

VACCA Early Years Evaluation Summary



VACCA
VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD
AND COMMUNITY AGENCY
Connected by culture

Koorie Kids Supported Playgroups

VACCA's Aboriginal-led playgroups give kids and families a place to learn, connect, and feel safe. This evaluation summary shares what's working and how we can build on it.

INTRODUCTION

What are VACCA's supported playgroups?

VACCA's Supported Playgroups are intensive, meaning they support families who have a range of needs, including those involved with Child Protection. Led by Aboriginal Facilitators, the playgroups offer play-based learning and cultural activities, while also linking and referring families to services such as kindergartens and healthcare.

Why we did this evaluation

We wanted to look at how the program was running, what it was achieving, and how it could improve. The evaluation was carried out by VACCA's Research and Evidence Development Team from 2018-2021.



WHAT DID THE EVALUATION FIND?



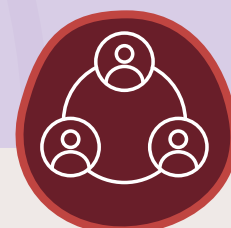
Children are learning and getting ready for kindergarten

Playgroups help children practice social skills, follow routines, and build confidence. Play also strengthens relationships between children and their carers.



Culture is central

Cultural stories, language, and art are part of every session, helping Aboriginal children and families build identity and pride.



Facilitators play a big role but need extra support

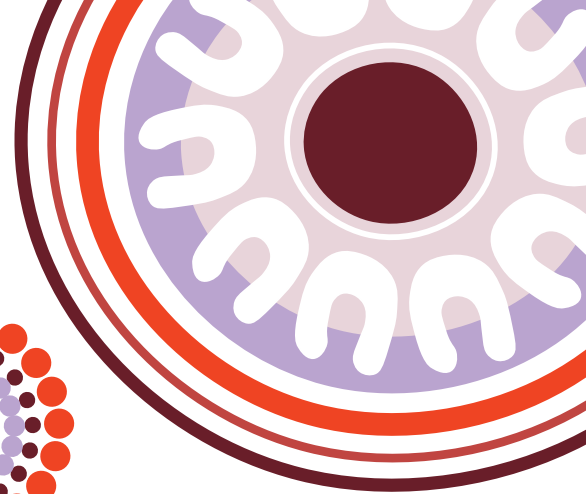
Aboriginal facilitators care for kids, build trust with families, and connect them to services. Their work is important and essential – but not always recognised or well-supported.



Parents and carers feel safe and less isolated

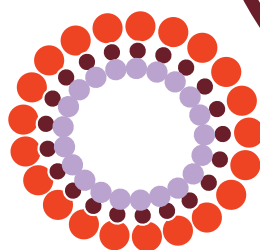
Families said playgroups helped them feel safe, connected and more confident in their parenting, especially during tough times.

WHAT ARE THE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS?



For VACCA Management

- **Aim** to ensure, as much as possible, consistent budgets for activities across regions so that every playgroup can offer regular activities, including cultural activities.
- **Review** facilitator roles and establish a clear career pathway, with access to training, mentoring, study support, and appropriate recognition for their skills and responsibilities.
- **Develop** clear criteria and processes for starting or closing playgroups, based on local community needs.
- **Train** new facilitators to track how their playgroup is going and use data with confidence.
- **Connect** playgroup teams through regular forums to share ideas and solve problems together.



For the Sector

- **Create** a statewide coordination group, led by Aboriginal organisations, to support planning and share learnings.

For Funding Agencies and Policy Partners

- **Recognise** this is an Aboriginal-led intensive playgroup model—not a standard one. Many families face complex situations that require greater resourcing.
- **Provide** flexible and consistent funding that meets the needs of different regions, including for cultural activities.

“My little one used to love it when we go to the shops and see other people from playgroups. “That’s my friend!”...It’s huge for them to have that sense of belonging.”



Find out more

To find out more about this evaluation or if you have any questions, please contact us: redteam@vacca.org

About this Evaluation

This work was supported by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing through the Aboriginal Children and Families Innovation and Learning Fund.

Information was gathered through interviews and surveys with families and staff, program documents, and data. COVID-19 restrictions meant some evaluation data was not available, but findings still show strong early benefits.

About VACCA

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