

Supporting self-determination in Aboriginal women raising their babies at home

- **A new project will support Aboriginal women in Victoria to better meet their babies' and infants' needs and reduce the likelihood of children entering the state's child protection and care system.**
- **In Victoria, Aboriginal children are significantly over-represented in out-of-home care (OoHC).**
- **About 1 in 18 (18,000) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were in OoHC in Australia at 30 June 2019, more than 10 times the rate for non-Aboriginal children.**
- **This new project is funded by a collaborative group of philanthropists with a shared interest in improving the outcomes of children and young people who are at risk of entering, or with an experience of, out-of-home care.**

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) are pleased to announce a grant of more than half a million dollars to co-design a new approach to supporting young Aboriginal mothers raise their babies and infants at home.

The grant is awarded by members of the Out-of-Home-Care Philanthropic Funders Network (the Network), a group facilitated by the Centre with an interest in improving the outcomes of children and young people at risk of entering, or with an experience of, out-of-home care. The funding is awarded as part of the Network's Innovation Grants program, which sees Network members collaborate to drive innovation and systemic change across the child and family services sector. This project is the second collaborative funding initiative of the Network.

CEO of VACCA, Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett said VACCA is determined to address the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care: "This funding will enable us to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal families in Victoria, with the broader goal of reducing the likelihood of Aboriginal newborns and infants entering out-of-home care, we must do better."

CEO of the Centre, Deb Tsorbaris said the fundamental right of self-determination for Aboriginal communities meant that VACCA was well placed to deliver this project alongside Aboriginal communities: "All children and young people should grow up in safe, stable home environments, connected to family, community and culture. Through this project, VACCA will work alongside Aboriginal women and families to help them make decisions about the safety and wellbeing of their children."

The three-year 'Growing Up Aboriginal Babies at Home' project will commence in October 2020 and will be delivered by VACCA in partnership with the University of Melbourne's Department of Social Work. The project will:

- Work with young Aboriginal women (and their partners) who are identified as at risk of their baby being placed in out-of-home care or, if removal has already occurred, seek reunification with their baby.
- Support the women to meet their infants' needs and keep them safe.
- Use Aboriginal defined measures of success and culturally appropriate data collection.

Children and Young People Grant Manager at Equity Trustees and Network member Emily Cormack said the Network's objective is to fund innovative and collaborative approaches to address systemic issues: "This Network and the Innovation Grants demonstrate how philanthropy can work together to affect change and create lasting impact for children and young people with an experience of out-of-home care."

Network members who collaborated to fund this project include Equity Trustees - The David Taylor Galt Charitable Trust, Gandel Philanthropy, William Buckland Foundation, The Jack Brockhoff Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund and the Australian Communities Foundation – EM Horton Family Fund.

About the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is a state-wide Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) servicing children, young people, families, and community members. It is the largest of its kind in Australia.

We believe in Aboriginal peoples' right to self-determination, the rights of the child and we commit to upholding Victorian Aboriginal cultural protocols.

About the Out-of-home Care Philanthropic Funders Network

The Network is a collaborative group of philanthropists with a shared interest in improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people who are at risk of entering, in, or have an experience of out-of-home care. Members of the Network include Equity Trustees, Gandel Philanthropy, William Buckland Foundation, The Jack Brockhoff Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund and the Australian Communities Foundation.

The Network meets to share learnings, evidence, and innovation in out-of-home care in Victoria and other jurisdictions. This information sharing forum supports Network members to collaborate and fund innovation grants in community service organisations to improve outcomes for children at risk of entering or with an experience of out-of-home care and focus on systemic change and collaboration within, and across sectors. The Network has so far funded two projects in collaboration.

The administration of the Network is conducted by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and proudly funded through Equity Trustees' Children and Young People granting program.

About the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre) is the peak body for child and family services in Victoria. Representing more than 150 community service organisations, students and individuals.

The Centre advocates for the rights of children and young people to be heard, to be safe, to access education and to remain connected to family, community and culture.

Our vision is to see a community that is fair, equitable and creates opportunities for children and their families to live happy and healthy lives.

For further comments from Muriel Bamblett, call Nigel D'Souza 0400 978 015

For further comments from Deb Tsorbaris, call Christie Long 0403 053 584



VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY



PHILANTHROPY

