



# VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY

ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – 2020

# ABOUT THE ARTWORK



**Artist: Dixon Patten**

**Tribes: Yorta Yorta and Gunnai**

The artwork of this report represents VACCA's commitment to protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families. These past 12 months have been significantly challenging for our community and the art depicts VACCA's response and ability to adapt.

The central motif depicts culture and community being central to values and the focus is about resilient families, workers and young people. The 'U' shape symbols are VACCA workers; connecting, nurturing, assisting, guiding and supporting the community and each other. The feet represent children navigating life, the boomerangs represent returning to cultural values and principles for guidance. The leaves represent being connected to mother earth and being 'welcomed' on Country.

The hands represent families and the importance of connection, education and nurturing. The emu and kangaroo paw prints depict moving forward and are also nurturing animals. The circles are our diverse families, mobs, communities and experiences.

## Accessibility

VACCA is committed to providing accessible services to all our community members. If you have difficulty in understanding this report, contact us on 03 9287 8800 and we will arrange assistance for you.

## Diversity and Inclusion

We appreciate and welcome diversity in all its forms, including staff and service consumers, and believe this makes our teams, programs, services and organisation, stronger and more effective.

## Privacy

To protect the identity of our clients, names have been changed in the interest of protection and privacy. Where the term 'Aboriginal' is used it refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Photography

Thank you to the community members and staff who gave permission for their photographs to be published.

Thank you to Deon Van Den Berg for the images.

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**VACCA**  
Connected by culture

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We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands that we work on, and recognise the continuing connection to Country, waters and communities.

We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders both past and present, and to their children and young people who are the future caretakers of this great land.





# THEME:

## Our Legacy; Our Future.

### Self-determination for our Community.

Late 2019, regional Victoria was impacted by devastating bushfires, and by March of 2020 the entire country was on lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been a challenging year.

As an organisation, we have remained focused and committed to our Clients and Community, delivering outcomes in support of our role to be self-determining for our community, despite the challenges throughout the year.

The **five** main areas we have focused on this year have been:

- **Preparing and protecting our community** – we recognise the importance of supporting our community as they navigate through change and in times of crisis
- **Connection through healing** – we remain focused on outcomes, with an unwavering commitment to cultural strengthening and therapeutic programs to support community wellbeing
- **Innovation** – we have been resilient and adaptive in our way of working, connecting and delivering service supports during times of change
- **Digital transformation** – we identified and employed alternative modes and digital technologies and implemented proactive methods of client engagement and support utilising virtual platforms
- **Social responsibility** – we reconsidered our role taking on a broader role and extended our service offerings and addressed broader risks outside of our remit.





# INTRODUCTION

**The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is Victoria's leading Aboriginal child and family services organisation and the largest provider of Aboriginal family violence and homelessness services. We have been supporting children, young people, and families within the community for over 40 years as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).**

Through our vision of self-determination – Live, Experience, and Be, we work towards the healing of the Aboriginal community by strengthening the safety, wellbeing and cultural connectedness of vulnerable community members, particularly children.

Our purpose is supporting culturally strong, safe and thriving Aboriginal communities. We believe in the principle of the right of Aboriginal people to self-determination and the rights of the child as well as a strong commitment to upholding Victorian Aboriginal cultural protocols. Our values are; Best Interests of the Child, Aboriginal Cultural Observance, Respect, Self-determination, Healing and Empowerment and Excellence. We deliver over 70 programs across Victoria including child and family services, early years and youth services, emergency relief, family violence, support for stolen generations, child protection, cultural strengthening and connection programs, mental health, financial services, alcohol and drug services, educational services justice and redress support, and homelessness services. By offering a broad range of services, we hope to:

- Ensure child and community safety and wellbeing
- Provide targeted support for Aboriginal children, young people and their families
- Provide targeted support for vulnerable community members
- Maintain and build strong connections to Aboriginal culture
- Promote culturally specific ways of raising Aboriginal children

VACCA's services are underpinned by principles of prevention, early intervention and therapeutic healing. They are premised on human rights, self-determination, promoting client voice, cultural respect and safety.

Our cultural protocols are the cornerstone of our services and programs. With no single answer to the complex issues faced by some members of our community, we do have the right and capacity to use different approaches. Self-determination does empower us, as People and a Culture.

# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The overriding theme of VACCA's focus for the financial year 2019-2020 has been one of implementation and bedding down major reforms. The state and federal elections brought with them a pause in the reforms of the previous years as we worked on delivering newly funded programs as well as existing programs.

Our commitment and key focus is to build on our work of embedding culture in our program delivery through our major project Cultural Therapeutic Ways, where we are incorporating the elements of an Aboriginal Cultural Model of Care that outlines the intersection of cultural practice with self-determination and trauma informed theories; a new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework; and a new database to track how programs are working towards outcomes and self-determined goals.

Our back of house infrastructure has also been moving ahead. It is future proofing us for the next five to ten years.

Our core service in the child protection and out of home care area still remains our main operational activity.

Our advocacy for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for self-determination also means we have been very active in high level strategic governance structures and processes across government.

Our CEO has been tireless in her commitment to this role and has been making an incredible contribution to ensuring jointly developed strategies and plans in government have every chance of success. The wellbeing of our children and young people demands this cross-sector engagement and partnerships, and the ability to develop greater cultural services that maximise the outcomes.

We have been strongly encouraging treaty advancement in our state as we see this framework as safeguarding and protecting Indigenous rights in Victoria for the long-term. There is still a lot of work to be done in this regard and we will continue our involvement and support for treaty.

As a Board, we take a holistic view of the needs of our children, young people and families. We know that having a healthy environment for our children and young people to grow up in requires a family that has housing, jobs and income, good health, education, and is able to live their lives engaged with their extended families, other community members and their land and culture. VACCA as a service for our children, young people and families, will always look for opportunities to strengthen our service offerings based on this view.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the numbers of Aboriginal children and young people entering the child protection system.

We share the responsibility of addressing this with our community, the government and our sector, including other Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and mainstream community sector organisations. Our advocacy is broader than our interests as an organisation, and our collaboration and partnerships extends to the sector as a whole. We believe that the reforms that have been implemented will show results in due course.

I am proud of the work VACCA has achieved this year. We, the Board, are seeing tangible and lasting solutions to a wide range of problems. This work is evidence that our programs work, and attract government funders, who historically gravitate toward traditional solutions and are more open to hearing the voice of Aboriginal services. We the Board are most proud of VACCA's cultural innovation and their continual quest to be reflective of the Aboriginal community ways of knowing and doing.

To the Board, CEO and staff, congratulations on a year of many achievements - a great team effort.



James Atkinson  
VACCA Chairperson







# CEO REPORT

This year has been an unprecedented year, with the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 being marred with catastrophic bushfires throughout regional Victoria and parts of the country. At the time, this was impactful enough. By March of 2020, the country and the world had started to go into lockdown due to COVID-19, a worldwide pandemic.

For VACCA, 2021 will be the year where we work to transition out and support recovery from COVID-19. However, recovery from the pandemic does not mean a return to 'normal'. We're unlikely to go back to the way we were. I believe after what we have learned over the past 12 months that we're going to be better than before.

We are currently reimagining our organisation post the pandemic. COVID-19 has effectively forced VACCA to experiment radically with how our work is done and there have been many learnings as you read through our Annual Report. The pandemic has transformed and forced us to rethink the way we work and communicate internally and externally.

The COVID-19 crisis has made it imperative for VACCA to reconfigure our operations—and an opportunity to transform them. We've built our work on digital collaboration and communication. Our workforce has adapted to the requirements of digitization and other

technologies. We have moved to a hybrid virtual working model to give employees the flexibility they desire. We've learnt that working remotely and offering flexibility will increase our potential talent pool, making us more attractive for staff. We've strengthened our cyber security resilience. Most impressive has been the ability of our staff to take on and implement activities and program work using digital innovation.

The initial challenge of COVID-19 was to move from simply reacting to the crisis to building and operationalising our essential service practice and compliance obligations. We have been agile in our response to changing client needs and of presenting issues. COVID-19 altered client behaviour so VACCA needed to develop an understanding of these shifts and develop new ways of engaging and responding to current and emerging demands.

We were also pleased to see our staff step up to the challenges of COVID-19 and embrace the seriousness of the pandemic. We moved to focus on the most critical issues demanded by the situation, band together, respond to support colleagues, clients, and those vulnerable within the Aboriginal community. We focused on not viewing challenges as roadblocks, but to seeing them as problems to be solved, and even learned from.

Initially, for many of us there was also novelty in working from home, and many employees were pleasantly surprised by how much could be done virtually. As teams mobilised to respond to the crisis, morale was buoyed by staffs' inspirational messages and actions showing that "we can get through this together."

Since the start of the pandemic, VACCA have launched a myriad of initiatives, ranging from wellness programs to virtual morning teas to support employees. Adopting well-being was viewed as a holistic concept, constantly of the mind that so much more can be done. Our drive was to place greater emphasis on fostering and nurturing personal connection and caring for our families and those across the communities and not as clients.

We are living in extraordinary times. This is the case globally as well as locally. In Victoria, we the Indigenous people have been driving forward the agenda of our rights and we have a supportive partner in government working with us. The journey hasn't been easy so far and we don't expect it to be smooth sailing in the future.

## Our business

Throughout this report you will read of VACCA's capability and reputation in providing far reaching benefits to our clients and to broader Aboriginal communities and of our leadership and to expand of our services to meet demand. We have done this through investing in research and evidence, innovation, policy advocacy, training and production of resources and training materials.

We have embraced strategic change and reform leadership in both policy and operations. Our ability to continuously innovate and evolve Aboriginal service delivery is demonstrated in our service offerings. We have an ability to scale up quickly and have a personal commitment to invest in Aboriginal research and evaluation.

The future too is truly transformative for both VACCA and the Aboriginal welfare system as we take on more and more statutory responsibilities and as we further embed Aboriginal self-determination and take up the responsibilities and obligations these present to us as an Aboriginal organisation.

To our Board, our chair James Atkinson we thank you. To our funders state and commonwealth government and our philanthropic partners; we are seeing the outcomes as we move away from traditional solutions and ways of doing and a concerted effort to move to self-determination.



Prof. Muriel Bamblett AO



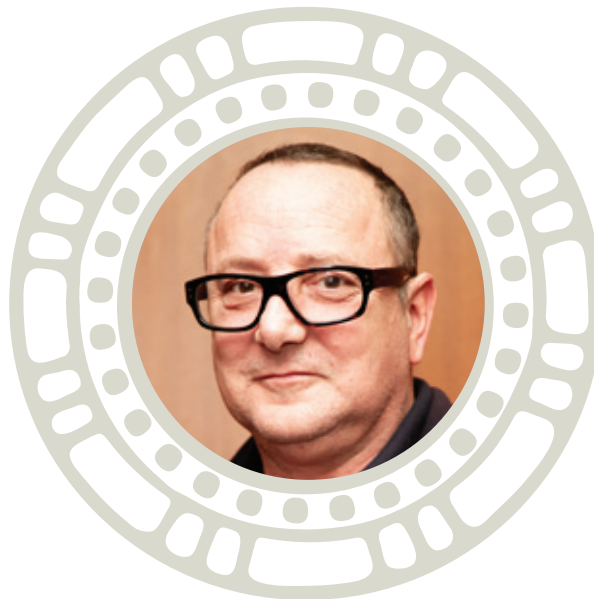
# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Our Board of Directors govern the strategic direction of VACCA; ensuring compliance with reporting bodies, responding to community expectations, and ensuring excellence in service delivery.**



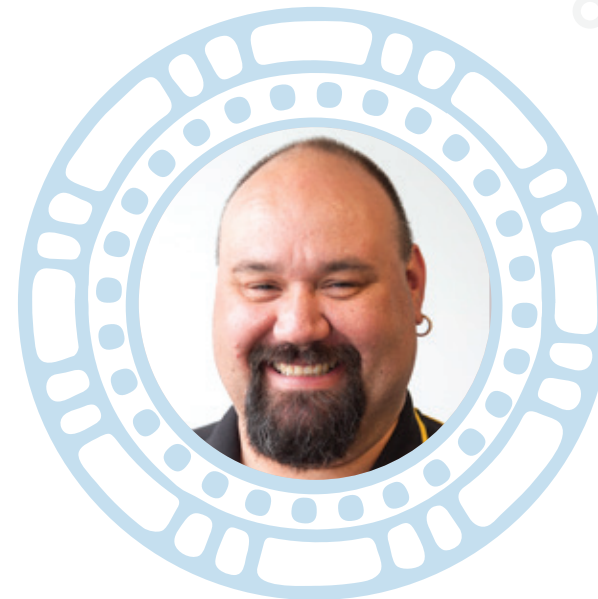
**James Atkinson – Chairperson  
Yorta Yorta / Bangerang**

James is the CEO of the Aboriginal Community Elders Service (ACES) in Melbourne. He is also the former CEO of the Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative. James has held management roles across the public sector in Education, from early childhood, schools, TAFE and higher education in the fields of policy development, stakeholder and project management. With a great deal of organisational experience, having served on Boards at a state and national level, James was one of the founding members of the first Victorian Aboriginal Youth Advisory Committee and a participant in the Koorie Leadership Program, and has been on VACCA's board for over 18 years.



**Rodney Monohan – Vice Chairperson  
Taungurung**

Rod was formerly the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer with the Northcote Police Complex. Previously an employee at VACCA for over 12 years, Rod was instrumental in implementing the Lakidjeka ACSASS program across the state. Rod has also worked at VALS and ACES and has served as a Board Member of several Aboriginal organisations including VACSAL, AALI and is the previous Chair of the Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.



**Jason King – Treasurer  
Gunditjmara**

Jason has worked in the Aboriginal health and affairs sector for over 20 years. He is the former CEO of the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative (GEGAC), Aboriginal health and welfare service in Bairnsdale and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service in Fitzroy. Jason was the first Manager of the Aboriginal Water Program at the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning and is now the Principle Aboriginal Adviser to the Head of Resources within the Department of Jobs Precinct and Regions. Jason has previously worked at VACCA in the Lakidjeka program and has been active on the VACCA board for four years.





**Margaret Atkinson – Secretary**  
**Yorta Yorta / Taungurung / Wurundjeri**

Aunty Marg is a Wurreeker Broker with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI). Previously Aunty Margaret worked at the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative and was an employee at VACCA for over nine years. Aunty Marg has been an active VACCA Board Member for nine years and has completed Governance Training.



**Jason Kanoa – Director**  
**Gunditjmara / Bunitj**

Jason is the CEO at the Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation. Prior to this Jason was employed as CEO of the Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-operative. Jason was previously the Senior Project Officer, Indigenous Family Violence, at the Department of Health and Human Services and with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) as the Koorie Caucus Executive Officer and has been on the VACCA board for eight years.



**Deidre King – Director**  
**Gunditjmara**

Aunty Deirdre is the former CEO of the Aboriginal Community Elders Services (ACES). Prior to this, Aunty Deidre worked at the Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) for 17 years and at VACCA. Aunty Deidre has also served as a Board Member of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL) and Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services and has been an active VACCA Board Member for continuously for five years and was previously on our board for 14 consecutive years.

# OUR VISION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination – Live, Experience and Be.

# OUR PURPOSE

Supporting culturally strong, safe and thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

# OUR PRINCIPLES



## Self-determination

We believe in the fundamental right of self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We are committed to strengthening understanding and empowerment in the exercise of rights and discharge of associated obligations as First Peoples.



## Respect

We pay respect to the individual and collective cultural rights, obligations and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our operations, management and in the delivery of our service. We show respect to each other, our partners and the community we serve.



## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural observance

We believe that compliance with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols, cultural practice and ceremony is integral in helping us achieve successful outcomes for our community and especially for our children and young people.



## Best interests of the Child

Our children and young people have the right to be heard, to be nurtured and safe; to optimal life opportunities (education, healthcare and development of social and emotional wellbeing); to their identity and connection to their community and to be with their own families.



## Excellence

We believe that the community we service expects and is entitled to a high quality and professional service that is culturally embedded.



## Healing and empowerment

We use a strengths-based approach and aim to provide empowering, healing services to repair damage done to the Stolen Generations and the community by policies of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and disenfranchisement of our community.





# VACCA'S CULTURAL THERAPEUTIC WAYS

For the past two years, VACCA has been undertaking a major piece of work that builds upon the Aboriginal wisdom within our organisation to determine the outcomes that are important to our Aboriginal Community. This will position us to respond to sector changes by developing an Aboriginal led evidence base of the work that we do, whilst also focusing on staff wellbeing and Aboriginal leadership.

Cultural Therapeutic Ways is the intersection of self-determination and trauma informed theories with culture. It guides our approach to practice, bringing together existing cultural knowledge with new evaluation frameworks and technical systems to articulate a practice model that heals, protects and connects. We are using our knowledge as a base to evaluate our practice, acknowledging different Community needs and strengths across the State.

Cultural Therapeutic Ways is being implemented across our whole organisation, from the Board to Case Managers, to Reception and Human Resources. Our programs and teams are contributing to foundational pieces of work and looking at how they will implement Cultural Therapeutic Ways into their practice, identifying strengths in current practice and developing implementation plans.

The key components that we are developing include a Model of Care, a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, an Outcomes Framework, and a custom built database to track how programs are working towards self-determined goals.

For the families and children who we work with, this means delivering services that meet their needs and working towards outcomes that are important to them with consistent, flexible practice that supports people to make decisions that affect their own lives.

For our staff, this will ensure that VACCA is a more inclusive workplace by improving Aboriginal staff wellbeing, promoting Aboriginal leadership, and supporting non-Aboriginal staff to fulfil the obligations associated with working in an ACCO.

For our organisation, this means advocating for Aboriginal ways of doing business so that we can serve the needs of Community and also respond to funding demands with evidence of what Aboriginal people need and what we know works best.

This is an ambitious undertaking, setting a new precedent state-wide and nationally developing an evidence base of how to best support our Aboriginal Community. It is a critical part of our journey of self-determination, ensuring that VACCA continues to operate in a culturally specific, sustainable way. It cements our point of difference amongst mainstream child and family welfare service providers, acting as a source of strength for our Community members, our staff, other ACCOs and our sector more broadly.

# OUR PERFORMANCE

**This year has brought us many challenges as a community and as an organisation, and despite the adversity, we have successfully transitioned many of our programs to an online format and made headway in supporting community in ways never seen before.**

VACCA has risen to the challenges and impacts with a timely response to our people impacted by the Victorian Bushfires and COVID-19 with innovative responses in crisis outreach and in delivering direct and remote services and supports.

We continue to meet our core responsibility to our clients and to Aboriginal children, families and young people and community across Victoria and are looking to harness our innovations in service delivery into the future. We have utilised our social media channels and technology to extend our reach in delivering family support programs, community engagement, community events and a suite of education programs and resources.

Under lockdown restrictions, we identified the exacerbation of some existing, and emergence of new challenges for the Aboriginal children, young people and families we support in areas of mental health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB), Child Protection, family violence, justice, education, housing stress and homelessness and social security payments. We believe that when responding to both the new and existing challenges, policy and program approaches, governance and funding arrangements across the sector must be grounded in the principle of self-determination.

In addition to navigating organisational change, this year we have successfully implemented the Rainbow Tick Standards providing a more inclusive and safe service for LGBTIQ+ community members, staff, clients, children and young people.

Our internal audit approach has been redeveloped and audits were completed virtually. We have continued the implementation of Child Safe Standards and ongoing review of program structures. New processes were also put in place to ensure effective and timely response to Covid-19. There was a review of the CQI structure and responsibilities, along with additional work and implementation of the Child Safe Standards.

As an organisation we have shown proactive leadership as we responded to the unfolding crises across the state, and broader country. Clients received support with minimal disruption as we transitioned to online programs and service delivery. Despite the challenges, of 2019-2020, we came together collaboratively in multi-agency efforts to support each other in our common goal of supporting community.











# PREPARING AND PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY

This year we have seen crisis and trauma affect our community on multiple fronts. With bushfires sweeping the state, and country, closely followed by a global pandemic, our community have endured a lot. We have seen people lose their homes and their incomes, we have seen the devastating effects of this loss take its toll mentally and physically on those affected and their families, with appropriate support often erratic and inconsistent. Systemic racism within the mainstream service network has also been reported by those affected by these devastating events. We then experienced lockdowns during COVID-19 further heightening people's need for connection and support.

As an organisation we worked with other Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO's) and mainstream service providers to support meaningful and healing outcomes for clients. We worked directly with community, adapting our service provision and support so we could tailor services to meet our client's individual needs. Our staff were on the frontline visiting clients and experienced firsthand clients situations, so as to provide tailored, realistic support interventions. We were able to follow through with services, so needs were adequately addressed, and clients had the opportunity to own their recovery process.

VACCA advocated strongly alongside ACCOs and across sectors with mainstream and government departments within networks and community, maintaining a cultural lens that observed, respected, and acknowledged local protocols.

# BUSHFIRE DISASTER RELIEF

We are always quick to support our mob, and with Victoria being impacted by devastating bushfires, we came together to form strong working relationships with other ACCOs across the state, particularly in the Ovens Murray and Gippsland regions, to facilitate strong community supports for our mob during this traumatic time.

The Victorian Bushfires Case Support Program was announced by the Victorian Government in partnership with Commonwealth-state Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. VACCA and Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative (GEGAC) joined forces, working together in response to the government's emergency and recovery support service partnership. The program was coordinated by Windermere, and specifically dedicated to supporting Aboriginal people impacted by the bushfires.

The bushfires created large-scale displacement of Aboriginal communities; particularly in regional Victoria and in response VACCA quickly reallocated eight dedicated caseworkers to work directly with community across the state for twelve months. With a dedicated staff member located in each of our Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western metro offices, and four dedicated staff in our Wangaratta office, they were able to support individuals and families affected by the fires to access and engage with required supports, provide case management and financial assistance.

Through the program, caseworkers helped link community members with vital supports such as information and advice, mental health support and financial counselling. They continue to help with practical matters such as filling out paperwork, accessing grants and financial claims, and navigating services available through local council, state and commonwealth governments. They also supported local services as required and worked collaboratively with GEGAC and Moogji to ensure clients were to have some face to face contact with supports and assistance from us in delivering emergency relief needs.

Various areas of the organisation, and broader community organisations have come together to provide wrap around services to our community during this time. VACCA was involved in training sessions facilitated by Financial Counselling Victoria, sharing our experience with the available supports, inadequacies, issues and remedial interventions for community. This was vital to helping attendees gain perspective on broader situational awareness. The training team have been developing Cultural Awareness and Trauma Training for the Bushfire Recovery Service providers that was delivered online later in 2020. VACCA has also maintained regular catch ups with GEGAC and Moogji to continue to support community.

In Ovens Murray, we will continue working towards providing resources to bushfire affected community through the Bushfire Hubs, as well as working with the healing team to develop a Yarning up on Trauma sessions.

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund and the Bushfire Brokerage are key in transforming bushfire victims' lives for the better. Given their trauma on so many levels, frequent and consistent outreach to each client has already borne significantly positive outcomes. Our services adapted to accommodate the facilitation of support services such as brokerages during this time. As a result, client needs such as replacement of damaged goods and equipment were being gradually met, with gratitude from our clients being a significant motivator for staff.



# COVID-19 RESPONSE

78,000  
wipes

540 litres of  
hand sanitiser

600 meals from  
Charcoal Lane  
were delivered to  
community members

1574 outreach  
calls to current  
and past clients

123 clients referred  
to other VACCA  
programs

279 Family violence  
referrals in May  
and June

Distributed over  
6,000 reusable face  
masks and thousands  
of disposable face  
masks to vulnerable  
community members

1000+ Coles vouchers  
and grocery boxes  
were delivered to  
community members  
and clients

144 outreach calls  
resulting in  
re-engagement with  
family violence  
services



From early 2020, as the pandemic in Australia unfolded it was important to us as an ACCO to support and maintain community connections during this time of change and need. As we transitioned to new ways of working and living, we never stopped visiting our most at-risk community members. We experienced an escalation in emergency relief, and supported residents that were experiencing a hard lockdown in residential towers in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

With staff safety also a priority during this time, our workforce adjusted to working from home. As VACCA undertook a digital transformation, the way we deliver services has changed forever. Within a short time over 182 laptops were distributed to our staff to enable working from home, 266 phones and internet data connections enabled. VACCA's IT security was upgraded to ensure all client data remained secure during this transition. Rapid response and learnings in collaborative technologies and new client tools created a whole new way of operating and connecting with clients and community.

As well as the supports we were providing to community and clients, our managers and staff were coping with extraordinary levels of disruption in their own lives, with children learning from home, balancing work and family commitments, and in many cases additional parent and carer responsibilities. To honour our commitment to staff wellbeing and provide support we introduced weekly online team meetings, staff check ins, and through the wellbeing committee frequent check ins with new staff members. Additional support to staff was made available from our clinical Aboriginal Healing Team. The development of a wellbeing plan and the establishment of wellbeing representatives helped to launch a raft of new wellbeing resources and activities, such as virtual team trivia, online coffees, mindfulness sessions to name a few.

The urgent need for timely information and communications during the pandemic resulted in new governance structures and communications. Our weekly online COVID-19 communique becoming the 'single source of truth' for all things COVID-19 related. It became a relied upon source of weekly information including crucial government announcements and community developments. It was also a great platform for our staff to connect to each other through the inclusion of wellbeing advice and resources. As the months unfolded, staff began to share coping mechanisms for lockdown. We received images of staff running - collectively walking some 900km during lockdown, dubbed COVID Capers and Run-Rona respectively.

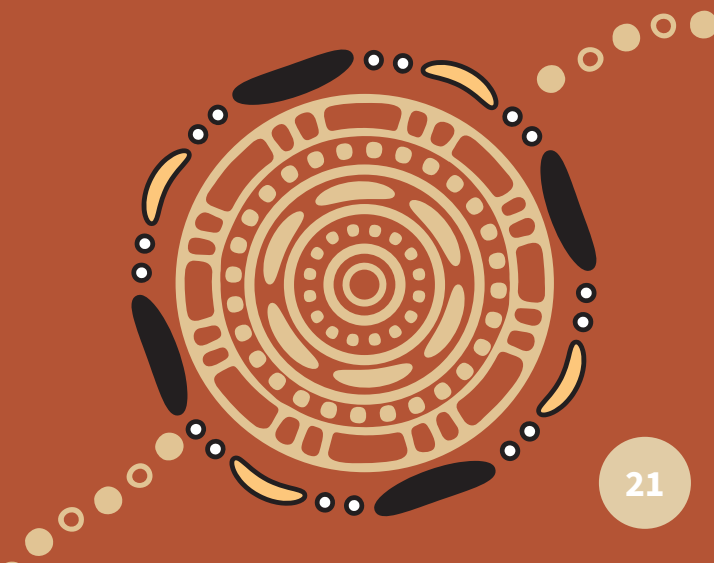
The impacts of COVID-19 has helped us to see areas we could improve upon and prompted an agile and transformative response to our service delivery. We were responsive particularly in high pressure areas such as child protection and family violence and in addressing the complexities of service needs during a state-wide lockdown. The unprecedented nature of 2019 and 2020 has prompted us to review our service delivery model more broadly, with a responsive client-centred approach at the forefront. One thing that remains the same – our clients and community are the centre of everything we do.

While lockdown restrictions meant that our usual group programs and activities were on hold, our essential services visits continued for our most vulnerable children, families and community members, even during Stage 4 lockdown. The guidelines around physical distancing, hygiene and personal protective equipment intensified with masks, gloves, goggles, sanitiser and wipes all becoming part of our caseworkers' workplace and home visit routine. Calls and online meetings were initiated to provide reassurance and support, ensuring we were on hand should circumstances change.

Our staff paused, re-grouped and developed a multitude of alternative approaches to meet core client and program responsibilities, supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of families and community members in their homes. Our social media channels became a platform for community connection, with events and activities flourishing. Educational packs, wellbeing supports, and other goodies were dropped off for children, young people and Elders, and virtual groups were launched to support these cohorts.

Together, VACCA and the community have assisted through the delivery of meals and groceries to people's front door, provided emergency relief vouchers for those doing it tough, and staff kept in regular contact with community and encouraged others to do the same, so no-one in our community felt alone or abandoned, especially those living alone. These innovative ways of doing business will remain valued ways in which we support our community.

These learnings are pivotal to strengthening the organisational crisis preparation, response, emergency preparedness and recovery.





# NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME

The National Redress Scheme was created in response to recommendations by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The National Redress Scheme started on 1 July 2018 and will run for 10 years, providing support to people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse.

The Royal Commission listened to thousands of people describe the abuse they experienced as children in orphanages, children's homes, schools, churches, sporting clubs, hospitals, foster care, and other institutions and religious organisations. The Scheme acknowledges that many children were sexually abused in Australian institutions and holds these institutions accountable for this abuse. The Scheme also helps people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse gain access to counselling, a direct personal response, and a Redress payment.

VACCA believes all children have a right to not only feel, but to be safe and to live in an environment that is free from abuse, neglect and violence. VACCA acknowledges the harm done to people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse. We support the establishment of the National Redress Scheme and its work to provide redress including financial payment, access to counselling and if sought, an apology for people who suffered institutional child sexual abuse. VACCA has joined the National Redress Scheme to ensure that any person who may have suffered any form of sexual abuse while in VACCA's care can seek redress through a fair, transparent and independent process.

# NGARRA JARRA NOUN

Ngarra Jarra Noun, means to *remedy or heal* in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri People. Since its commencement in July 2018, the program has supported many Aboriginal survivors of institutional child sexual abuse access redress through the National Redress Scheme (a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse). This has been done through supporting clients in taking the National Redress Scheme Journey and assisting them with completing an application for redress and being there every step of the way. In addition to holistic, trauma-informed and culturally grounded support and healing, VACCA continually advocate for improved access to justice and healing for survivors.

Clients can be anyone who turns 18 years of age by 2027 and was sexually abused as a child in institutions. Institutions include out-of-home care (including kinship care and respite care), and includes youth justice, schools, churches, missions, sports clubs, childcare centres and other institutions. Many of our clients are Stolen Generations who were abused in children's homes and foster care.

In November 2019, we held a community forum to provide information for community members and key service providers about the program, where our CEO Muriel Bamblett announced that VACCA will be joining the National Redress Scheme showing our commitment to past clients in being able to access justice. The program was featured on NITV's The Point during reconciliation week in 2020, along with an accompanying article where Muriel spoke of the importance of accessing redress and cultural healing.

We are passionate about making sure community know about the National Redress Scheme and the support our team can provide so that no Aboriginal survivor of institutional child sexual abuse misses out on accessing redress; their right to justice. With the upheaval during this year, we successfully transitioned to an online cultural healing model. There were weekly online yarning circles, a safe place for survivors to connect and share. To overcome any accessibility issues, the team provided iPads where needed, and IT assistance, along with a wrap around support system of approach with check ins and care packages. This year has had many highlights for Ngarra Jarra Noun, with several successful determinations of redress for clients, along with supporting them through successful civil litigation claims.

**"We no longer feel we have to be ashamed or hide."**

**"I'm feeling empowered to teach my children about past history to ensure it never happens again."**



**"Knowing culture is powerful, it helps you know your strength."**

**"Each time I have told my story, it heals me and makes me stronger."**



**"My mob is telling their story and it makes me feel good."**

**"Because I have no extended family, I feel connected to this mob in a spiritual sense."**

**"It is so much better to heal together. It is hard to heal in isolation."**



# SUICIDE PREVENTION

The year has impacted many so differently. Sadly, during this time, we have lost community members to suicide, which has had an impact on us all – and has us asking “what more can we do?”

Our team at VACCA’s Gippsland office together with support from the local community created a powerful video; We are Gippslanders - We are strong, in response to a suicide which had a deep impact on the community.

The clip was designed to help those saddened by losses and raise awareness around suicide prevention, and features Elders, VACCA staff and local community. In the clip, which has now been viewed by over 12,000 people, the group remind us that when things are really tough and you can’t see a way forward, there is always someone you can turn to — Aunts, Uncles, cousins, your friends and family and of course support services at VACCA. These messages of hope also urge our community to seek help and support. There is no shame in asking for help and there are community and professionals that can walk alongside.

VACCA’s approach will always be community focused in times of grief and hardship. We know we need to be there to support family and community on an ongoing basis. It is clear that further support is needed, particularly around early intervention and prevention work with our young people. We will also continue to advocate for culturally safe mental health services, greater education and funding.





# HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

This year, we continued to provide a number of holistic, wrap around and culturally appropriate housing and homelessness support services, as well as crisis support and case management services to Aboriginal peoples who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. These include Kurnai Youth Homelessness Program, Orana Gunyah and Wilam Support Service.

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 our homelessness programs experienced increased pressures and demand. We responded with innovative responses in crisis outreach and in delivering direct and remote services and supports. We know that community members are waiting for longer periods for transitional to permanent accommodation, so the need for prevention and early intervention is critical for VACCA's services.

Our team were committed to managing the increase in demand, with children learning from home and lockdown impacting mental health and wellbeing, we focused on regular wellbeing checks and provided vouchers to clients who needed the support.

We have found that when clients have access to safe and stable housing and feel supported through additional wrap around services, they can stabilise employment, health and wellbeing. Despite a challenging year, we have seen positive outcomes for clients in our homelessness programs and have assisted many to attain permanent public housing.

## CASE STUDY: Wilam Support Service

Beverley, a Yorta Yorta woman self-referred to our Wilam Support program in 2019 when she relocated from regional Victoria. As she had no stable accommodation, her teenage son initially stayed in regional Victoria with his grandparents.

Beverley sought assistance with finding stable and affordable housing for her family and accessing public housing. Her only option in the meantime was couch surfing.

Our Wilam Support Service staff member worked with Beverley to update all her public housing applications and placed her on the appropriate housing priority waitlists.

Beverley was couch surfing for a period of 18 months. During this time both Beverley and her son faced many challenges, such as; a decline in mental health, relationship breakdowns and for Beverley's teenage son, increased involvement with the justice system.

During the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, they experienced further issues and a breakdown with the couch surfing arrangements. Our staff were able to advocate for access to emergency accommodation through Haven Home Safe agency. Beverley and her son were supported by our services while adapting to living in a hotel room for a short period.

By mid-2020, Beverley received a call with the great news that she was successful in gaining a transitional property, followed by an offer to enter a public house in her preferred suburb soon after. With both mother and son now settled they were able to start rebuilding their relationship and establish a routine while having safe and stable accommodation.



# CONNECTION THROUGH HEALING

Connection to culture, community and country is a fundamental healing element for our people. It is without doubt that we have so many programs and services centred around connection to these core elements for our young people, families, and broader community members because we know the powerful healing that can be supported through connection.

This year has seen so much change and work in the Treaty space, with some key milestones leading to a truth-telling process, where the historic wrongs and injustices for our community will be formally recognised.

The transition of care of Aboriginal children from mainstream organisations to Aboriginal community organisations has been a large area of work this year and will continue to be so. We have also shifted many of our support services such as family violence services to an online service offering, enabling community members to access assistance during lockdown.

Deadly Story was also a great source of connection for our young people during lockdown, where they were able to access videos and resources to connect to culture during isolating times.

# TREATY

This year has marked significant steps in the journey towards treaty. We have seen the establishment of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and its progress against key work areas, enabling it to be negotiation ready.

In November 2019, 31 members were elected to the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria which is the voice for Victorian Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities in establishing a fair and just treaty process with the State of Victoria.

Our CEO, Muriel Bamblett was elected as an Assembly Member for the Metropolitan region. In the lead up to Assembly election, VACCA supported community and staff engagement by facilitating yarning circles and providing a range of resources and information guides.

This year the Assembly has led and continues to lead considerable community engagement to inform each aspect of the treaty process. In doing this, the Assembly has forged strong relationships with supporters in Victoria, nationally and internationally.

In June 2020, Assembly members agreed that there cannot be Treaty without truth and justice and successfully called on the Victorian Government to support a truth-telling process. A truth and justice process will formally recognise historic wrongs and address ongoing injustices for Aboriginal communities in Victoria.

The Assembly has established several sub-committees each responsible for leading an aspect of the treaty process. These include truth-telling, Elder's Voice, Treaty Negotiation Framework, Self-Determination Fund and Cultural Governance. Aunty Muriel is a member of each of these and has provided significant input into the Assembly's work and discussions.

To help inform staff and community understanding of the treaty process, VACCA has shared information from the First People's Assembly across VACCA's social media channels and included a treaty update section in our Message Stick staff newsletter. We will continue to encourage staff and community to be engaged and informed throughout every step of this historic process.





# TRANSITIONING ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

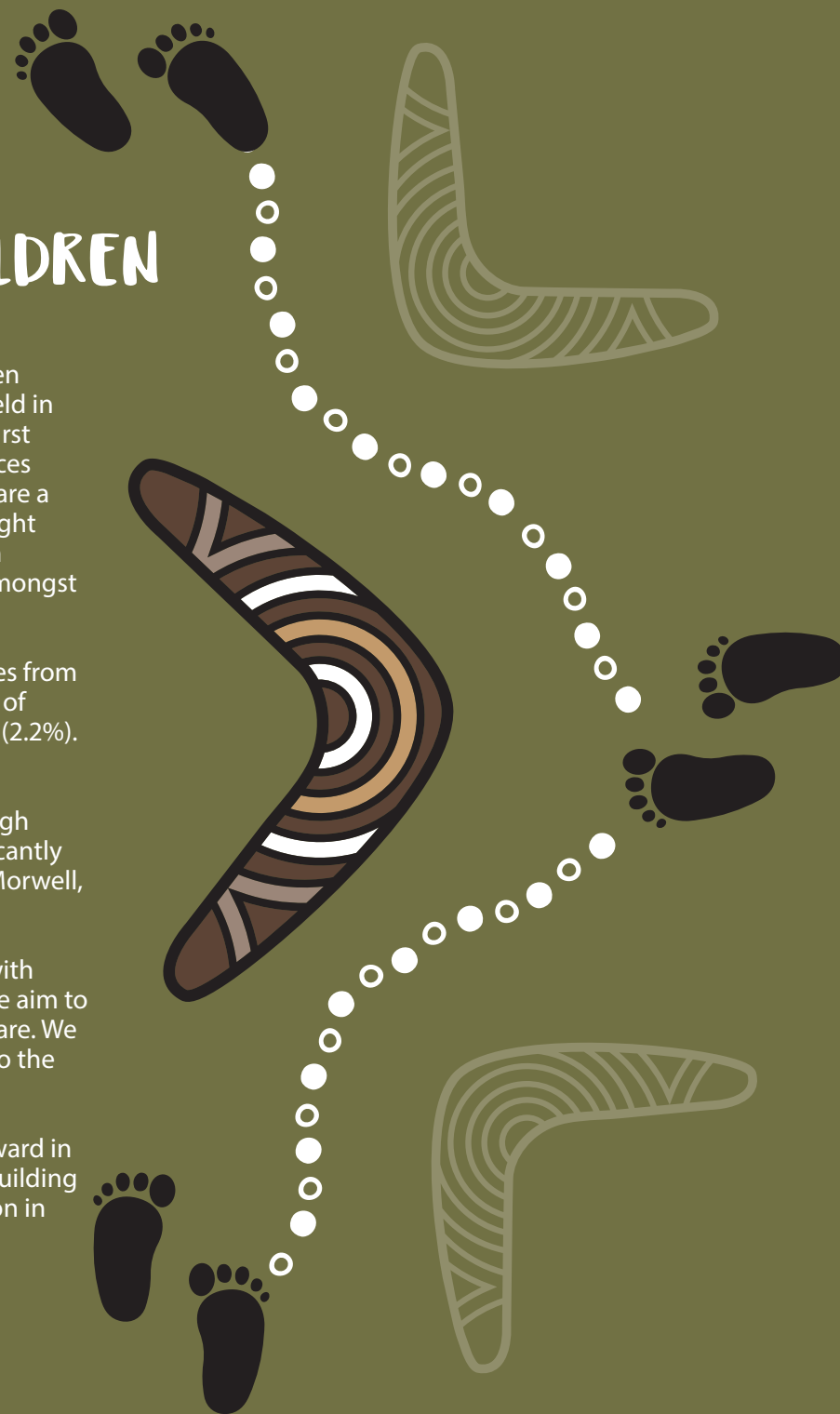
The Victorian government's commitment to the Transitioning Aboriginal Children (TAC) was the result of strong advocacy by the ACCOs. This commitment is upheld in Wungurilwil Gapgapduir the Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement; the first tripartite agreement between the Aboriginal community, child and family services sector and the Victorian Government. The agreement and strategic action plan are a generational marker of change in our long journey for justice, particularly our right to our children. It embodies our aspirations for our children, based on the seven principles, including self-determination, culture and community, and respect amongst others.

The mid-term evaluation by Social Policy found that the actual reunification rates from 2017-2019 from an indicative sample of 100 children, that the reunification rate of ACCOs for TAC was higher (5%) than the reunification rate for mainstream CSOs (2.2%).

Wungurilwil Gapgapduir commits to transferring the care, case management and decision making to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. Through embedding the main objectives of the agreement, we have been able to significantly increase our footprint throughout the state and establish out-of-home care in Morwell, and Ovens Murray, with each region developing plans to assist in the process.

A key challenge we have faced this year has been transferring children placed with mainstream community services organisations to VACCA. In the coming year we aim to commence transitions of Aboriginal young people and children in residential care. We are currently developing a new model of residential care to tailor the program to the needs of Aboriginal young people and children.

Wungurilwil Gapgapduir is a key platform that we need to use, to propel us forward in our urgent work to address the high rates of our children in care, and towards building and strengthening our families and communities so that we end the intervention in their lives.







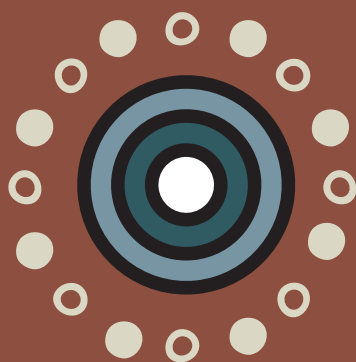
## FAMILY VIOLENCE

This year has seen many changes and additions to our family violence services and programs. The 'Strengthening cultural safety in mainstream family violence organisations' project has grown this year with 80 mainstream organisations currently engaged, and most of those completing both the self-assessment and action plan process as they embed cultural safety in all areas of governance, systems and operations.

Over 500 staff from mainstream organisations have participated in cultural reflective conversation, exploring an intersectional values-based lens, as they strive to embed mechanisms for Aboriginal self-determination within their organisations. Cultural safety is everyone's business and we walk alongside mainstream organisations to move past practices and attitudes from a place of misinformation, denial and benevolence, to a place of true understanding and shared learning. We have created a set of training packages to complement and support this work being embedded at all levels of an organisation.

Since developing a COVID-19 response plan, the Family Violence Initiatives Team has been collecting monthly data to look at the impacts on delivery of family violence services for community members during this difficult time. The data provides a snapshot of the work being undertaken. The team will continue to collect this data to help identify gaps and demonstrate the themes and impacts of family violence facing Aboriginal women, children, men and adolescents during the pandemic. We have seen a surge in outreach calls as staff connect with past and current clients and anticipate an increase in demand for services as lockdown measures are eased in metropolitan Melbourne.

Family Safety Victoria have also held operational forums with ACCOs from which VACCA has had practice forums with Family Safety Victoria senior staff.



# MARAM

The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), previously known as the Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF) aims to increase the safety and wellbeing of Victorians through services that identify, assess and manage family violence risk. MARAM was developed to address the issues and gaps that were identified by the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Coronial Inquest into the death of Luke Geoffrey Batty and the 2016 Monash Review of the framework.

Over the last year we have continued to embed and implement the MARAM framework throughout the organisation making significant achievements in the alignment process. Internally, our MARAM Advisory Working Group created smaller focus groups to facilitate spaces where further development and consultation can occur. We created culturally inclusive and safe resources and tools for both VACCA practitioners and staff, along with the families and communities that we work alongside and support, who are impacted by family violence.

Earlier in the year VACCA held a closed information sharing training session facilitated by Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). As we transitioned to working in a COVID safe way, we co-facilitated multiple MARAM webinar training sessions with the Centre For Excellence in Child and Family Welfare. By adapting these sessions to an online environment, we were able to embed a deeper cultural lens and include VACCA's own MARAM risk and safety screening, assessment and management tools.

As our programs shifted to online delivery, the Crisis Family Violence tools we developed continued to be utilised, ensuring ongoing support for families and community. Furthermore, VACCA shared these resources with other ACCOs and continues to actively engage with the sector working groups.



# YOUNG FULLAS BUILDING SAFE AND STRONG FUTURES PROGRAM

Young Fullas Building Safe and Strong Futures Program, supports Aboriginal children and young people who are at risk or have been affected by family violence and are in out-of-home care, involved with child protection or youth justice. This year the program delivered its second Cultural Connections and Healthy Respectful Relationships Camp at YMCA Anglesea. This camp specifically focused Cultural Connections and Healthy Respectful Relationships. Young Aboriginal girls aged from 12 – 17 years of age across the north metro region attended the camp. An Aboriginal Elder, artist and empowerment speaker guided the youth through cultural workshops, group activities and campfire Yarns.

Due to COVID-19 two cultural camps were rescheduled, becoming successful Virtual Yarning Circles in the interim. These virtual meetings were delivered as a reflection session reminding the girls of their experiences and exploring the knowledge they gained from the previous camp and how that has assisted their personal growth and confidence.

The girls were sent basket weaving kits in the mail, and the online workshops were received with overwhelming positive feedback.

Overall, the program has six key activities assisting in the prevention of family violence and targeting Aboriginal children and young people aged between 10-17 years who are at risk of violence, exposed to violence or in violent relationships and are from out-of-home care, with child protection or youth justice involvement, connected through our family services program and / or from the local Northern Aboriginal Community.





# RETURN TO COUNTRY

Our Return to Country programs are a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practice and an integral part of connecting children and young people in out-of-home care to their home and Country.

Return to Country programs recognise the impact of disconnection to identity, health and wellbeing – and are about knowing who you are, where you come from and what this means.

Return to Country programs incorporate people, land, water, language, kinship systems, lore, knowledge, beliefs and spirituality. It is about shared history and shared memories, healing and resilience, survival and pride.

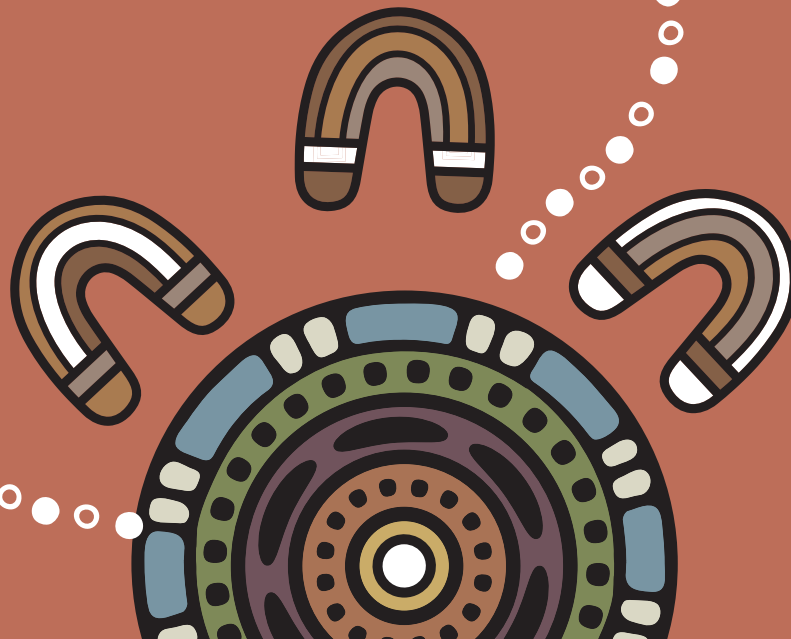
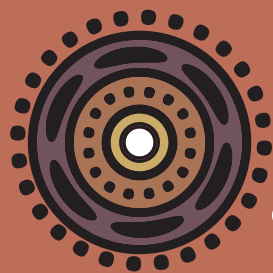
Children and young people are provided the opportunity to travel to their home Country to meet Elders, visit sacred sites, share knowledge and learnings about songs, stories, art, places, plants, animals and natural resources. It helps create culturally strong and empowered children, young people and families.

This year we supported Return to Country trips across several regions before the program was paused in some regions due to the 2019/20 Bushfires and then again in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. With the support of the major grant from Gandel Philanthropy, 11 children and young people from our Eastern region completed a Return to Country and there are 16 children and young people in the South who have either completed or due to complete a Return to Country.

There were an additional 10 children and young people in the Eastern region who completed a Return to Country with siblings and family members in out-of-home care. All children in the program were either in out-of-home care or at risk of entering out-of-home care.

The trips allow the children and young people to meet extended family, visit and attend community areas, meet with cultural advisors, investigate family links or meet family members, share experiences and create lifelong memories. It's an invaluable experience that connects the child and young people to country and culture.

VACCA would like to thank and acknowledge Gandel Philanthropy for their commitment to self-determination and funding our Return to Country program.





# DEADLY STORY

Deadly Story is a cultural information website to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care to connect with their country, their communities and their culture and identity. Deadly story, available via [deadlystory.com](https://deadlystory.com), is the result of a partnership between VACCA, SNAICC, The Koorie Heritage Trust, the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners Corporation and Brightlabs, in conjunction with the Department of Health & Human Services.

This year we focussed on growing our online community and offering even more content online to support our community during the challenges of COVID-19 lockdown.

Connected  
community with  
online events  
across the country  
through the Events  
page

Created COVID-19  
support portal with  
resources and activities  
for young mob. Thank  
you to artists from  
ACCOs across the state  
who shared their own  
resources

A 51% increase in  
Deadly Story's Newsletter  
subscriptions. With over  
1,700 subscribers each  
month!

We have over  
3,600 followers on  
the Deadly Story  
Instagram page

In June 2020,  
Deadly Story website  
have over 61,500  
unique page views, in  
comparison to January  
when there were 14,990





# CULTURAL THERAPEUTIC WAYS

## Child and Family Services Yinga Yarning: Information Gathering Tool

As we implement Cultural Therapeutic Ways, we are reflecting on the ways that we use research, practice wisdom and client preference to enhance our practice, and where we need to apply a stronger Aboriginal lens to existing practice tools that we use. The Child and Family Services reform provided us such an opportunity to focus on the way that we connect with families; and identified some key areas that needed to be redeveloped so that we can better understand families and support them to define their own journey within programs.

The Cultural Therapeutic Ways team followed a co-design process with a group of dedicated staff across our Child and Family Services programs to document practitioner knowledge and best practice. Staff led a process of developing new ways that we can gather information from the families that we work with, and together develop their own 'Footsteps to our Future' plan to work towards for their family.

The information gathering process uses Yinga<sup>1</sup> - a visual representation of a possum skin cloak with six connections – family, community, Country, mind and emotions, body and spirituality. These connections are based on the Aboriginal determinants of health and wellbeing, and provide a guide for staff to yarn with families and hear about their strengths and needs. People identify the goals that they would like support with to make changes and achieve connect, protect and heal outcomes in their lives.



<sup>1</sup> Yinga designed by artist Emma Bamblett  
(Wemba Wemba, Gunditjmara, Ngadjonji and Taungurung connections)  
and means "This Way" in Wemba Wemba.



## VACCA's Outcomes Framework

VACCA's Outcome Framework is a key component of our Model of Care which is currently in development. As part of this process, we have recently finished a major part of work developing our Community Outcomes. This work is groundbreaking in that it allows us to self-determine the outcomes that are important to Aboriginal people, and help us to define what makes VACCA different.

Our Community Outcomes apply to program practice and have been developed through best research of the cultural determinants of health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, and our practice wisdom. They set the standard of what children, families, Community and carers can expect from a VACCA service.

The Community Outcomes are grouped to reflect 3 domains: Heal, Protect and Connect:

- Heal identifies wellbeing and development in relation to cultural identity, health, and growth, social emotional and behavioural and education and learning.
- Protect outlines safety – physical, emotional, and cultural safety as well as housing and environmental safety.
- Connect considers connection to caregiver, family, land, culture, school, and friends to describe stability.

The development of our Community Outcomes is the result of two year's work with so many staff generously sharing their time and expertise so that we can develop a way to measure what we do, and why we do it. We would also like to acknowledge the work of Dr Graham Gee and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) as part of this long journey.

The next phase of this work is to develop the other component of our Outcomes Framework, our Organisational Outcomes. These will identify the outcomes that VACCA prioritises in our workplace to support staff wellbeing, and Aboriginal leadership. They will apply across the organisation.

Our Outcomes Framework strengthens our voice so that we can articulate Aboriginal ways of doing business. This supports our sustainability in a culturally appropriate way, ensuring that we can be better heard in the domains of evaluation, policy development, program design, and funding allocations.

## New Case Management Database

A key support to the implementation of Cultural Therapeutic Ways is the design of our own electronic case management database. This significant project will require work with program staff to custom build a database to manage client information across more than 70 VACCA programs.

We have focused our efforts on building a system based on what our staff need, with extensive consultation and training already taken place with 150 staff over seven programs. We have embedded culturally specific information guided by Cultural Therapeutic Ways, as well as our Outcomes Framework. This will support staff more effectively in the area of case management, easing the load of meeting funding requirements to our funders, as well as ensuring that we monitor and evaluate program outcomes that meet the needs of Community.

Maintaining control and ownership of our data is another critical step in our journey of self-determination. It ultimately enables us to build an evidence base of our program and practice, and generate data on what is important to Aboriginal people.





## ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S HEALING TEAM

Aboriginal Children's Healing Team (The ACHT) works with children and young people from 0-18 and their families and carers, although during COVID-19 this expanded from Aboriginal children who are clients of VACCA's out-of-home care programs to servicing all teams working with children 0-18 years of age. The work of the team is trauma sensitive, relational, developmentally informed and privileges culture as central to healing.

We know that culture is healing, and it is through connection to culture, community, Country and kin that children grow strong in their identity. This is a powerful factor in interrupting intergenerational trauma, and in embedding self-determination for children and young people.

The past year has seen the development of multidisciplinary teams, enabling us to expand our expertise with the addition of mental health social workers, art therapists, mental health occupational therapy and speech therapy. We have also established a partnership with the Royal Children's Hospital Wadja Clinic and a Pediatrician also works with the team one day a week.

The team also deliver training support for VACCA staff, to further develop their child focused trauma informed practice, group reflective practice and multidisciplinary team consultation to staff and teams working with children, whilst also delivering direct work with children and their significant adults, professionals, family and carers.

The team continues to provide a range of services, specific brief consultations, Mental Health Social Emotional Wellbeing assessment and trauma informed advice to support care planning, with goal directed therapeutic healing plans for Aboriginal children, including a limited provision for brief healing therapy.

## CASE STUDY: Aboriginal Children Healing Team

Jack is eight years old and had lived with his great grandmother Mary since he was 18 months old. Jack's a proud Palawa young person, from Tasmania. He is well connected to his culture through his family, although sadly they have been significantly impacted by intergenerational trauma but remain strong and resilient. Jack was removed from his parents care as he was exposed to family violence, substance abuse, and his mum was struggling with her mental health. Mary was herself a survivor of the Stolen Generation and terrified of Jack having a similar experience.

Over time, Mary and other professionals observed Jack's behavior starting to deteriorate, he was becoming oppositional and aggressive particularly at school. Jack was also struggling to maintain friendships and couldn't focus in class which would make him frustrated and angry leading to physical outbursts of aggression.

It was through Jack's caseworker from our Kinship Program that he was referred to the Aboriginal Children Healing Team (AHT) for a therapeutic assessment. Through combining culturally attuned relationship work on a fortnightly basis, weekly carer support sessions, and a referral to mental health supports through Child and Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Jack and Mary were able to access culturally appropriate trauma informed support. The team also worked with Mary, supporting her in processing her own grief and loss.

Mary was able to implement many positive changes in her life so she could better support and care for Jack, who she loved dearly. Sadly, there came a point that Mary knew it was in Jack's best interests for him to be with

younger family members, with more energy and a positive male role model, and other children for him to play with. Jane, Jack's mother, is a strong Palawa woman, with connection to Gunai-Kurnai and Yorta Yorta clans, and could provide long term care for Jack. Mary still sees Jack every weekend, and made sure he knew how much she loved him.

It was an incredible loss at the beginning for both Mary and Jack, and the team provided support for both placements during the transition. AHT worked closely with Mary unpacking her feelings of grief and loss and at times difficulty in relinquishing Jack, whilst also creating a transition plan for Jack. The VACCA caseworker organised a Return to Country for Jack and his family, extending and strengthening the connections of all.

Jack loved living with other children, he became involved in sports with his 'cousins' and responded well to Jane nurturing boundaries and predictability in his life. He started to excel at school, was respectful in class and built solid friendships with his peers. Jack continues to be cared for within two loving homes, and still sees Mary every weekend. With his primary placement providing him with a strong connection to family and culture, he now has a sense of stability, security and predictability that gives him the foundation to thrive both at home and school whilst still keeping him immersed in his culture, fundamental to his ongoing wellbeing.

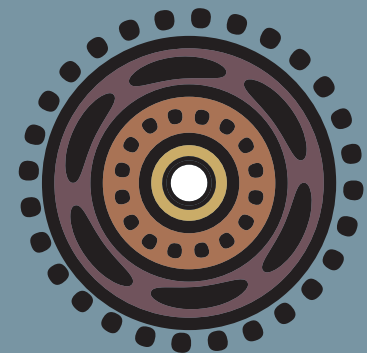


## SENSORY PROFILES

The Sensory Profile is a measure of children's responses to sensory events in daily life. It provides an overall picture of a child's sensory processing patterns. By developing culturally safe ways of conducting sensory assessments that are commonly done in mainstream organisations, it was essential the team took a collaborative approach. By seeking input from other Aboriginal colleagues in a range of teams and roles, along with offering children and families various ways to understand their sensory needs, we aim to reduce stress, increase relaxation and manage emotions leading to an improved quality of life.

Altering the way in which we work during COVID-19 meant that we focused on supporting carers with information, preparing tip sheets on mask wearing, COVID-19 testing and managing anxiety during the pandemic, along with providing child focused carer support and child therapy online. Sensory resources have been provided to children in VACCA's care to assist them with regulation and calming.

Staff have also been supported through expanded Group Reflective Practice and consultations and were able to access a wide range of online programs. Whilst acknowledging that we were able to successfully provide supports and resources in an online format, we also believe that face to face is just as important when possible again.







# NUGEL

Since 2017, Nugel has led the way in transforming the business of protecting children. Through section 18 of the Children Youth and Family's Act (2005), Nugel assumes full responsibility for a number of children who are on Children's Court Orders. Nugel means 'belong' in Woiwurrung language and represents a new model of child protection practice premised on self-determination and developing strong partnerships with Aboriginal families that includes them in decision making. Nugel's practice approach is to focus holistically on keeping children safe while attending to other aspects of their wellbeing including emotional, social, cultural, spiritual wellbeing. Nugel upholds that all the rights of the children are of critical importance. Nugel practices from the perspective that 'family is forever business' and the best way to achieve this is to wrap our service response around the family and to restore circles of care that have always been a part of the Aboriginal Way of protecting children.

This year Nugel established a third team, continuing to evolve its unique practice approach embedding Cultural Therapeutic Ways (CTW) in all aspects of practice. This has involved establishing a new 'Practice Lead' role as a form of cultural mentorship to the three Nugel teams, conducting regular reflective practice and cultural journey gatherings, and developing a Nugel Practice Framework based on the Cultural Therapeutic Ways YINGA possum skin cloak.

In September 2019, as part of the Victorian Protecting Children Awards, Nugel received the Minister's Award for Innovation in Protecting Children. In February, 2020, Nugel was also recognised as part of the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) for Victoria Leadership in the Public Sector Awards, winning an award in the category of Advancing Aboriginal Self-Determination being collectively given to VACCA, BDAC and the DHHS, North Division for the work on "Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care".

The first phase of the external evaluation of the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) and Transitioning Aboriginal Children to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (TAC) initiatives were conducted and showcased the positive outcomes Nugel achieved. The results include a reunification rate of 22% (compared to the DHHS reunification rate of 5%), a low rate of 2.5% of children transitioning to either a long term or care by secretary order (thus entrenching them in the child protection system) – (compared to the DHHS rate of 11.5%).



**Currently  
supports 88  
children**

**This year 9  
children have  
been reunified  
with a parent**

**Family Preservation  
Orders that were in  
place for 10 children,  
have been closed**

**2 children are  
now residing with  
Aboriginal family from  
being in foster care**





## CASE STUDY: Nugel

John is two years old, living in a kinship care placement with his Aunty. He was removed from the care of his parents immediately after birth due to concerns around their substance use. Jennifer, John's mother has had a long history of drug use which has resulted in her four older children also being removed from her care and placed on Permanent Care Orders. John was referred to VACCA's Nugel program with a case plan to remain permanently with his Aunty.

When John was transferred to Nugel, his new case manager looked at the situation with a fresh set of eyes. In line with Nugel's practice approach, she engaged with Jennifer about the role that she could play in her son's life. Jennifer was hopeful and engaged in supports for her substance abuse and is now 18 months clean. Nugel assisted Jennifer in gaining stable accommodation, and counselling services with VACCA to work through her own trauma and issues of grief and loss at having had all her children removed.

With these changes being made, Nugel were able to gradually increase the amount of time Jennifer spent with John, leading to a review of the case plan which changed the direction to reunification with the mother. John spent increasing amounts of time with his mum, supported by Aboriginal Stronger Families Program, who are working with Jennifer to develop her confidence as a mum and strengthen her relationship with John. Later that year the court formally returned John home to his mum.





## CASE STUDY: Lakidjeka

Lakidjeka - Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service (ACSASS) is an Aboriginal service that provides advice on the Best Interests of Aboriginal children and young people when Child Protection are making decisions regarding children and young people's safety and wellbeing.

### Families Supporting Each Other

A young mum and dad of three children recognised they were struggling with mental health and addictions and reached out to local child protection workers who referred the family to VACCA. They wanted to be the best possible role models and parents for their kids.

After initial discussions and assessments with family members, Lakidjeka ACSASS workers helped keep the family together by working with both sets of grandparents. This meant that all the children could stay together with their siblings and the family could support one another.

The children stayed with one set of grandparents during the week and the other set of grandparents on the weekend, with supervised and remote access arranged with the parents. Aunties and uncles also helped.

Whilst it was initially a difficult change for everyone, it allowed the parents to start rehabilitation and access other programs like parenting courses and seek help with mental health issues. While the parents are working hard on their addictions, they can still feel connected and part of their children's lives and aiming to hopefully reunite as a family unit in the future.

Lakidjeka workers advocated for all members of the family and have coordinated services to come together including; pediatricians, school, education support, welfare support and mental health.

Lakidjeka workers were pleased to help this family and parents stay together and heal. They reflected that the reinforcement of family bonds during this difficult time is a testament to all family members as they focus on making decisions together and staying strong and connected for each other and the children's future.





# INNOVATION

Despite all the turbulence the past year has brought about, one thing that shone through was VACCA's ability to adapt and to be innovative in the face of adversity. As an organisation we transitioned our programs and services to an online format, enabling our most vulnerable community members a place to connect to each other, and access services during difficult times.

Our Cultural Hub, available through [Vacca.org](http://Vacca.org), was created to offer people a culturally rich resource to connect into during COVID-19, with videos and resources for children and young people, and the regions developed a diverse range of online activities such as 'Zoom Bingo' for our Elders, everyone was able to connect and come together. Cultural events and yarning circles were available online as well, giving people more options to connect to community and culture whilst isolated.

Many of our playgroups were delivered online, and we provided education support to Aboriginal children and young people learning remotely, particularly in the transition stages to remote learning and ensuring young people had the infrastructure needed to succeed.

We also successfully implemented the Rainbow Tick Standards providing a safe and inclusive service for LGBTIQ+ community members. Our internal audit approach was redeveloped, and audits were completed virtually. As an organisation we proactively responded to the needs of our community whilst the state was in a State of Emergency throughout the year.





# 2019-2020 HIGHLIGHTS



## Cultural Hub

VACCA regions have collectively produced over 40 videos, a remarkable achievement given the increased demand for services during COVID-19 to address community vulnerability. These resources are all housed on VACCA's website in the new Cultural Hub, a rich and rapidly expanding library of content for current and future generations to enjoy, engage and remember special moments. This culturally rich online resource has been a life saver for many, helping to keep children, young people, families and Elders busing during COVID-19.

## Elders Bingo - Staying Connected and Having a Laugh

The introduction of 'Zoom Bingo' has provided a welcome distraction and lighthearted fun with our over 50's community members. Bingo books were pre-delivered to community so on the day, everyone can participate on the day as Sam "The Voice" Bennett called the draw and Jacinta "The Scribe" Scott keeps track of the results.





## VACCA's NAIDOC Children and Family Day Event

Over 10,000 people dropped into the live streamed NAIDOC Children's and Family event hosted by VACCA. The *Always Was Always Will Be* event provided a rich cultural experience with dance workshops, singing, hip hop, cooking, and more. Aboriginal children introduced all the acts and many were performed and led by our young people.



## Music with Mob

Throughout the year, VACCA premiered a video featuring a musician sharing a song, dance or music skill. Some 15 musicians have entertained community online. Over time, VACCA is compiling a virtual songbook with all the lyrics and guitar chords from each performance.

## Carers and Young People Yarning

VACCA's regular foster carer and youth groups began meeting online in early 2020 and children in care have been provided with iPads to make it easier for them to engage with their families through video conferencing software (e.g. Facetime). We needed to ensure our community stayed connected.





# EDUCATION SUPPORT DURING COVID-19

VACCA presented a policy paper and submission to the Parliamentary Secretary for Schools in relation to COVID-19 lessons from remote learning for Aboriginal children and young people.

A VACCA survey conducted during COVID-19 involving 685 primary, secondary and tertiary students revealed that many Aboriginal children and young people did not have the basic infrastructure and support to enable learning from home. This highlighted the need for VACCA case managers to become more actively involved in advocating for our children's rights and needs with schools.

In response, we created a *'Keeping Our Kids Engaged'* Working Group to identify educational issues in regions and developed strategies to improve attendance and engagement. These included the provision of iPads to Cradle to Kinder families to support remote reading with children and their families, and the distribution of education and cultural packs to homes, homework clubs, playgroups and families.

A key issue was the digital divide that exists within the Aboriginal community. The move to home schooling meant that VACCA had to adjust accordingly managing children, parents and grandparents digital literacy challenges to support with learning from home. What was most amazing was the high number of families with no computers or printers which to VACCA is a necessity in any home and something that we will continue to drive as a key issue.

During COVID-19, VACCA also began attending Koorie Taskforce meetings with key Koorie education stakeholders. This was beneficial to build relationships, share data, information and collaborate on strategies to support all Koorie learners. This is something VACCA's education team are planning to continue and strengthen in the future.

A number of children are also receiving tutoring, including two young students from the VACCA Ovens Murray office who have been tutored through Trade Winds. The feedback has been positive from the carer and the boys, and even the Vice Principal has noticed a positive change in attitude towards schoolwork.

One student is illustrating and writing a picture storybook about different Australian animals in Barkindji language. The young man has been completing his homework and the Vice Principal has commented on his change in attitude towards schoolwork. The other student has developed a new passion for cooking. With support from his tutor he is researching food and recipes, working out measurements, and preparing shopping lists. The strained relationship with his carer has shifted. Instead of refusing to come out of his room and being consumed by video games, the young man and carer now go shopping together and he is cooking meals for the whole family (including his mum who comes over for the meals).

Finally, during the COVID-19 period VACCA partnered with Berry Street in a program called Side by Side. This is a social impact bond initiative that aims to increase the attendance and literacy and numeracy of students. It includes facilitation and intensive family supports with early years primary school years commencing in North Metro Melbourne.









# CULTURAL CAMPS

In the South-East in early October Camp Jungai took place on Wurrungeri Country, North East of Victoria. Thirty young people from across our southern out-of-home care, youth and family services programs attended. The camp provided strong connections with Traditional Owners and Elders, while also giving the young people a connection to community and each other.

Uncle Shane and Aunty Aurora did a Welcome to Country, shared stories about Country and shared teachings of gender roles and the depth of respect Aboriginal men and women hold for each other and their important roles in family, culture and society.

As most attendees have been exposed to family violence through either past or present parental relationships, staff and Elders supported the young people with their experiences and reinforced the importance and right to respectful healthy relationships.

During the September school holidays the west had 25 young people attended a school holiday program at the Wunggerrwil Dhurrung Centre in Wyndham Vale. VACCA also facilitated an overnight Foster Care Camp at Lady Northcote Recreation Camp.

Throughout the year there were two camps run in the north, with 18 young people attending overnight camps at both the Lady Northcote Recreation Camp and also the Anglesea Recreation Camp, both YMCA camp facilities.

We'd like to thank Carer Café, Family Violence, Cultural Support Planning, Preventing the Cycle of Violence, and Family Safety Victoria for funding towards these camps for young people.



# RAINBOW TICK

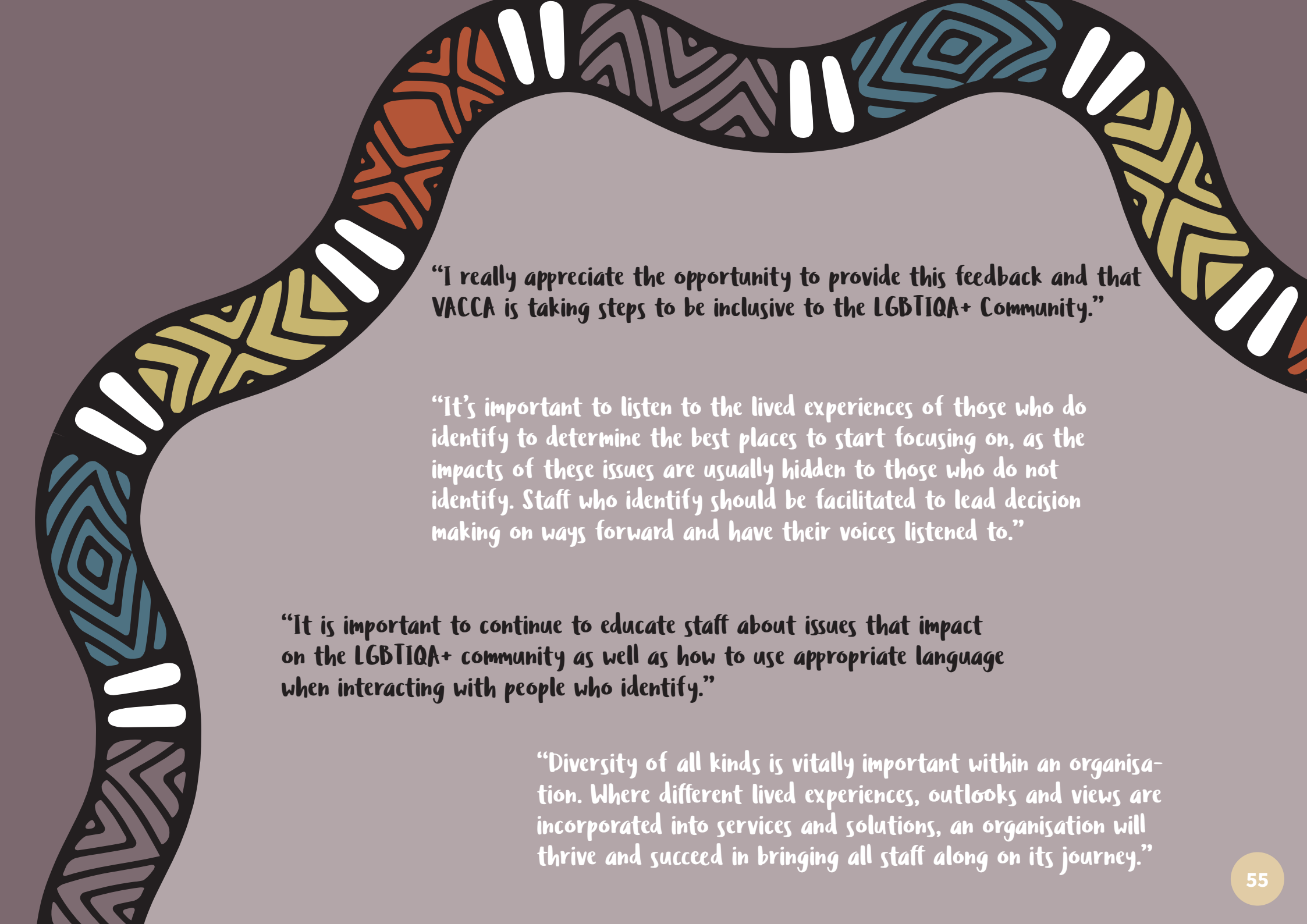
VACCA have proudly begun the process of becoming Rainbow Tick accredited. Whilst it is a requirement for all Family Violence funded programs to go through the Rainbow Tick accreditation, the entire organisation is working towards being acknowledged as an inclusive, safe and welcoming organisation for the LGBTIQ+ community.

This year, we established multiple initiatives as part of our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ inclusivity, including the formation of Binbeal Murrup, VACCA's first inclusivity working group. Resources have been created and amended to inform the broader VACCA community of our inclusive practice. We also undertook a staff knowledge survey to better inform areas of development in LGBTIQ+ inclusivity.

Although the Rainbow Tick process is ongoing and there are still areas that remain to be strengthened, so much has been achieved. With the development of LGBTIQ+ training packages and resource guides, we seek to embed inclusive practice systemically. Creating dynamic ways to engage our children, families, and community in making sure VACCA is a safe and inclusive environment for Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ people.



Logo of our Binbeal Murrup Inclusivity Working Group



“I really appreciate the opportunity to provide this feedback and that VACCA is taking steps to be inclusive to the LGBTIQ+ Community.”

“It’s important to listen to the lived experiences of those who do identify to determine the best places to start focusing on, as the impacts of these issues are usually hidden to those who do not identify. Staff who identify should be facilitated to lead decision making on ways forward and have their voices listened to.”

“It is important to continue to educate staff about issues that impact on the LGBTIQ+ community as well as how to use appropriate language when interacting with people who identify.”

“Diversity of all kinds is vitally important within an organisation. Where different lived experiences, outlooks and views are incorporated into services and solutions, an organisation will thrive and succeed in bringing all staff along on its journey.”



## PLAYGROUPS

2020 has been a difficult year for all and it is no different for the Playgroup program. Due to the pandemic, all face to face programs were ceased immediately to ensure the safety of the children, families and staff. Continuing to provide families with support and a program was delivered via 'activity packs' as well as 'selfcare packs' which included cultural activities, links to virtual cultural content, cooking activities, up to date information on the pandemic and personal protective equipment such as hand sanitiser and masks.

As the year progressed staff provided families with a 'virtual' playgroup online, through Facebook live and through Facebook video posts. This was hugely successful with the online content reaching more families and a much wider audience than the face to face playgroups would have.

Staff also provided families with links to various cultural activities, wellbeing and mindfulness activities and selfcare guides. They also had access to the VACCA Family and Children's Day NAIDOC Event, and broader NAIDOC activities such as flag raising, and the virtual walk with Aunty Pam and Uncle Jack.



## CULTURAL HUB

The VACCA Cultural Hub was developed in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 Lockdown restrictions in place across Victoria. Created as a space that celebrates Aboriginal culture, the Cultural Hub was designed to offer activities and resources to support community stay connected during COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions, which saw many families and individuals isolated at home.

In the early stages of COVID-19, our dedicated and creative team of Aboriginal VACCA staff formed the 'Cultural Connections' group, working together to collate the broadest range of resources and activities for our children and families to engage and utilise their creativity and as a resource to be shared and celebrated.

We know that supporting families with resources that connect us to culture will help our young ones grow up strong. The Cultural Hub offers resources and activities for different age groups and interests, including art and music video tutorials, cooking videos, exercise programs, Aboriginal coloring-in pages and podcasts.

It will continue to be a resource for staff, clients, families, friends and other ACCOs to get creative, grow knowledge and connect to culture, available via [vacca.org/cultural-hub](https://vacca.org/cultural-hub).





# SUPPORTING SELF-DETERMINATION IN ABORIGINAL WOMEN RAISING THEIR BABIES AT HOME

In June 2020 VACCA was awarded an Innovation Grant from the Out-of-Home Care Philanthropic Funders' Network (the Network), a collaborative group of philanthropic organisations facilitated by Victoria's peak body for child and family services, the Centre For Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW).

The three-year grant totaling just over half a million dollars will be dedicated to co-designing a new approach to supporting young Aboriginal mothers to raise their babies and infants at home. The grant is awarded by members of the Network which has 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.

The three-year 'Growing Up Aboriginal Babies at Home' project will commence later in 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.

Network funders for 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.

VACCA would like to thank and acknowledge all funders from the Network for this grant and the commitment to self-determination, collaboration and innovation, and the CFECFW for its support and facilitation of the grant.







# FAMILY PRESERVATION AND REUNIFICATION RESPONSE

The Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification Response (AFPR Response) is a new intensive family services program that provides support to families with children who are at risk of entering out-of-home care or have recently entered care. VACCA commenced delivery of the AFPR Response in October 2020 for a nine-month pilot period - which has since been extended to four years.

The AFPR Response involves an initial intensive support phase of frequent engagement and, where appropriate, in-home support, and a sustained support phase to transition the family into self-management and connect them with the right supports and opportunities for their future. The Response also includes an after hours phone-based service delivered by VACCA Team Leaders that families can access in a crisis situation.

VACCA's dedicated AFPR Response Practitioners will work closely with eligible families to develop a trusted relationship, support the family to identify their own goals and walk alongside them to take steps to achieve these goals. The Practitioners will be supported to do this by a broader Multidisciplinary Team at VACCA that includes specialists in family violence, child development, speech pathology, cultural therapeutic practice and other domains. We are committed to designing, shaping and monitoring this new program and to ensuring the Aboriginal AFPR Response model is delivered our way.

In addition to providing direct services, and in partnership with the Centre for Evidence and Implementation and the Centre for Excellence, VACCA will provide implementation support to the sector particularly on the Aboriginal practice elements.





## OUR ORGANISATION

## OUR PEOPLE



Staff wellbeing was imperative this year for our staff and organisation. The year brought with it many challenges and the transition to remote working, as an organisation we were responsive and resilient. Continuing to build strong capable staff through workforce training, e-learning and further education and qualifications equated to more Aboriginal staff in leadership roles within the organisation and improving our Aboriginal recruitment strategy.

This year our staff displayed considerable agility in adjusting to working from home under COVID-19 restrictions. While essential services continued, albeit differently, other client service delivery and internal business support moved online. A detailed wellbeing plan was developed along with the formation of a wellbeing steering group and Aboriginal wellbeing representatives were appointed across all regions. Weekly communications were provided to all staff sharing any important information, service delivery updates, COVID safety precautions and wellbeing resources. Reminding staff that they can also connect with the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) via 'LifeWorks', we also engaged VAHS to deliver a culturally appropriate EAP service for Aboriginal staff during this unprecedented time.

Two wellbeing surveys were conducted throughout the year. While the surveys revealed the difficulties many were experiencing working remotely, it also highlighted that 86% of staff thought that work was positively contributing to their sense of wellbeing, and 89% of respondents felt that their direct manager was providing the necessary support and communication during this unusual time.



## STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

We are working towards an environment where developing skills and embedding culture is an integral feature of our everyday work. Our staff have many options and opportunities to further develop and enhance their capabilities and the way they contribute to supporting themselves and community.

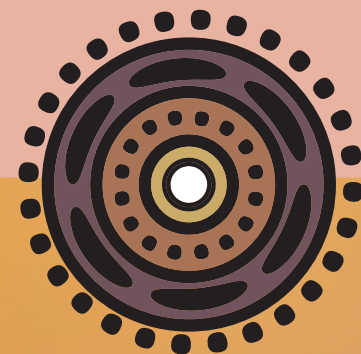
This year all staff qualifications moved to an online mode, requiring adjustments by both teachers and students alike. A second group of staff commenced the Diploma of Community Services (Statutory and Forensic Child, Youth & Family Welfare) delivered by Swinburne University. Unfortunately, their placements have been delayed due to COVID-19 impacts and it is anticipated these 19 staff will complete their qualification in early 2021. In total 45 staff completed their Diploma of Community Services this year.

VACCA encourages staff to undertake other qualifications, with nine staff currently completing a Graduate Certificate in Family Therapy through Bouverie Centre, La Trobe University. We also have 12 current and emerging leaders completing their Diploma of Leadership and Management, and 11 administrative support staff completing their Certificate IV in Business through Melbourne Polytechnic.

Most participants are Aboriginal staff and through the skills and qualifications they have acquired will be able to further develop their careers.

## Aboriginal Trainees

We offered nine Aboriginal people employment at VACCA after the successful completion of their traineeships. There are another seven trainees working throughout the regions currently. This success of this program highlights the value of this initiative in contributing to increasing VACCA's Aboriginal workforce.



## Learning and Development

82 internal training (non-accredited) workshops were conducted

New self-paced e-learning modules were developed for new starters, and for some HR modules for staff to access at any time

We offered nine Aboriginal people employment at VACCA after the successful completion of their traineeships. There are another seven trainees working throughout the regions currently. This success of this program highlights the value of this initiative in contributing to increasing VACCA's Aboriginal workforce.

Online learning included Induction, Cultural Awareness, Case Management, Family Violence and Management skills

1,219 attendees completed a workshop

Online learning and workshops were delivered virtually

# THE FUTURE FOR OUR PEOPLE

As we work towards the future, we will continue to embed our Organisational and Development Framework, with key themes such as Attraction, Recruitment, Retention, Wellbeing, Learning and Leadership Development being the focus. We will continue to develop new strategies as we build on work that has already begun and truly embed a sustainable workforce development model that will continue to grow and strengthen VACCA.





# FINANCIAL REPORT

This financial year was of continuous growth, with the gross operating income of \$70.2 million and a net operating surplus of \$949,950.

A number of new programs were rolled out during the year including DHHS funded Bushfire Recovery Support programs, Youth Justice programs, expansion of Family Violence services, additional funded project work and large expansion of funded programs in Wangaratta.

The largest growth has been the continuation of the transfer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to VACCA's responsibility.

It is expected that the State Government Roadmap to Reform and Family Violence 10 year plan will continue to have a significant impact on the operations, workforce and potential future growth of the organisation over the next three to five years.

## Gross operating income compared to previous year

\$58.6 million > increased 19.8% to \$70.2 million

## Gross operating income over five years

\$21.9 million > increased 167% to \$58.6 million.

## Summarised Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) as at the year ended 30 June 2020 (\$)

	2020	2019
Total Current Assets	28,495,861	29,385,883
Total Non-Current Assets	13,290,829	3,903,705
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>41,786,690</b>	<b>33,289,588</b>
Total Current Liabilities	25,152,511	24,345,263
Total Non-Current Liabilities	7,079,723	340,006
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>32,232,234</b>	<b>24,685,269</b>
<b>Net Assets (Liabilities)</b>	<b>9,554,456</b>	<b>8,604,318</b>
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>9,554,456</b>	<b>8,604,318</b>

## Summarised Statement of Profit and Loss for the year ended 30 June 2020 (\$)

	2020	2019
Total income	70,239,040	58,619,881
Total expenses	69,289,090	57,120,040
Net income	949,950	1,499,841

# THANK YOU

We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you.

We are very grateful for the contribution our supporters, donors, fundraisers and clients make to VACCA and the work we do. The invaluable support we receive helps assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families to heal and connect with culture.

Programs you have assisted us in supporting include Books in Homes, Narrun Yana Art Collective, Koorie Tiddas Choir, Return to Country and Cultural Camps. We have also seen amazing support for our NAIDOC Week events.

We have a range of useful educational resources and merchandise available online, visit [vacca.org/shop](https://vacca.org/shop)

# SUPPORT US

Over the past year our support from the public has continued to grow especially from individuals, community groups and organisations through our initiatives such our Morning Tea for Culture and Christmas Appeal and Winter Appeal.

Support has also increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and recession allowing VACCA to provide more support for those in need during these difficult times.

Ways you or your organisation could help include adding support of a program or campaign to a Reconciliation Action Plan; workplace donations or building a partnership with a program; or leaving a gift in your Will.

If you or your organisation would like to support us – we are always happy to connect with you.

For more information visit [vacca.org/support-us](https://vacca.org/support-us)





# OUR SUPPORTERS & FUNDERS

## Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

VACCA would like to acknowledge and thank all Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and groups we collaborate and work with across the State of Victoria.

## Partners and sector organisations

Anglicare, Australian College of Agriculture and Horticulture, Berry Street, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Centre For Evidence and Implementation, Centre For Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Charcoal Lane, Child First Partners, Community Housing Ltd, Djerriwarrh Health Services, ECMS, Elizabeth Morgan House, Family Life, Family Safety Victoria, Food Ladder, Foster Care Association, Fostering Connections, Gateway Community Health, IPC Health, Jesuit Social Services, Kids Under Cover, Latrobe Valley Community Health, La Trobe University – Bouverie Centre, Life Without Barriers, Lowitja Institute, MacKillop Family Services, Melbourne City Mission, Melbourne Polytechnic, Merriwa Industry, Orange Door, OzChild, Quantum Support Services, Queen Elizabeth Centre, Swinburne University, Save The Children, Social Ventures Australia, SMA Multidisciplinary Centre, Salvation Army, Upper Murray Family Care, Uniting Vic Tas, University Of Melbourne – Centre for Training and Research in Developmental Health and the Department of Social Work, Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance, Westcare, WestCASA, Women's Health West, Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Youthworx.

## Philanthropy

Australian Communities Foundation - EM Horton Family Fund, Equity Trustees - David Taylor Galt Charitable Trust, Gandel Philanthropy, The Geo Group, Healing Foundation, Inner North Community Foundation, The Jack Brockhoff Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund, William Buckland Foundation.

Pro bono services:

Ashurst, Neon Parlour  
Supporters: Impact For Women, Triple R Broadcasters (3RRR), GM Leasing, Good 360, Kia Motors Australia, Lucky Coq, Nappy Collective, Nelson Alexander, Pinchapoo, Share the Dignity, St Kilda Football Club, Toyota Fleet Management.

## Government

Federal Government Departments: Department of Social Services, Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Department of Education and Training, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

Local Government Councils:

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency acknowledges the support of the Victorian State Government and Creative Victoria.



# CONTACT AND FEEDBACK

## Become a member

We invite all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 years and over to become members of VACCA. Members have voting rights at our Annual General Meeting.

Information on membership can be found at [vacca.org/membership](http://vacca.org/membership)

## Feedback

We are always interested to hear how we can improve our services to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and community members living in Victoria.

All feedback is welcome via [vacca.org/feedback](http://vacca.org/feedback) or [feedback@vacca.org](mailto:feedback@vacca.org)

## Our locations

### Chirnside Park

1 East Ridge Drive,  
Chirnside Park VIC 3116  
Ph: (03) 8727 0200

### Dandenong

Level 2, 1-7 Langhorne Street,  
Dandenong VIC 3175  
Ph: (03) 9108 3500

### Frankston

Suite 4-6, 108-120 Young Street,  
Frankston VIC 3199  
Ph: (03) 8796 0700

### Melton

43 Bakery Square,  
Melton VIC 3337  
Ph: (03) 8746 2776

### Morwell

21 Hazelwood Road,  
Morwell VIC 3840  
Ph: (03) 5135 6055

### Ovens Murray

Suite 3, 27 - 29 Faithfull Street,  
Wangaratta VIC 3677  
Ph: (03) 5756 9000

### Preston

340 Bell Street,  
Preston Victoria 3072  
Ph: (03) 9287 8800

### Werribee

75-79 Watton Street,  
Werribee VIC 3030  
Ph: (03) 9742 8300





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Facsimile: +61 3 9287 8999

Facebook: [facebook.com/vaccaorg/](https://facebook.com/vaccaorg/)

Instagram: [@vaccaorg](https://www.instagram.com/vaccaorg)



# VACCA

Connected by culture