

VACCA Therapeutic Services Research Summary

Healing and Trauma Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples



VACCA
VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD
AND COMMUNITY AGENCY
Connected by culture

This summary highlights findings from a review of trauma services supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The research will help guide the development of future trauma services led by Aboriginal communities in Victoria.



WHY DID WE DO THIS RESEARCH?

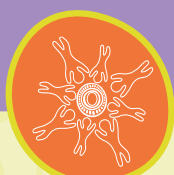
Many Aboriginal families experience ongoing trauma linked to intergenerational injustice, colonisation, and systemic racism. These impacts contribute to poor mental health, family separation, and mistrust of mainstream services.

This research looked at services across Australia designed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with experiences of trauma, violence or abuse. We wanted to understand what services currently exist, who they support, how they are designed, and what makes them work well

WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT HEALING AND TRAUMA SERVICES?

Around Australia, there are around 80 trauma and healing services currently supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by trauma, violence, and abuse.

Who are these services are designed for?



Community

50%



Families

18%



Young People

18%



Men Only

8%



Women & Children

6%

What principles guide these services?

Most services share three common principles:

1

Recognise the impacts of colonisation, including dispossession, racism and child removals

2

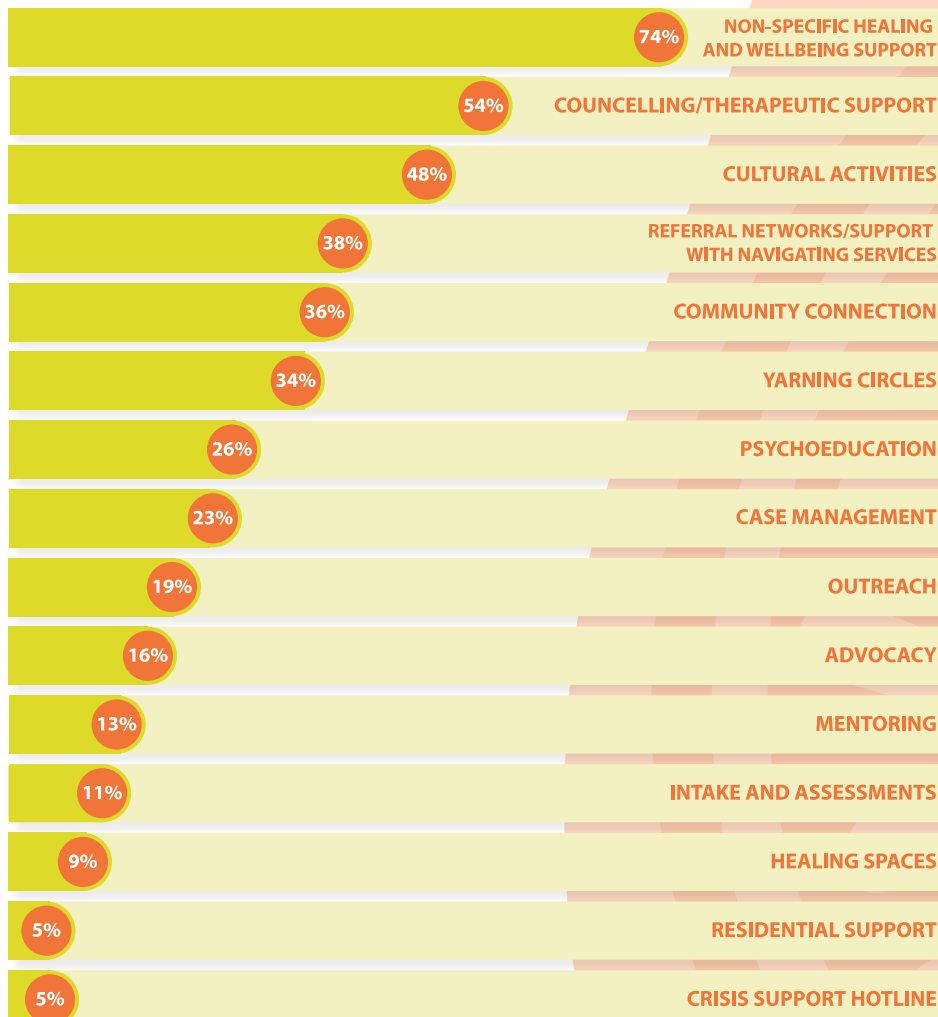
Use a trauma-aware and healing-informed approach to practice

3

Prioritise community leadership and Aboriginal self-determination

What kinds of support do these trauma and healing services provide?

The 80 services provide a wide range of support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:



What makes these services culturally safe?



Culturally centred



Flexible responses tailored to individual and community needs



Community-led and collaborative



Strengths-based



Safe and accountable



Preventative, restorative, holistic wraparound care

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PRACTICE?

Our research provides insights to inform the design of a statewide trauma treatment service led by and for Aboriginal communities in Victoria. This research highlights what's working, where support is needed, and how healing approaches can be grounded in culture and community.



What works well in healing and trauma services:

- Grounding services in culture and community leadership
- Embedding cultural practices in service delivery
- Employing Aboriginal staff builds trust and cultural connection
- Designing services that reflect local priorities and contexts

Barriers still faced:

- Short-term, insecure funding and limited resources
- Workforce shortages and staffing challenges
- Gaps in Aboriginal-led evaluation and evidence
- Western evaluation methods that don't reflect Aboriginal worldviews of healing

Together, these findings
can **help guide the**
strengthening of trauma-informed services
across Victoria and
shape future statewide approaches.

Find out more

Read the research article [\[read online\]](#)

For questions or more information,
please contact us redteam@vacca.org

About this research

This research was led by VACCA and the University of Melbourne's Onemda Indigenous Health Equity Unit. It analysed 131 sources from 2012–2025, identifying 80 services, and 31 healing frameworks designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Fifteen services had published evaluations. This summary expands on the Scoping Review by drawing on updated information compiled in 2025. The findings help build an evidence base to support culturally safe and effective trauma and healing services.

About VACCA

The Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA) is a statewide Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation servicing children, young people, families, and community.