal young people and Aboriginal women, the increasing rates of incarceration of Aboriginal men is partly driven by a higher proportion of offenders being held on remand.

## Adult males continue to be overrepresented as alleged offenders

### Measure 15.3.1

#### Aboriginal

	Unique alleged offenders (n)	Unique alleged offenders (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	1,355	1,006.5
2018-19	2,666	1,462.6
2019-20	2,720	1,439.3
2020-21	2,859	1,456.1

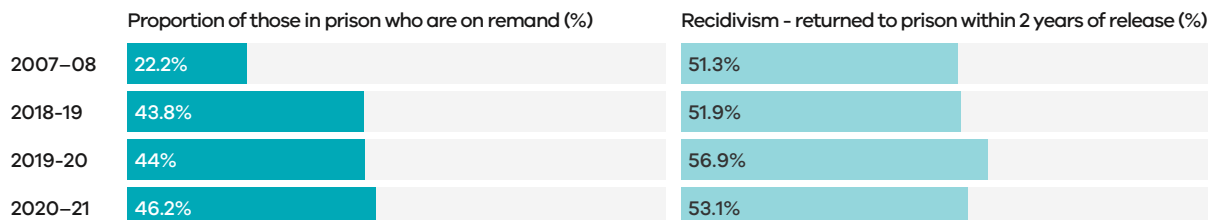
#### Non-Aboriginal

	Unique alleged offenders (n)	Unique alleged offenders (rate per 10,000)
2007-08	33,859	175.1
2018-19	52,501	213.5
2019-20	54,055	214.7
2020-21	60,736	237.4

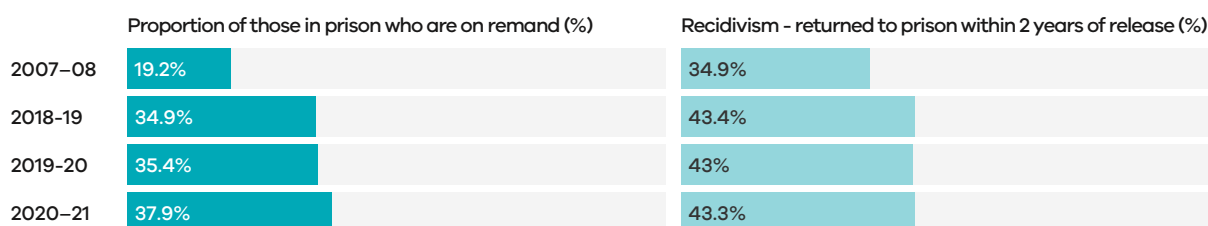
## The proportion of adult men in prison held on remand remains high

### Measure 15.3.4

#### Aboriginal men



#### Non-Aboriginal men



There was a slight increase in the number of Aboriginal youth receiving intensive bail support through the Koorie Intensive Support Program (KISP)

### Ngarra Jarranounith Place

Delivered by Dardi Munwurro, Ngarrra Jarranounith Place (NJP) is a residential healing and behaviour change program for Aboriginal men who use or are at risk of using family violence. The program is aimed at helping men to make positive changes in their lives through one-on-one support and group activities that focus on supporting and addressing strong spirit and strong culture, taking responsibility and healthy relationships.

The program's unique and holistic approach focuses on planning for the participant's transition back into their community and linking men into the Men's Healing and Behaviour Change Program located across Victoria. Following completion of the intensive 16-week program, participants are supported for up to 18 months.

NJP won gold at the national Crime and Violence Prevention Awards in 2021 and was recognised for its effectiveness in helping to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma and supporting healing for behaviours that can manifest in family violence.

Alan Thorpe, CEO Dardi Munwurro, explained "the program provides a safe place for men so they can explore the deeper issues, like trauma, that set them on that path of destructive behaviour. You need to learn to understand and care for yourself before you can care for your kids and family".

Analysis of Dardi Munwurro's programs by Deloitte Access Economics found that each dollar invested provides a return of 50 to 190 per cent, with the largest monetary benefit from reduced incarceration rates. The report also found an 80 per cent reduction in the number of men who reported having a recent episode of family violence after program completion; a reduction in the number of men who reported recent issues with substance abuse (from 80 per cent pre-program to 34 per cent at program conclusion); and a 100 per cent reduction in homelessness in the six months after program completion.

Of note, the report found that, across the programs, participants reflected a greater connection to culture, a stronger sense of identity, improved relationships, increased connection to community, and an increased responsibility for behavioural change as part of cultural roles.

### **Establishing a legislated Spent Convictions Scheme**

For years, Aboriginal organisations and advocacy groups have been at the forefront of spent convictions reform in Victoria. In 2017, Victoria's Attorney-General acknowledged the work of WoorDungin, an Aboriginal advocacy group, whose Criminal Record Discrimination Project brought to light the historical practice of charging children with neglect (and other 'offences') that led to them receiving criminal records.

In March 2021, after sustained advocacy from the Aboriginal legal sector and the Aboriginal Justice Caucus, the Victorian Parliament passed the Spent Convictions Act 2021 (the Act). The Act implements the Government response to recommendations by the Legal and Social Issues Committee's Report, Inquiry into a Legislated Spent Convictions Scheme. Findings from the Inquiry acknowledged the disproportionate impact the absence of a spent convictions scheme had on Aboriginal Victorians.

The first tranche of the Act, which commenced on 1 December 2021, provides a clear and consistent framework to limit the disclosure of criminal record information to support rehabilitation and address the discrimination that individuals face from criminal record information.

Under the first tranche of the Act, certain offences are spent immediately, such as those where no conviction was recorded, those where the offence was committed by a child under the age of 15 and those that result only in a lower-level fine. These spent convictions will not appear on common requests for police records checks (e.g. for employment or housing applications) but they will still be visible to the police and courts, and when a person completes certain applications that require access to their full offending history (e.g. for a firearms licence, Working with Children Checks). Other convictions, apart from serious convictions, are automatically spent after a crime-free period of 10 or 5 years (depending on whether the person was 21 or older, or under 21, at the time of the offence).

The Act also provides for a process where more serious convictions 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 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. This court application process will commence in the second tranche of the Act, from 1 July 2022 onwards.

The Act amends the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of a spent conviction, creating penalties and providing redress through the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission for discrimination. For example, being refused employment or housing (with limited exceptions), on the basis of spent convictions.

The Act was developed in consultation with the Aboriginal Justice Caucus, the Woor-Dungin coalition of ACCOs and other Aboriginal community partners. The Victorian Government allocated funding of \$2.5 million over two years, announced in the 2021/22 State Budget, to support implementation of the Act.

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



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 16 have continued to improve.

The Victorian Government recognises the gross over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system is inextricably linked to systemic racism, colonisation and policies of exclusion. Government also acknowledges that justice reforms currently underway are the direct result of strong First Peoples and ACCO advocacy over many decades. Government accepts that it must continue to change the way the justice system operates to ensure that long-standing injustices are addressed.

Culturally appropriate prevention, early intervention, diversion and support services are critical to addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system. In particular, community-based and community-led services can connect Aboriginal Victorians to culture and promote positive outcomes.

Aboriginal adults and young people involved in the justice system are continuing to access support programs and community services in greater numbers.

### Closing the Gap – Relevant Outcomes and Targets for Goal 16

The National Agreement does not contain outcomes and targets that align with this VAAF goal. Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive goals under the VAAF, which are reported on in this chapter and the Data Dashboard.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Not applicable.

### Data Note



All measures in this goal are reported on.



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

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

In 2020-21, 100 Aboriginal young people received intensive support through the Koorie Intensive Support Program (KISP), a slight increase from 90 in 2019-20. Of these young people, 8 (or 8 per cent) received intensive bail support in 2020-21, a slight decrease from 11 (or 12 per cent) in the previous year.

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

In 2020-21, 223 Aboriginal adults (18 years and above) eligible for bail support received intensive bail support through the Court Integrated Services Program (CISP), which represents 54.6 per cent of Aboriginal adults referred.

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

In 2020-21, 652 Aboriginal children and young people (10-17 years) participated in Aboriginal community support programs. This includes all Aboriginal specific programs funded by DJCS. This is an increase from 502 in the previous year

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

In 2020-21, 652 Aboriginal children and young people (10-17 years) participated in Aboriginal community support programs. This includes all Aboriginal specific programs funded by DJCS. This is an increase from 502 in the previous year.

### There was a slight increase in the number of Aboriginal youth receiving intensive bail support through the Koorie Intensive Support Program (KISP)


#### Measure 16.1.1

	Number of Aboriginal youth on the KISP (n)	Aboriginal youth receiving bail support through the KISP (%)
2018-19	111	24.3
2019-20*	90	12.2
2020-21	100	8

\*Please note that 2019 data has been revised since the previous reporting period.

#### Culturally appropriate case management, engagement and support services

Services for Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system include cultural mentorship from Aboriginal Elders and Respected Persons, and post release support packages to help support people's transition and reintegration back into their community via the DJCS Yawal Mugadjina cultural mentoring program.

 Address trauma and support healing

## Over half of referred adults receive intensive bail support

### Measure 16.1.2

#### 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
2018-19	497	278	55.9
2019-20	461	234	50.8
2020-21	408	223	54.6

#### 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
2018-19	3,184	1,695	53.2
2019-20	3,189	1,666	52.2
2020-21	2,812	1,571	55.8

### Corrections Victoria Cultural Review

In response to concerns regarding the safety and effectiveness of Victoria's prisons, the Victorian Government has established an independent cultural review of the adult custodial corrections system. The review aims to help drive a safer, more inclusive environment for all staff, and ensure the prison system supports rehabilitation, reduces recidivism, and provides for the needs of all prisoners.

Considering the significant over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody, the review will provide advice on how government can better support Aboriginal people in ways that are culturally appropriate and free from discrimination. The review will also consider how improved access to health, social and wellbeing supports can support people's rehabilitation and transition back to the community.

The review will build on initiatives already underway across DJCS and Corrections Victoria, including increased integrity training for staff, ongoing efforts to strengthen operational and cultural leadership, and continued work under AJA4.

In relation to cultural safety, the review will examine the role and pressures on Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers and other Aboriginal staff working in the adult custodial system and consider ways to ensure that cultural safety in the custodial system is a responsibility for all staff.

The review will provide the Minister for Corrections with a final report in December 2022.

# Goal 17: Aboriginal Victorians feel safe and connected



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 17 have continued to improve.

The Victorian Public Service has set the goal of having a minimum of two per cent representation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the workforce. This is to ensure departments are representative of the communities they serve. This is especially important in the justice context.

Increasing numbers of Aboriginal people are employed in the justice system, and staff in the justice system receiving Aboriginal cultural awareness training also continues to increase.

### Closing the Gap – Relevant Outcomes and Targets for Goal 17

The National Agreement does not contain outcomes and targets that align with this VAAF goal. Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive goals under the VAAF, which are reported on in this chapter and the Data Dashboard.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Not applicable

### Data Note



The following measures relies on datasets that are infrequently collected. No new data was available at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 17.1.2:** Proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who feel safe/very safe walking alone at night in local area in the last 12 months
- **Measure 17.1.3:** Proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who reported being a victim of physical or threatened violence in the last 12 months.

Data for these measures is available at the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).


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

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

As at 30 June 2021, 23.85 per cent of police officers had received Aboriginal cultural awareness training. This is an increase from 15.5 per cent at the same time last year.

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

At 30 June 2021, 218 Aboriginal people were employed across the justice system. As at October 2021, 1.9 percent of the workforce across DJCS is Aboriginal. Under the Koori Employment and Career Strategy, DJCS has established clear pathways and tailored initiatives for new and existing Aboriginal employees to support individuals' career potential.

 Address trauma and support healing

## Aboriginal staff employed across the justice system\*

### Measure 17.1.4

#### Department of Justice & Community Safety (DJCS)

	Number	Percentage
2007-08	30	0.5%
2018-19	210	2.1%
2019-20	210	2.1%
2020-21	218	2%

#### Victoria Police

	Number	Percentage
2008-09	7	0.1%
2018-19	98	0.6%
2019-20	103	0.6%
2020-21	113	0.5%

#### Court Services Victoria

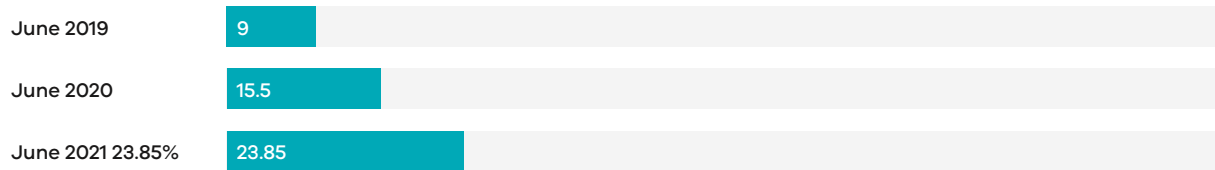
	Number	Percentage
2018	53	2.4%
2019	60	2.2%
2020	60	2.3%
2021	64	2.3%

\*As at June 30 of given year

Note: Prior to July 2014, Court Services Victoria staff were counted as part of the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Also note that Elders and Respected Persons (ERPs) working across Koori Courts are not included in Aboriginal staff numbers.

## The proportion of police officers receiving Aboriginal cultural awareness training continues to increase\*

### Measure 17.1.1



\*as at 30 June of given year

### Cultural Respect Frameworks and Action Plans

The Koori Cultural Respect Framework ensures DJCS' services are more responsive to the cultural needs of Aboriginal people and ensures all employees have the knowledge and skills to deliver services in more culturally appropriate ways and that its work environments are culturally inclusive.

The Victoria Police Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2024 will set out the organisation's commitment to achieving its vision through people-focused leadership and creating a culturally safe workplace that understands, respects and values Aboriginal people and their culture.

 Address racism and promote cultural safety



## Domain 5 - Victorian Government Investment and Action

*The Victorian Government is working to ensure that 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.*

The key Aboriginal Governance Forum for realising outcomes in this Domain is the Aboriginal Justice Forum.

### Aboriginal Justice Agreement

The Victorian Government remains deeply committed to working in partnership with the Aboriginal community to address Aboriginal overrepresentation in the justice system through the Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA).

The AJA was established in 2000 and now in its fourth phase – Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja – is the longest running Agreement of its kind in Australia. By the end of 2021, ninety per cent of Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja actions were in progress or complete.

The Victorian Government continues to invest in the implementation of the AJA and related strategies and reforms to build on these gains. Delivery of a dedicated legal service for Aboriginal young people (Balit Ngulu); expansion of the community-based Aboriginal Youth Justice Program and implementation of Wirkara Kulpa have been backed by nearly \$12 million from the 2020-21 State Budget.

In keeping with commitments to enable greater self-determination in DJCS processes for development of Aboriginal Justice budget bids, the Aboriginal Justice Caucus has led the way in identifying and prioritising budget initiatives.



### Preventing Aboriginal deaths in custody and addressing over-representation in the criminal justice system

The 2021/22 State Budget provided \$33.1 million over four years for 12 initiatives aimed at preventing Aboriginal deaths in custody and responding to Aboriginal community calls for greater action to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

Key initiatives include: \$5.95 million to keep Aboriginal children out of the justice system, \$4.73 million for after-hours specialist family violence support and \$4.09 million to enhance diversion programs for Aboriginal adults.

Work is underway to establish a healing unit for Aboriginal women in prison with \$6.76 million allocated for this purpose. Additional Aboriginal Wellbeing Officers are also being recruited supported by a \$2.49 million investment. Further support is also being provided for the Wadamba Prison to Work Program (see case study) and The Torch art program in prisons and community.

One goal of the AJA is that Aboriginal people are not disproportionately worse off under policies and justice legislation.

In line with this aim, legislation was passed in February 2021 to repeal existing public drunkenness offences under the Summary Offences Act 1966 and make consequential amendments to the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 and the Bail Act 1977 to remove references to public drunkenness offences.

The Victorian Government has allocated \$76.4 million to implement these critical reforms to decriminalise public drunkenness and replace it with a health-based response. This is in order to provide appropriate help and support to persons found to be intoxicated in public.


The Victorian Parliament also passed the Spent Convictions Act 2021 in March 2021 (see case study) to support rehabilitation and address the discrimination that individuals face from criminal record information.

### Stolen Generations Reparations

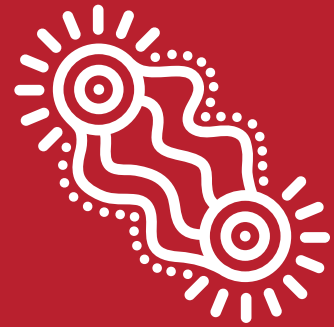
Supporting members of the Stolen Generations and their descendants is a key priority for the Victorian Government. Design of the \$155 million Stolen Generations Reparations Package (Reparations Package) was led by the Stolen Generations Reparations Steering Committee, comprised of Stolen Generations, their family members and service delivery organisations. The Steering Committee engaged over 400 Stolen Generations to produce its Final Report to government in July 2021. DJCS and DPC worked collaboratively to establish the Reparations Package in line with the Final Report, to ensure it is culturally safe and responsive, and can contribute to genuine healing for Stolen Generations.

The Reparations Package is a significant step in increased government accountability, acknowledging and addressing the role of past governments in forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families, culture and Country. The Reparations Package will help address the trauma and suffering caused by the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families by offering financial compensation alongside a range of other supports, including access to legal and financial support, healing services, and an opportunity to record and share personal stories.

In the lead up to the full Reparations Package becoming operational, a \$300,000 Interim Funeral Fund was established in 2021 to ensure families of members of Stolen Generations can access financial support to cover funeral expenses to honour their loved ones. The full Reparations Package also provides for advance payments of \$20,000 for applicants who are terminally or critically ill, alongside prioritising processing of these applications. This work recognises the urgent nature of reparations given the age and illness of many members of the Stolen Generations.

 Address trauma and support healing

# 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 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.





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



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 18 have continued to improve.

The Victorian Government acknowledges that water rights were granted to European settlers to the exclusion of Aboriginal people, and the State made decisions without regard to Aboriginal people or the deep significance of water to them. As settlers moved across Victoria, they diverted, dammed and drained landscapes of water to suit and supply their specific needs. Aboriginal people were also not considered in land legislation or policy until very recently.

Recent advancement of the State's treaty process and the uptake and promotion of initiatives are seeing Aboriginal land, water and cultural rights being increasingly realised.

### Data Note



Data for - **Measure 18.1.4** Number of Whole of Country Plans published - is sourced from the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners Corporations (FVTOC).

FVTOC had not provided data for this measure at the time of reporting.

### Goal 18 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 15:** People maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters.

- **Target 15a:** By 2030, a 15 per cent increase in Australia's land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests.
- **Target 15b:** By 2030, a 15 per cent increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests in the sea.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Nationally, based on progress from the baseline, the land mass target shows good improvement and is on track to be met, while the sea country target shows improvement but is not on track to be met. In Victoria, there is no change since the baseline year.

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

### Area of Crown land with native title determinations and/or Recognition and Settlement Agreements continues to increase

#### Measure 18.1.1

	Victorian land area over which native title exists (km <sup>2</sup> )	Victorian land area over which Traditional Owner Settlement Act agreements have been reached (km <sup>2</sup> )
2008–09*	1,707	0
2020–21	14,899	40,132

\*The Traditional Owner Settlement Act was enacted in 2010.

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

In 2020–21, native title is recognised across 14,899 square kilometres of land. 40,132 square kilometres of land is recognised under *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* agreements<sup>12</sup>.

#### Measure 18.1.2 Work of the State in advancing the treaty process

Victoria's nation-leading treaty process is continuing to progress and achieve significant milestones. On 6 June 2022 the Treaty Authority Agreement was executed between the Victorian Government and the First Peoples' Assembly, establishing the Treaty Authority. The Minister for Treaty and First Peoples introduced the *Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Bill 2022* to parliament on 7 June 2022, which recognises the establishment of the Treaty Authority and facilitates its operations by giving legal force to its activities. To date, the Victorian Government and the First Peoples' Assembly have also agreed treaty conduct protocols and established a dispute resolution process. Work is continuing between the Victorian Government and the First Peoples' Assembly to finalise the remaining elements required to negotiate treaty, including a self-determination fund and treaty negotiation framework.

The treaty process will also be informed by the ongoing work of the Yoorrook Justice Commission that is detailed in the Priority Reform Three: Transforming Government Organisations section of this Report.



<sup>12</sup> Please note figures from previous reporting were amended to correct a miscalculation from 2010–11 and to account for the deregistration of the Taungurung settlement's Indigenous Land Use Agreement in 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 2020-21, three RAPs entered into an ACHLMA and five RAPs submitted an intention to enter an ACHLMA. A further notice of intention was lodged in March 2022, bringing the total to six.

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

Joint Management Plans are collaborative partnerships between the Victorian Government and Traditional Owners, that recognise and respect Aboriginal land, water and cultural rights and work to embed Aboriginal knowledge in the everyday management of parks and reserves.

A key attribute of joint management plans is that they integrate Traditional Owner cultural authority, knowledge and care for Country into the management of the parks and reserves within the plans.

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:

- 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.

**Partnering with Registered Aboriginal Parties**

In 2020/21, the Department of Transport (DoT) extended invitations to three Registered Aboriginal Parties to co-design a partnership agreement, in respect of their roles as statutory and cultural authorities. In accepting these invitations, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, Yorta Yorta and Taungurung were:

- resourced to draft an agreement befitting the needs of their organisation, including internal consultation
- provided information from the transport portfolio, including integrated maps capturing transport assets, projects and services, to enable meaningful decision-making to occur on the breadth of transport activity occurring on their traditional lands.

Partnership discussions will continue in 2022, with invitations inclusive of resourcing to be extended to all other Registered Aboriginal Parties from 2022. RAP partnership agreements are being designed separate to but in respect of the legislative obligations of both RAPs and the transport portfolio, including the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and *Native Title Act 1993*.

**Measure 18.1.6 Number of cultural burns conducted**

From 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, Traditional Owners conducted fifteen cultural burns with the support of Victorian Government agencies. This has increased by 50 per cent since the previous year (ten in total) and highlights the critical role of Traditional Owners in fire management, particularly in light of the recent 2019-20 bushfire crisis.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has continued to work with Victoria's Traditional Owner groups to increase the number of Cultural burns over the past 12 months. Forest Fire Management Victoria Regional Cultural Burning Officers have been instrumental in working with groups to understand their aspirations and work with them through the nomination, planning and delivery stages of the burns.

**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 2021, there was a substantial increase in active partnership agreements (+50), little change in ongoing agreements (+6) and a notable increase in closed agreements (+27).

The 2021 data includes partnership agreements with 32 Aboriginal organisations and 21 government agencies (DELWP, 10 Catchment Management Authorities and 10 water corporations) out of a possible total of 30. This is an increase in 2020 numbers (21 Aboriginal organisations, 16 of 30 water agencies).

**The number of cultural burns conducted continues to increase**

**Measure 18.1.6**



### **Cultural Burning – Supporting Traditional Owners to Care for Country**

Traditional Owners undertake cultural burning for a range of reasons to sustain and care for Country – including protecting sacred sites, promoting revegetation, producing food and game, and maintaining spiritual connection with Country.

In support of this effort and the implementation of the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy (Fire Strategy), the Victorian Government invested \$22.5 million, through the 2021/22 State Budget, to re-invigorate and continue to support Traditional Owner-led cultural land and fire management practices. Central to the process and development of the Fire Strategy has been the 50 plus Traditional Owners and Aboriginal fire knowledge holders from across Victoria, who form the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Knowledge Holder group, including representatives from Traditional Owner groups, as well as Aboriginal staff from DELWP, Parks Victoria and the Country Fire Authority.

A key part of re-establishing cultural practices here in Victoria is access to Country to enable Traditional Owners to practice cultural fire and other land management activities. This is central to enabling and supporting self-determination. It is also vital supporting the right of Traditional Owners to continue their culture.

Many of the Traditional Owner groups continue to build capacity in this area by conducting multiple cultural burns and working in partnership with Forest Fire Management Victoria to assist in delivering planned burn requirements. It has been encouraging to see new Traditional Owner groups either deliver their first burn, working on nominations or planning for future cultural burns.



# Goal 19: Aboriginal culture and language are supported and celebrated



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 19 have continued to improve.

The Victorian Government recognises culture as a protective factor critical to countering the poorer outcomes that are statistically experienced by Aboriginal people in Victoria. The protective function of culture, identity and connection to Country was emphasised in the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System final report.

There continues to be many examples of recognising and celebrating the unique status, rights, cultures and history of Aboriginal communities in Victoria.

### Data Note



All measures under this goal are featured.

### Goal 19 directly aligns with the following Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

**Outcome 16:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing.

- **Target 16:** By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Nationally in 2018-19, there were 123 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken (with 14 considered strong).

This target relies on data from the National Indigenous Languages Survey. No new data since the baseline year of 2018-19 was available at the time of reporting. State and territory data are not available.

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

### Measure 19.1.1 Participation in community events which celebrate Aboriginal culture

#### Strong Roots for Our Futures Program

Part of the Traditional Owner Nation-building Package, the *Strong Roots for Our Futures Program* resources foundational activities to support Traditional Owners to build strong groups, ready to engage in formal recognition processes if they choose. Designed based on extensive engagement, the program supports family gatherings and reunions, and Traditional Owners self-determined projects in Far East Gippsland, North East, Central North and Mid North West Victoria.

In 2021, the Johnson and Kirby family from Central North were granted \$20,000 for a family reunion on Country for the first time after nearly a decade. Over 150 members of the Johnson and Kirby family involving four generations of Elders, adults and children, camped together for five days to celebrate culture and connection, and to make longstanding memories for generations to come. The family honoured the memory of the ancestors, Alfred Johnson and Christine Kirby and all loved ones passed away by a memorial ceremony, and a corroboree performed by the young descendants. The gathering was featured in *Robinvale Sentinel* (22 April 2021) and celebrated as a healing and rejuvenation opportunity by the family.

### 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.





Initiative / organisation		Description
1.	<b>Koorie Heritage Trust</b>	The Victorian Government funds the Koorie Heritage Trust to support its operations; delivery of the Koorie Family History Service for members of the Stolen Generations; and the retention and revival of Victorian Aboriginal history and language through the Koorie Oral History Project.
2.	<b>Connecting Home Limited</b>	The Victorian Government funds Connecting Home Limited to support its operations and provide case management services, counselling and healing initiatives for members of the Stolen Generations and their families.
3.	<b>Koorie Youth Council</b>	The Victorian Government funds the Koorie Youth Council to support its operations and deliver activities that engage with, and advance the rights and representation of Aboriginal young people, including the annual Koorie Youth Summit.
4.	<b>Cultural Markers Project</b>	The Victorian Government is funding the Cultural Markers project, which aims to increase visibility of Aboriginal culture in inner Melbourne. The project is being developed in collaboration with Traditional Owners and seeks to create digital cultural markers that can be viewed through augmented reality on a smart device at a number of cultural sites across Melbourne's CBD.
5.	<b>Reconciliation Victoria</b>	The Victorian Government funds Reconciliation Victoria to support its operations and deliver a range of activities and products that promote reconciliation, including the Maggolee website and Reconciliation Week initiatives.
6.	<b>Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust (Trust)</b>	The Victorian Government funds the Trust to deliver municipal and essential services to its residents. This funding supports the management of Trust's land, water and built environment, as well as the preservation of cultural heritage.
7.	<b>Geographic Names Victoria (GNV)</b>	The Victorian Government funds GNV to oversee the naming and registration of roads, features and localities in Victoria by administering the Geographic Place Names Act 1998. GNV formally engages with Traditional Owners to support and progress this work.
8.	<b>Our Language Matters – Aboriginal place names workshops</b>	The Victorian Government funds the delivery of Aboriginal-led workshops to recognise the importance of Aboriginal place names, strengthen partnerships with TOs, and increase the number of Aboriginal place names throughout Victoria. The workshops partner with RAPs, municipal councils, and Victorian government departments and agencies. Eight workshops have been delivered since 2018.
9.	<b>Victorian Aboriginal language programs in Schools</b>	The Victorian Government is funding Aboriginal languages education in kindergartens, schools and the VET sector through a collaborative partnership involving VAEAI, the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority and DET.
10.	<b>VICNAMES - sound files for Traditional Owner place names</b>	The Victorian Government has funded VICNAMES to produce sound files, which will allow users to hear a name in the spoken language. This will assist with the pronunciation of place names. This feature will initially focus on the Aboriginal language and the recordings will be spoken by Traditional Owners.
11.	<b>Naming Authority training</b>	The Victorian Government is supporting municipal Councils, government departments and agencies to understand the process around using Traditional Owner languages. Since 2018, 6 councils have been provided Naming Authority Training.
12.	<b>Documentaries</b>	The Victorian Government has funded the Victorian International Year of Indigenous Languages to develop short documentaries to showcase the importance of Traditional Owner language, place names, culture and history. Since 2019, 2 documentaries have been developed for Victoria wide publication, focusing on Woookarung Regional Park in Ballarat and the UNESCO World Heritage Site Budj Bim in Western Victoria.
13.	<b>Classifying road and place records</b>	The Victorian Government funds the VICNAMES – Register of Geographic Names enhancements to enable the classification of Victoria's 208,000 roads and 46,000 places to identify Traditional Owner languages. This is to better promote the use of TO languages across Victoria.

### **Djakitjuk Djanga native food industry development program**

Agriculture Victoria has partnered with the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC) to deliver the Djakitjuk Djanga native food industry development program. This grants-based program and Community of Practice is supporting 13 Aboriginal organisations to progress native plant crop trials. The objective is to help overcome key resource-related barriers to commercially produce native plant food and botanicals.

Agriculture Victoria has also partnered with the FVTOC to support the implementation of the Traditional Owner Native Food and Botanicals Strategy. Early implementation activity is focusing on the structural elements that need reform to ensure Aboriginal Cultural Intellectual Property is better protected and Traditional Owners are enabled to lead the industry.

### **Updated Budj Bim Cultural Landscape Master Plan and Strategic Investment Plan**

The UNESCO World Heritage-listed Budj Bim Cultural Landscape in South-West Victoria contains one of the world's most extensive and oldest aquaculture systems developed by the Gunditjmara people over a period of at least 6,600 years. In 2014, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation completed the initial Budj Bim Master Plan. In recognition of Budj Bim's significance and its untapped tourism potential, the Victorian Government has invested \$11.86 million in priority visitor infrastructure.

The Budj Bim Master Plan has recently been updated to reflect what has been delivered to date and align with current visitation trends and preferences for visitor experiences. A Strategic Investment Plan has also been developed to progress the vision for the landscape to 2035. The strategic work focuses on the cultural, social, economic and environmental outcomes for the Gunditj Mirring community to build on the World Heritage Listing as well as development of a series of business cases to identify and present short term investment opportunities to inform funding requests to Government.

### **Echuca-Moama Bridge Project**

As part of the largest transport infrastructure project in northern Victoria, Major Road Projects Victoria (MRPV) and Transport for NSW have built a second Murray River crossing to connect Echuca and Moama on the traditional lands of the Yorta Yorta people. Works started in March 2020 and were completed in April 2022.

From the earliest stages of planning, the project prioritised the protection of Echuca-Moama's rich cultural heritage. MRPV and its contractor McConnell Dowell Constructors established strong relationships with the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation to collaborate on key cultural heritage issues and employment opportunities.

The new Murray River crossing will be known as Dhungala Bridge and the new Campaspe River crossing will be called Yakoa Bridge – the respective names in Yorta Yorta language for the two rivers. The story behind the new Dhungala bridge's name is told in the Dreamtime-themed artwork, Dhungala Dreaming, created by Yorta Yorta elder Aunty Judy Atkinson, on display in nearby Victoria Park.

 **Prioritise culture**



### **Dja Dja Wurrung Corporate and Community Centre**

The Victorian Government committed funding of \$11.288 million over 2020-21 and 2021-22 for the development and construction of the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation's corporate and community centre in Bendigo.

The Centre will be the permanent base for the Corporation's operational activities, its emerging agriculture business, its cultural and natural resource management services enterprise, 'Djandak' (Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Pty Ltd), and for Dja Dja Wurrung material culture. The centre will be designed for Dja Dja Wurrung members, will provide spaces for learning and interaction and honour the survival, growth and culture of the Dja Dja Wurrung. The Centre will also create a destination for arts and cultural events.

On 18 February 2022, the Attorney-General handed over freehold title under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2019* (Vic) to 5.578 hectares of public land in Golden Square, Bendigo to the Corporation to build the new centre.

In 2013, the State recognised Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owner rights in 265,600 hectares of public land in central Victoria, as the foundation for a Settlement Package agreed under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic).



*Dja Dja Wurrung Digging Stick Dance*



*Attorney-General the Hon Jaclyn Symes MP and Trent Nelson*

# Goal 20: Racism is eliminated



## Overview

### Measures under Goal 20 have continued to stay the same.

Existing data shows that while there is some evidence of attitudinal change in the Victorian community towards concepts such as self-determination and celebration of First Nations cultures, Aboriginal Victorians continue to experience a high rate of racism and discrimination.

### Closing the Gap – Relevant Outcomes and Targets for Goal 20

The National Agreement does not contain outcomes and targets that align with this VAAF goal. Victoria is pursuing more ambitious and comprehensive goals under the VAAF, which are reported on in this chapter and the Data Dashboard.

### Data Note



The following measure relies on data that is infrequently collected. No new data was available at the time of reporting.

- **Measure 20.1.1** Proportion of Aboriginal people who report having experienced racism in the previous 12 months

Data for this measure is available through the Data Dashboard, which can be accessed via the First Peoples – State Relations website at [www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard](http://www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/report-data-dashboard).

In this report the data source for **measure 20.1.2** has been altered to better align to the measure. The data source used in previous reports was the number of complaints under the Equal Opportunity Act and Racial and Religious Tolerance Act relating to Indigenous people (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission).

### Closing the Gap - How Victoria is tracking nationally

Not applicable.

## 20.1 Address and eliminate racism

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

National survey data collected by Reconciliation Australia in 2020 indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are nearly three-times as likely to have experienced verbal abuse in the past six months (36 per cent), than the general community (13 per cent), and are much more likely to have experienced other forms of prejudice on the basis of their race. This includes social media abuse (36 per cent), being prevented from renting or buying a property (21 per cent), physical violence (18 per cent), refused service in a shop (19 per cent), refused entry to a venue (21 per cent), or other forms of prejudice (24 per cent).

One of the first steps to addressing racism is recognising it. According to Reconciliation Australia, 21 per cent of Victorians feel there are low levels of prejudice between Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, while 47 per cent feel these levels are fairly high or very high. The survey also highlighted changing attitudes toward concepts such as self-determination and celebration of First Nations cultures. 70 per cent of Victorians believe that it is very important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a say in matters that affect them. This is the highest out of all Australian states and territories. It is also the most notable shift in perspective out of all states and territories, increasing from 58 per cent in 2018 to 70 per cent in 2020. Victorians were also most likely out of all state and territories to agree that they are proud of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures (68 per cent).

While this demonstrates some positive attitudinal changes in the Victorian community, it is evident from the many incidents of racism experienced by Aboriginal people that more must be done.



### Anti-Racism Taskforce

The Anti-Racism Taskforce (the Taskforce) was established in June 2021 as a joint initiative between the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples and the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. The Taskforce was established to provide strategic advice and recommendations on the development of Victoria's first whole of government Anti-Racism Strategy.

The Taskforce is chaired by Josh Bull MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Sheena Watt MP, Member for Northern Metropolitan, and a proud Yorta Yorta woman. The Taskforce includes a broad range of experts and community members (11 in total) with lived experience of racism and discrimination, alongside representatives from the Victorian Multicultural Commission and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. The Taskforce includes two Aboriginal members:

- Ruby Tribe, a Kamilaroi woman and front-line health services worker who works as a vaccination nurse at First Peoples' Health and Wellbeing.
- Professor Yin Paradies, a Wakaya man and academic and expert in the field of racism and antiracism practice.

The work of the Taskforce includes a focus on addressing racism experienced by Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In late 2021, the Taskforce met with Professor Eleanor Bourke, Wergaia and Wamba Wamba Elder, and Chair of the Yoorrook Justice Commission, to identify opportunities to complement the work of the Commission.

The Anti-Racism Strategy is being developed in consultation with Aboriginal community groups, as well as multicultural and multifaith communities. Roundtables were held in November 2021 with Aboriginal community groups and the Victorian Government's Aboriginal Justice Caucus. Feedback has also been sought through an online survey. Oversight from an interdepartmental committee will ensure that the Anti-Racism Strategy is developed to support other self-determination initiatives across government.



## Domain 6 - Victorian Government Investment and Action

*The Victorian Government is committed to promoting self-determination, treaty and truth. Supporting Traditional Owners is a critical element of that.*

The key Aboriginal Governance Forum for realising outcomes in this Domain is the Caring for Country Partnership Forum.

### Traditional Owner Nation-building Package

The Traditional Owner Nation-building Package continued to support Traditional Owners to engage in nation-building and prepare for future treaty negotiations.

A further \$11.2 million was provided in the 2021/2022 Budget to continue delivering programs and funding nation-building activities until June 2024.

- **Nation-building Resource Pool** was launched in September 2020 to support Traditional Owners groups with formal recognition to engage in nation-building activities, as determined by each group. Administered by the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, a total \$1.4 million in funding was awarded to five groups in 2020-21.
- **Traditional Owner Engagement Officers** continue to be employed in most formally recognised Traditional Owner groups to support their nation-building and treaty readiness work.
- **Formal recognition work.** Funding continues to be provided to First Nations Legal & Research Services to deliver focused and intensive services to Traditional Owners of the Mid North West, Central North, North East and Far East Gippsland to continue pursuing formal recognition. This has included research engagement with individuals and families, conducting family group gatherings, and holding full group meetings. This work has been undertaken independent of government.

### Communities of Practice on engagement with Traditional Owners without formal recognition

Six community of practice meetings were convened across Far East Gippsland, North East, Central North and Mid North West Victoria in 2021. 16 government agencies came together to coordinate engagement activities and learn from each other to improve engagement with Traditional Owners without formal recognition. The meetings have established and strengthened connections between key regional staff delivering projects on Country. It has also enabled agencies to utilise existing engagement forums across the network to reduce the engagement burden on Traditional Owners.

These communities of practice respond to feedback from over 120 Traditional Owners of the regions documented in the 2019 Report 'To be heard and for the words to have actions' Traditional Owner voices: improving government relationships and supporting strong foundations'. Traditional Owners in areas without formal recognition want to be engaged by government, particularly about decisions affecting Country.



## Review of Victorian Regional Forest Agreements

Victoria appointed a Traditional Owner as one of the three members of an independent Panel to undertake a Major Event Review of Victorian Regional Forest Agreements following the 2019-20 bushfires, to assess the impacts of the bushfires and make recommendations for remedial actions.

In conducting its review, the independent Panel undertook dedicated and thorough consultation with Traditional Owners from across Victoria, including representatives of Traditional Owner groups (including groups both with and without formal recognition), Traditional Owner co-governance groups and forums, and Victorian ACCHOs. In total, the Panel held 21 online and face to face meetings with Traditional Owner groups.

## Aboriginal Landholder Information Service

The Victorian Government has provided \$0.24 million in funding annually through to 2024-25 to provide culturally safe and fit for purpose agricultural information and skills to Aboriginal land managers. A range of tailored workshops, training programs, study tours and fieldtrips have been delivered to more than 20 Aboriginal organisations and individuals with this funding.

## Traditional Owner Corporation (TOC) and DELWP Exchange Policy

The policy provides an opportunity for DELWP staff to work directly with Traditional Owners and learn from their experience. This strengthens partnerships and assists TOCs with project, policy or administrative support to help alleviate pressures from the increase in delivery demands.


 Transfer power and resources to communities

## Advancing self-determination through the State Budget

A number of departments are advancing self-determination through the State Budget. For example, DH has shown leadership by requiring that all budget proposals include a mandatory Aboriginal Impact Assessment. This has been supported by tools, guidance, and all staff information sessions. DH also provided the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector with transparent information on the budget process so priorities can be co-designed.

Both DPC and DTF have applied self-determination principles to analyse budget bids as well as provide advice to other departments to help increase Aboriginal community engagement and influence on funding decisions that directly impact Aboriginal Victorians. DTF has continued to refine business case templates, helping to promote greater collaboration between departments and Aboriginal communities when developing bids.

In its *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu* Implementation Action Plan, DELWP committed to enable Aboriginal self-determination in its budget development processes. Budget submissions for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Budget were developed with the aim of addressing the systemic issues related to the current ad hoc, short-term funding of Traditional Owners.

 Transfer power and resources to communities

## Other examples of prioritising Aboriginal culture

- **Creating workplaces that are sensitive to cultural needs and providing opportunities for Aboriginal staff to connect through Aboriginal Staff Networks.** For example, DoT's Network designed the first Transport Portfolio Aboriginal Staff Conference, prioritising discussions on Aboriginal employee experiences to inform a cultural safety review and framework for the portfolio.

### Prioritise culture

- **Equipping VPS staff with the knowledge and confidence to understand treaty and its practical impacts for their work through the Preparing for Treaty MicroCertification series.** In October 2021, the first DPC-funded cohort commenced, delivered by the University of Melbourne. The series explores the role that treaties have played, and might play, in relations between Indigenous peoples and contemporary settler societies.

### Prioritise culture

- **Supporting cultural pride and identity among Aboriginal Victorians through significant dates.** NAIDOC week 2021 was celebrated across Victoria with online and in-person events in partnership with the Victorian NAIDOC Committee and Local Aboriginal Networks under the theme 'Heal Country!'.

### Prioritise culture

- **Embedding Aboriginal language and culture into service design and the built environment.** For example, the Victorian Fisheries Authority is partnering with Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation to co-design a new Arcadia native fish hatchery with a visitor centre named in Yorta Yorta language.

### Prioritise culture

Another example is the Aboriginal Cultural Identity artwork, *Mirring – Country*, located at DELWP's offices, by artist Thomas Day. The artwork binds together the elements of land, mountain, water, fire, forest and ocean, demonstrating the work DELWP does, and the values staff hold, as well as the department's ongoing commitment to working in full partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

### Prioritise culture

- **Celebrating the unique status, rights, cultures and history of Aboriginal communities in Victoria.** The Deadly & Proud campaign began in February 2021 and featured 21 Aboriginal storytellers who shared their stories of pride across the themes of ancient cultures, resilience, community and the historic path to treaty. The campaign's reach was amplified through well-known ambassadors, events, advertising and partnerships – attracting widespread positive news coverage. By 30 June 2021, the campaign's website had obtained more than 200,000 views. Since finalising the campaign, the Deadly & Proud website continues to attract high levels of online engagement, helping Victorians to listen and learn in relation to the path to treaty and truth-telling.

### Prioritise culture

## Glossary

<b>AAP</b>	Aboriginal Access Points	<b>AJC</b>	Aboriginal Justice Caucus
<b>ABDU</b>	Algabonyah Business Development Unit	<b>AJF</b>	Aboriginal Justice Forum
<b>ABF</b>	Aboriginal Children’s Forum	<b>APC</b>	Aboriginal Partnerships Coordinators
<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics	<b>APRAP</b>	Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program
<b>ACARA</b>	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority	<b>ATSICSSC</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety Sub-committee
<b>ACAT</b>	Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training	<b>ASGF</b>	Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum
<b>ACCHO</b>	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation	<b>ASN</b>	Aboriginal Staff Network
<b>ACCO</b>	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation	<b>AWF</b>	Aboriginal Workforce Fund
<b>ACF</b>	Aboriginal Children's Forum	<b>AYCP</b>	Aboriginal Youth Cautioning Program
<b>ACHLMA</b>	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreement	<b>BDAC</b>	Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative
<b>ACIF</b>	Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Fund	<b>CALD</b>	Culturally and linguistically diverse
<b>ACIP</b>	Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Program	<b>CECFW</b>	Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
<b>ACLO</b>	Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer	<b>CUST</b>	Community Understanding and Safety Training
<b>ACST</b>	Aboriginal Cultural Safety Training	<b>DAPs</b>	Designated Aboriginal Positions
<b>AEC</b>	Aboriginal Executive Council	<b>DELWP</b>	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
<b>AECS</b>	Aboriginal Employment and Cultural Strategy	<b>DET</b>	Department of Education and Training
<b>AEDC</b>	Australian Early Development Census	<b>DFFH</b>	Department of Families Fairness and Housing
<b>AES</b>	Aboriginal Employment Service	<b>DH</b>	Department of Health
<b>AET</b>	Aboriginal Employment Team	<b>DJPR</b>	Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
<b>AHV</b>	Aboriginal Housing Victoria	<b>DJCS</b>	Department of Justice and Community Safety

<b>AHWPF</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum	<b>DOT</b>	Department of Transport
<b>AJA</b>	Aboriginal Justice Advisory	<b>DTF</b>	Department of Treasury and Finance
<b>DPC</b>	Department of Premier and Cabinet	<b>LGBTIQ+</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Intersex and Queer
<b>DSP</b>	Disability Support Pension	<b>MCGC</b>	Marrung Central Governance Committee
<b>First Peoples' Assembly</b>	First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria	<b>MCH</b>	Maternal and Child Health
<b>FPDN</b>	First Peoples Disability Network Australia	<b>MCHN</b>	Maternal and Child Health Nurse
<b>FMCIP</b>	First Mortgage and Community Infrastructure Program	<b>MHWD</b>	Mental Health and Wellbeing Division
<b>FVTOC</b>	Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations	<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>GNV</b>	Geographic Names Victoria	<b>MRPV</b>	Major Road Projects Victoria
<b>HfAVR</b>	Homes for Aboriginal Victorians Round	<b>MSEP</b>	Maternity Services Education Program
<b>IDS</b>	Indigenous Data Sovereignty	<b>NAIDOC</b>	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
<b>IPSA</b>	Intersex Peer Support Australia	<b>NAPLAN</b>	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
<b>IWG</b>	Implementation Working Group	<b>National Agreement</b>	National Agreement on Closing the Gap
<b>JPP</b>	Justice Policy Partnership	<b>NDIA</b>	National Disability Insurance Agency
<b>KAS</b>	Key Ages and Stages	<b>NDIS</b>	National Disability Insurance Scheme
<b>KEC</b>	Koori Education Coordinator	<b>NJP</b>	Ngarra Jarranounith Place
<b>KESO</b>	Koori Engagement Support Officer	<b>NSW</b>	New South Wales
<b>KLO</b>	Koorie Liaison Officer	<b>NT</b>	Northern Territory
<b>KMS</b>	Koori Maternity Services	<b>NT Act</b>	Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)

<b>KOSP</b>	Koorie Outreach Support Program	<b>PALO</b>	Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer
<b>LAECGs</b>	Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups	<b>QLD</b>	Queensland
<b>LAJACs</b>	Local Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees	<b>RAJAC</b>	Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committees
<b>SA</b>	South Australia	<b>SA</b>	South Australia
<b>SCFCPF</b>	State-wide Caring for Country Partnership Forum	<b>VACYPA</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance
<b>SEWB</b>	Social and Emotional Wellbeing	<b>VAEAI</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Education Alliance Incorporated
<b>SDRF</b>	Self-Determination Reform Framework	<b>VAEEC</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council
<b>SPPIKE</b>	'Strengthening Principals' Professional Capability in Koorie Education' program	<b>VAEES</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Strategy
<b>TAFE</b>	Technical and Further Education	<b>VAHFF</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework
<b>TO</b>	Traditional Owner	<b>VCAL</b>	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
<b>TOAU</b>	Traditional Owner Agreements Unit	<b>VCE</b>	Victorian Certificate of Education
<b>TOC</b>	Traditional Owner Corporation	<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education Training
<b>TOS Act</b>	Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (VIC)	<b>VIC</b>	Victoria
<b>The Report</b>	2021 Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report	<b>VPS</b>	Victorian Public Sector
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference	<b>VPSC</b>	Victorian Public Sector Commission
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation	<b>WA</b>	Western Australia
<b>VAAF</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework	<b>WDP</b>	Work and Development Permit
<b>VACCA</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency	<b>YBFS</b>	Year Before Full-Time Schooling
<b>VACCHO</b>	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation	<b>YES</b>	Youth Employment Scheme

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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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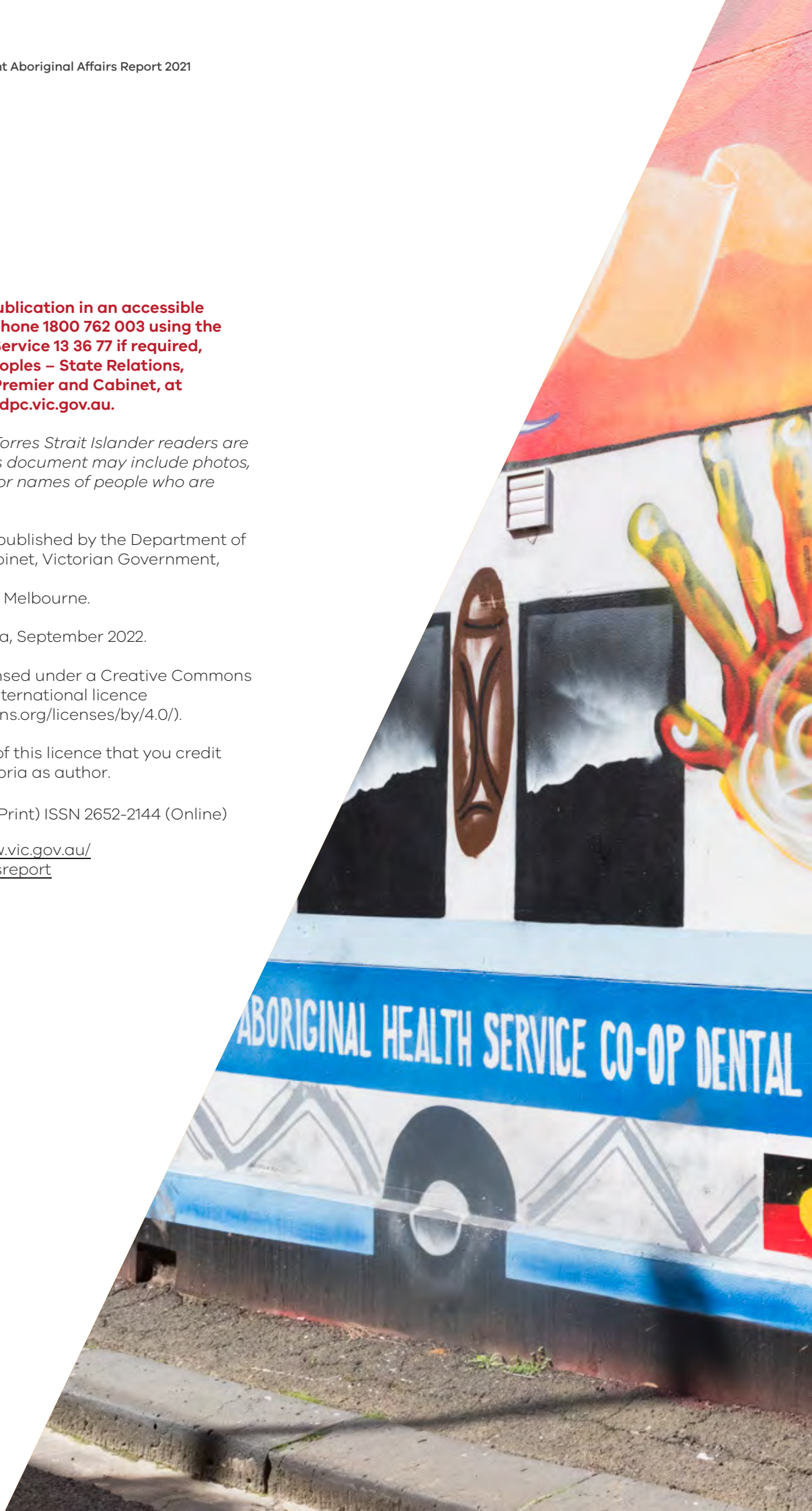
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