

# VACCA Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015



**VACCA**  
Connected by culture



## Introduction

The development of a new Strategic Plan requires that we review where we are at and where we have come from. It prompts us to revisit our origins - why we started, the struggles we have been through to get to where we are, the lessons learned and whether we are making a difference to our community and our children.

Over thirty-five years on from the days when Aunty Mollie Dyer first established VACCA, we have the same values but bear little resemblance to the organisation we were. There remains a number of key concerns which continue to drive us which have been prevalent since these beginnings in the seventies. These are: healing the damage done by years of deliberate and misguided abuse of our communities including the forcible removal of our children; our concern to preserve and strengthen our culture and our aim to rebuild our communities.

We remain committed to addressing these issues, as well as a complex mix of other issues affecting our families today.

In 2012 we are a dynamic and robust organisation that employs over 200 people delivering a broad range of services spanning the child and family services field.

Too many Aboriginal children are being removed from their families even today. Many are from families who were clearly and seriously affected by removal policies and still bear the consequences some five or six generations later. We now better understand inter-generational trauma and our services have started to incorporate these learnings into practice. Importantly, we are beginning to incorporate the best of child welfare as a discipline and practice into our cultural approach and vice versa. This is a long-term project and one which

necessarily involves trial and error albeit in an operating environment where we place the safety of our children above all. VACCA is truly developing a practice which we can say is genuinely 'Aboriginal child welfare'.

It is evident that the increasing complexity of child welfare cases has led to the need for a more diverse service response including the need to provide a response to family violence.

VACCA has for a long time provided a Link Up service to the Aboriginal community in support of the Stolen Generations (those removed from their families in the past) and we will continue to improve this support.

However, it is not just disadvantage that drives us. We see Aboriginal people and culture in Victoria and Australia as a vibrant and vital community and at the core of what it means to be Australian. We believe that Aboriginal culture offers the answers to many of our issues. Indeed, for all of our thirty-five years we have been on a journey to transform the children's services landscape by developing a model of Aboriginal service delivery based on Aboriginal cultural protocols and Aboriginal values and principles. For us, 'cultural excellence' means never giving up on our children, keeping them connected to their communities and offering them the best service and support that we can.

A key feature of VACCA which has also remained the same and will continue over the years is our advocacy. We will continue to seek improvements in government policy and programs and in the services delivered by the rest of the community sector to Aboriginal children and families. The next three years of VACCA's development will partly be in the framework of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry's recommendations although this alone will not determine our strategic directions. We will continue to reshape our own practice through reflection, research and review to find better ways to help our community heal and thrive.

The effects of the ongoing community experience of grief and loss is also acutely felt within Aboriginal community organisations as our staff carry these experiences and this history with them. The same culturally integrated approach to our services will be extended to our approach to leadership and organisation development.

Achieving thirty-five years of service to our community means we have matured and this is shown in our services and our practise.



We can now see a truly VACCA model of child and family welfare developing. This is the combination of services we offer with the unique approach our staff bring to their work with their clients. This model of service delivery also gives greater shape to the concept of the Moondani Child and Family Centre which we aim to begin constructing in this Strategic Planning period.

Finally, we will continue our focus on our staff who give so much on a daily basis to achieve the success we have to date. We will find better ways to support our staff and to develop their capacity and skills. We will also aim to improve our recruiting practices by offering employment opportunities to Aboriginal people and supporting them to develop in a high risk service area. We are a significant employer of Aboriginal people in Victoria and we have a responsibility to keep playing this role in a community where unemployment levels are unacceptably high.

### **Vision**

Our children, young people, families and communities are thriving - culturally strong, empowered and safe.

### **Purpose**

To strengthen the safety, wellbeing and cultural connectedness of Aboriginal children, individuals and families in their community.

### **Our Principles and Values**

We believe in the principles of the right of Aboriginal people to self-determination and the rights of the child and we commit to uphold Victorian Aboriginal cultural protocols.

### **Best interest of the Child**

- Our children have the right to be heard, to be nurtured and safe
- They have the right to optimal life opportunities including access to education, healthcare and the development of social and emotional wellbeing
- Aboriginal children have the right to their Aboriginal identity
- Wherever possible we believe that families offer the best environment for raising children.

### **Aboriginal Cultural observance**

- We believe that wherever possible and practicable that compliance with Aboriginal protocols, cultural practice and ceremony is integral in helping us achieve successful outcomes.

### **Respect**

- We pay respect to and commit to comply with the individual and collective cultural rights, obligations and responsibilities of Aboriginal people in our operations, management and in the delivery of our service.

### **Healing and Empowerment**

- We believe in empowering the people we serve.
- We use a strengths-based approach in our services and help our clients make choices for their future.

### **Excellence**

- We believe that the community we service expects and are entitled to a high quality and professional service.



## Our Approach

Serving the Victorian Aboriginal Community by continuing to develop an Aboriginal model of service that is holistic, trauma-informed and addresses the wellbeing of clients, community and staff.

The model will ensure a balance of the key objectives all shaped by culture:

- Service excellence
- Developing Aboriginal leadership
- Promoting informed understanding and commitment in government, sector and general community for better outcomes for Aboriginal children, individuals and families.
- Highly effective infrastructure and systems.

## Priority Areas

Implementing the Approach and Key Objectives

### Our Services

- Ensure the best possible care and support for vulnerable and at risk Aboriginal children, individuals and families in the community
- Secure a full suite of Aboriginal-specific child and family welfare services for our families in particular in the Eastern, Southern and Gippsland regions
- Support service development to cover service gaps in areas of most pressing need including:
  - Implement Aboriginal guardianship pilot and explore full implementation
  - Identify and implement expanded presence in Melbourne's west
  - Extend Aboriginal youth homelessness services
- Strengthen Aboriginal identity
- Ensure integration across all services.

## Our emerging service model

- Moondani – a place and a model of service delivery for all.

## Our people (staff and Board)

- Recognise, value and support our staff
- Implement Workforce Strategy Review
- Explore options for Registered Training Organisation
- Review and strengthen governance structures and procedures.

## Leadership in partnership (with sector and government)

- Establish a position where VACCA sets the agenda for care and support for vulnerable and at risk Aboriginal children, individuals and families
- Expand the Building Respectful Partnerships model to mainstream, government and corporate sectors
- Advocate for cultural respect and practical self-determination
- Build sustainable partnerships and strengthen service coordination so services to Stolen Generations are improved.

## Growth and strength (sustainability)

- Progress and monitor sustainable organisational growth
- Strengthen infrastructure and systems
- Review organisational branding
- Secure appropriate long term premises for all offices
- Meet our environmental responsibilities by implementing an environment strategy.



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