



**VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021**



**VACCA**  
Connected by culture

## 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. We 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 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.

# ABOUT THE ARTWORK



### Artist: Nakia Cadd - Gunditjmara, Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung and Bunitj woman

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 for our community and our services; strength, resilience and determination are still evident. VACCA continued to stand strong and provide integral services to our families and community.

The five panels represent the various sacred lands on which we support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

The footprints acknowledge those who serviced VACCA and shaped it into the community organisation it is today; honouring their efforts and hard work.

The gathering circles are our Victorian communities and the 'U' shape is the people; our Elders, staff, community and families together.

The bright colours tell a story of optimism, healing and resilience. These are challenging times, but we continue to strive.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

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

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.

## ABOUT VACCA

**We are the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), Victoria's leading Aboriginal child and family services organisation, and the largest provider of Aboriginal family violence and homelessness services. VACCA is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).**

For over 40 years we have delivered a sweeping range of services to meet the needs and improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities across Victoria.

Strong Aboriginal families and communities means strong Aboriginal children. Our vision for self-determination is exemplified in our tagline *Live, Experience and Be*. It is a mandate that is simple in its vision and value, but obviously complex in its breadth. In short, we focus on seeing needs and we create services, supports, policies and advocacy that deliver solutions. That will make a difference. That can change wrong paths to right roads for equality and equity for all Aboriginal Victorians.

But at our heart is the safety, wellbeing and cultural connections of our Aboriginal children, families and communities – first, foremost, always.



# OUR VISION

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

# OUR MISSION

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

# OUR VALUES



## 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.



## 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.



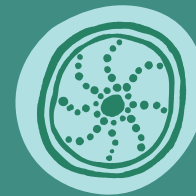
## Respect

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.



## 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.



## 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.



## Excellence

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



# THE THEME:

## Standing Strong: Our People, Our Community, Our Story

### Welcome to the VACCA Annual Report for 2020-2021

Our theme, **Standing Strong: Our People, Our Community, Our Story**, speaks to the continued impact and challenges faced by VACCA and the Victorian Aboriginal communities in this second year of the COVID-19 pandemic and to our collective successes, as we came together with strength, resilience and innovation.

The Annual Report is presented as chapters reflecting our theme, **Standing Strong**.

The first is **Our People**, where we recognise the talented and skilled people that are our Board, our staff, our carers, our members, our volunteers and our donors and supporters. They deserve our thanks and celebration.

**Our community** is dedicated to culture and the connections that we make with each other through our many programs, events and interactions. This chapter honours the communities we serve and provides examples of how all our work is driven by Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing and being.

And lastly, **Our Story** is about the programs and strategic initiatives we undertake daily that make such a difference to the way we support community and are central to achieving better outcomes for the children, young people and families we support.

**We hope you enjoy our 2020-2021 Annual Report.**

### Connected to Culture

Connected to Culture is more than a tag line to us at VACCA. We believe that culture defines who we are, how we think and what we value. We know cultural identity is a key positive factor that builds resilience and positive self-identity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- › Connected to culture means showing respect to those who have walked before us, clearing a path for us and our ancestors looking after us from their Dreaming place.
- › Connected to Culture means knowing whose Country you are on and respecting their land, traditions, ceremonies, history and language.
- › Connected to Culture means knowing who your people are but always being open to know more about your own culture and of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Nations.
- › Connected to Culture means truth telling, no matter how uncomfortable or painful it is.
- › But most of all Connected to Culture is about relationships. Relationships with family, with community, with land and Country, with ceremonies and lore and with each other.

# CHAIR REPORT

**There has never been a more fitting theme for VACCA's Annual Report than Standing Strong: Our People, Our Community, Our Story. It typifies the tenacity of the organisation, our people and the communities we serve. We've leveraged our learnings from the challenges of 2019-2020 and indeed stood strong, and continue to deliver high quality services and supports to our communities.**

I was heartened to see the reach and impact of the supports provided to children, young people, their families and Elders. It is of no surprise to anyone that I personally am passionate about supporting Elders in not only their care and support needs but ensuring that connection to culture, our stories, wisdom, ceremonies and leadership is shared and valued for generations to come. The way VACCA did this was to make sure no one was left behind and worked hard to ensure all were safe throughout COVID-19. More outreach calls to Elders and vulnerable families were made than ever before. Connections were maintained.

The pandemic has highlighted how pervasive the digital divide is between young and old, the wealthy and the disadvantaged. The digital divide heightened loneliness and disconnection from family, friends and culture. COVID-19 put a spotlight on inequities like never before. The inventiveness of staff, the desire to address gaps in service delivery we had never considered before resulting in simple but meaningful solutions; iPads and training on how to use them for Elders, data and devices to support home-schooling, online homework clubs and tutors for kids falling behind, online cooking, art classes and playgroups to keep connected. All examples the value of VACCA and the legacy the organisation has built on being connected not only to culture but to the support needs of so many under COVID-19.

2020-21 was a time of significant growth and innovation, continuing to strengthen and drive VACCA's journey of self determination through creating services, supports, policies and advocacy that deliver, are reflective of community needs and that make a difference to the communities we serve. It was also a year of consolidation and embedding VACCA's investments in its own capacity. The foresight and strategic investment in internal systems, staff and new markets provide the foundation for this growth to occur, now and sustainably into the future.



As a Board, we acknowledge and are focused on our responsibilities to govern the work of VACCA to ensure the best outcomes for our children, young people and families. Our concerns now are on recovery from COVID-19 and the disruptions and challenges this has created for education, employment, health and safety. Most of all we are concerned about the long term impacts on mental health and family relationships. The next year will see more need than ever to strengthen families, build connections with culture and community.

Every year I reflect on and am immensely proud of the work of VACCA. This year staff and community have indeed shown that they stand strong in the face of adversity and in challenging times. I hope you enjoy reading this report as much as I do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Atkinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**James Atkinson**  
Chairperson, VACCA

# CEO REPORT

**The 2020-21 year has been a time where we can look back and give thanks for so much and take the time to acknowledge so many who contributed under extreme working conditions due to COVID-19.**

Across VACCA all of us have had to understand and address our own day to day challenges and fears, and then turn outward to address community needs and supports.

Firstly, thanks to the Board and senior management across VACCA for your keen awareness of and action in what is going on, with determined effort to protect staff, clients and community whilst still delivering services. Even though challenging, our approach was always “We’ve got this”. We set up our crisis-response infrastructure to address the evolving needs of our organisation, tapped in to see how our people were feeling and acted with compassion to support our organisation through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The staff themselves unleashed a level of creativity and innovation necessary to navigate a new working environment imposed by COVID-19 and make a positive difference in people’s lives. I have witnessed first hand staff making a positive difference in people’s lives. Our staff has been compassionate in dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 as our first

priority and in delivering on our services to the most vulnerable and at risk.

Throughout this report you will read of the significant work of our staff in service delivery, of our corporate services keeping our human resources, technology, finances, payroll and property services operating seamlessly. Our staff across our innovations, community development, learning and development, research and evaluation have continued to put us at the forefront of driving reform and in service excellence.

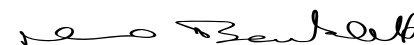
Our strong focus during COVID-19 in protecting our young people in our residential services, our work in keeping our Elders safe and in delivering child welfare, family services, homelessness, justice, family violence, virtual playgroups and yarning circles all demonstrate our commitment and understanding of the criticality of these services and also of the need to keep connections even under extreme situations.

Organisationally we are in a strong position financially as you will read through our finance report. We have a strong reputation and have strengthened our communication platform, our legal team has brought a new dimension to VACCA and we have seen much progress for redress for many of our people. Our policy and advocacy work is acknowledged across the various sectors and we are seen as leaders nationally through many of our programs and service offerings.

Operationally we have been able to meet targets and performance in these challenging times. Our quality of services are constantly under review with the Board committed to service excellence.

This year we also began the process of improving access for LGBTIQ+ and are working towards meeting the Rainbow Tick standard, something we are committed to given their strong footprint across our organisation and in our service offerings.

I believe over time our people and the organisation will bounce back from the pandemic and be a better organisation through what we have learned. We have begun the process of reimagining and planning our post COVID-19 future with a focus on our workforce needs to deliver on our organisation’s mission. As we move to recovery – there is much work on the horizon as we work to fully understand our post COVID-19 issues and needs of our children, young people, adult clients, families and communities, but know that we will be up to job as we have stood strong and will continue to stand strong with our people, our community to tell our stories of survival from this pandemic.



**Prof. Muriel Bamblett AO**  
Chief Executive Officer, VACCA





# PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT: 2020-21

The following illustrates VACCA's reach and efficacy over the 2020-2021 financial year.

## Corporate

- › Maintained average 45% Aboriginal staff
- › Grew number of staff by over 223 people
- › Aboriginal Leaders Careers Pathway Pilot Program
- › Added VAHS as a dedicated Aboriginal provider
- › Implemented new Talent Management & Finance software

## Client Services

- › Supported over 400 kids in care
- › Supported 108 kids through Nugel
- › Supported over 160 carers
- › Received over 3600 referrals from women and families experiencing family violence
- › Provided over 20,000 hours family supports across all regions
- › Supported over 80 young people engaged with the justice system
- › Supported 26 women released from prison
- › Supported over 20 people with their Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) recovery
- › Over 300 new family finding/ connecting to mob referrals
- › Supported over 77 survivors of historical sexual abuse

## OCEO

- › Three-year fundraising plan raised \$1.7million
- › 1,500 donors
- › 30 Radio, TV and print media features
- › 41 Policy Submissions
- › Supported 32 Committees and workgroups
- › 22 Media Releases
- › Sold 4500 resources
- › 34,036 Unique visitors to our website
- › 90,819 social media engagements

# OUR REGIONS

Our programs cover a wide range of community services that work together in an integrated way to bring the best outcomes for the Aboriginal community. Our services work towards self-determination and healing of the Aboriginal community by embedding culture and strengthening the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable community members; especially children and families.

## NORTHERN VACCA

VACCA delivers a range of services from a number of locations in Melbourne northern metropolitan region. These services are delivered by up to 100 staff members.



### 2021 Highlight – Koorie Women's Diversion Program

*Balit Baggarruk works with Koorie women aged 18+ who have entered, or are likely to enter, the criminal justice system.*

While incarcerated at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, our client, a Gunai Kurnai woman, was referred to Balit Baggarruk by her lawyer. The woman suffered from severe mental illness, substance dependence, an intellectual disability and spent much of her adult life in and out of custody.

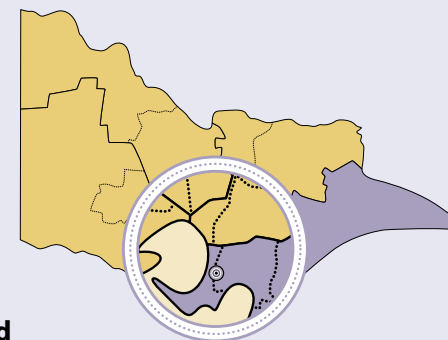
Our care team ensured a coordinated and client-based approach to support the goals this woman needed, including a VAHS GP and dentist, AOD support, and Launch Housing and Rubix Support from her NDIS package.

When released, she was approved for a Homeless-to-Home Housing Package; providing a safe, affordable home with intensive case management for two years. She attended culturally-specific women's groups to interact with other Aboriginal women and yarn in cultural safety.

Recognising how substance use and dependence affected her life, she independently decided to change. She consistently engaged with the program and showed strength, resilience and determination to overcome the many facts that led to her offending and re-offending behaviours.

## SOUTHERN VACCA

Southern VACCA provides a broad range of children, youth, family and cultural services to Aboriginal children and families in the southern metropolitan area, including Bayside Peninsula.



### 2021 Highlight – Family Services

*The sole parent of a three year old son was referred to us, described as "aggressive and difficult to engage in services".*

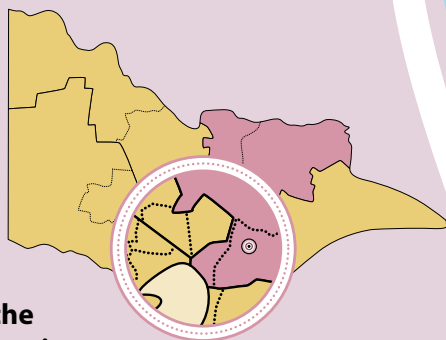
Her family was also engaged in the out-of-home care Kinship program. This led to engagement with the father, who admitted his challenges in dealing with feeling overwhelmed by expectations. He recognised the parenting skills he possessed, and could build. We supported referral to our Family Services Specialised Disability Program, for assessment and potential NDIS support.

In six months, his confidence rose in himself and his parenting to provide a safe and loving environment for his son. He successfully secured employment. He now requires a less intensive family support program, but has flexibility to continue working with our team.

## OUR REGIONS (CONT.)

### EASTERN VACCA

Eastern VACCA provides services to Aboriginal children and families living in the eastern metropolitan region.



#### 2021 Highlight – Better Futures

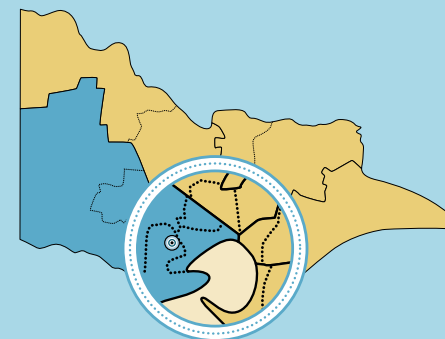
*VACCA's Better Futures program helps Aboriginal young people leaving out-of-home-care (or who have exited care) from the age of 15 years and 9 months, to navigate steps towards independence and a rewarding life ahead.*

The program works with young people to connect with family and culture, access practical help when leaving care, and to connect with their communities and local support. It provides an opportunity for young people to be engaged with a local Aboriginal mentor and to attend community events.

The program is delivered by youth advocates and a key worker. Although this is not a justice specific service, we know that young people in and leaving care are disproportionately represented in the justice system.

### WESTERN VACCA

Western VACCA provides a broad range of family and cultural services to Aboriginal children and families living in the western metropolitan region including the areas of Wyndham, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton and Brimbank.



#### 2021 Highlight – Koorie Kids Supported Playgroups

*This year, we delivered services to 65 families and carers across Melbourne's west, received referrals from other programs, and increased the number of families accessing our playgroups.*

During the pandemic, we reached out with fortnightly home-delivery of cultural activity packs to help families stay connected to culture, assist children to understand their identity and cultural learning, and provide the whole family with tools to assist bonding.

Our new Facebook page featured health updates, local news, support services information, and families shared ideas, photos and experiences. Feedback showed these outreach efforts provided comfort and support, while assisting with links to other urgent needs such as food banks, clothing, counselling and housing.

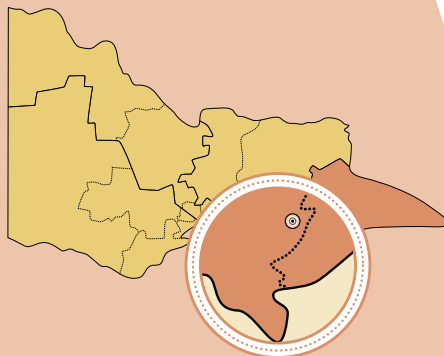
Effectively converting a Playgroup program to an online platform that is fully connected to families in isolation was a challenge and, as many families and carers were separated from their regular supports, we assisted with referrals to crisis programs including Family Violence, Family Service Support and Emergency Relief Support, helping families as far away as Geelong.

Reinventing aspects of our program to suit the changing environment was a combined team effort by our Playgroup Educators, families and the community.

## OUR REGIONS (CONT.)

### GIPPSLAND VACCA

Gippsland VACCA is one of the region's largest Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. We currently employ over 60 staff and operate across sites in the Latrobe, East Gippsland and South Gippsland areas.



#### 2021 Highlight – Kinship Care

*Our Kinship Care program supports Aboriginal children who are unable to live with their parents. Children may be in kinship care due to protection concerns, or because their parents are experiencing difficulties.*

We worked with a family of four siblings and one cousin who were in placement with their maternal grandmother. All children had poor school attendance records, but now they attend school several times a week.

The children's mother was supported by VACCA and GEGAC (Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative), and drug and alcohol misuse has not been a concern for many months.

This progress enabled the mother to see her children in unsupervised visits. The children loved having visits with mum, and she was working towards having her children over nights.

The VACCA and Child Protection aim remains for the children to return to their mother's care by the end of the year, in time for Christmas.

### OVENS MURRAY VACCA

VACCA's Ovens Murray offices are based in Wangaratta, Wodonga and Shepparton. We provide a range of services and programs across Mansfield, Benalla, Wangaratta, Alpine, Indigo, Wodonga and Towong shires. Goulburn support services are limited to the Lakidjeka program.



#### 2021 Highlight – Wellbeing Library

*Our Wellbeing Committee established a Wellbeing Library in our Wangaratta office, to support connection to culture through the sharing of resources and materials.*

Fully stocked with cultural and wellbeing titles, the Library provides an important reference and borrowing point, and a staff meeting place, with a gentle reminder that taking time to browse helps to keep us focused for our important work.

Artist, Lexi Clare, painted the bookshelves: "My name is Lexi Clare, I am 11 years old. I am a proud Dunghutti Woman (Muna). This painting I did with my Mum. This is the story, and I have included some of my traditional Dunghutti language. The meeting places (Camps – Gandi) symbolise the three VACCA offices in Ovens Murray and Goulburn; Wangaratta, Wodonga, Shepparton. The three offices all work together and connect by the Earth (country – dhitiyn), Rivers (Bitha), Mountains (Banduung) and the Sun (Dhunuwi). Surrounding the offices, the U shape symbols represent our community and families coming into VACCA". A second library has started in our Wodonga office.







# COVID-19 RESPONSE

July 2020 to June 2021 saw Victorians experience the longest running COVID-19 restrictions in any nation in the world. But we ensured the unique challenge of the pandemic would not adversely affect delivery of services to our community. We responded quickly to each restriction change and connected with clients through a mix of remote and COVID-safe face-to-face visits.

Risk management was a key feature of our flexible approach to service delivery. We ensured there was streamlined and consistent planning for all home visits. We introduced client safety plans for every family. We operated with Red and Yellow bubbles across our workplaces, so potential risks were minimised and services were not affected.

Our rules were simple and effective:

**RULE No.1**  
Sight the child-  
Every time

**RULE No.2**  
Conduct a  
COVID-19 health  
check prior to each  
visit

**RULE No.3**  
Wear a  
MASK

**RULE No.4**  
No Client will  
miss out on  
services

**RULE No.5**  
Get  
Vaccinated

VACCA view of lockdown 2020-2021

**130**  
days in  
lockdown

**30,000**  
outreach  
calls

More direct  
material  
supports to  
clients

Increased contact  
with clients  
through remote  
platforms

**100%**  
client safety  
plans

**100%**  
home visit  
plans

Adapted  
COVID-19  
Protocols with  
each change in  
restrictions

Incentives for  
staff to be  
vaccinated

# EMERGENCY RELIEF

**We know our donors and funders together with our staff can make a difference and continue to help those most at need. From April 2020 to September 2020 last year, just one of VACCA's Emergency Assistance programs located in Northern metropolitan region provided over 3,500 instances of direct emergency assistance to families, including the provision of food and household essentials, vouchers, delivery of meals and conducting wellbeing checks.**

When we are able to help community members quickly, we find they also access ongoing services at VACCA, or services in the community, which supports our clients to make timely and informed decisions to create a brighter future and begin pathways to healing.

## Spotlight on the South

Prior to the pandemic, VACCA's Emergency Relief program in Melbourne's south was a walk-in service based in Dandenong, accessible on specific days and set hours per week.

During the pandemic, our team adapted to provide a remote service including telephone intake and home-delivery of resources. This response has helped to optimise our community safety, particularly for Elders. Despite social distancing, we have connected remotely with clients to yarn, seek information, and provide support or referrals during a very isolating period for many in lockdown. Record numbers of Emergency Relief vouchers and assistance materials for Elders.

Our young Aboriginal team members gained much from the outreach provided to Elders. And Elders told us how much they appreciated the opportunity to connect and receive practical assistance.

Emotional support for adults and families was critical, and we gratefully acknowledge Working for Victoria funding that facilitated our delivery of this extra level of support to the community during these difficult times.

## Helping families so young people can stay close to their own family and culture

Nanna Kaye, a grandmother, recently took on care of her granddaughter.

Nanna Kaye, already a vulnerable community member, came to VACCA in urgent need of support. Early help can mean a smoother transition into Kinship Care arrangements and can make all the difference for a young person and their carer.

Our support workers were able to assist with necessities for her granddaughter like providing a bed, and having clothing, blankets, extra food and toiletries.



# Our People





# OUR BOARD

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), an 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*



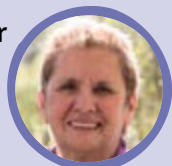
Auntie Marg is a Wurreker Broker with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI). Previously Auntie Margaret worked at the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-operative and was an employee at VACCA for over nine years. Auntie Marg has been an active VACCA Board Member for nine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

**Jason Kanoa – Director**  
*Gunditjmara / Bunjty*



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*



Auntie Deidre is the former CEO of the Aboriginal Community Elders Services (ACES). Prior to this, Auntie Deidre worked at the Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) for 17 years and at VACCA. Auntie 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 continuously for five years and was previously on our Board for 14 consecutive years.

**Travis Lovett – Director**

*Kerrupmarra / Gunditjmara*



Travis is employed as the Director of Aboriginal Self-determination and Reform with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. He previously held the role of Director / Chief of Staff in the Office of Deputy Secretary Water and Catchments at DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning). He also previously held the position of Manager of Koori Courts with Court Services Victoria, and served in various roles in areas ranging from youth engagement, to higher education at VAEAI (Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated). Travis has completed a Masters Business Administration (MBA) and Graduate Certificate in Management. He was elected to the VACCA Board of Directors in 2021.

# OUR STAFF

While a small sample, the staff profiled this year exemplify the calibre of staff employed across VACCA regions and programs.

## Shirley Slann

### Pitta Pitta

A strong and passionate advocate for community, Shirley is known for being calm under pressure and a respected voice of reason within the ACCO and Family Violence sectors for over 28 years. She is someone staff across VACCA turn to for advice and guidance, both in her technical expertise and knowledge in family violence, youth justice, sexual assault services and more but also for her cultural guidance and wisdom. Shirley fights fiercely for all clients, always respecting and acknowledging the impact of trauma. She believes in self determination for all Aboriginal people.

## Tamrah Johnson

### Trawlwoolway

Tamrah has devoted her career to working with vulnerable people in community services, including youth and children, families and people of all abilities. She is a woman of integrity, strong in culture with an open and honest manner. Tamrah is held in high regard by both her staff and the Aboriginal community. Since living in Wangaratta she has been a member and chair of the Local Aboriginal Network and has played a key role in rekindling and reconnecting the Wangaratta Aboriginal community. Starting at VACCA in 2019 she has played a vital role in the establishment of the Ovens Murray office and has implemented 13 new programs.

## Nakia Firebrace

### Yorta Yorta

Nakia is passionate about making a difference in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and ensuring the voice of Aboriginal people are heard. Nakia is a generous person and loves to share his deep knowledge and understanding of his Nation's lore, protocols and language with the young people he works with to support their healing journeys and strengthen their pathways back to kin, Community and Country. A strong advocate, he is respected for his way of advocating for the inclusions of all peoples in society. He is a respected advocate and role model to young Aboriginal men who are in contact with the justice system and has a proven record of supporting young men to stay grounded and connected to culture.

## Kylie Ponchard

### Palawa

Kylie has dedicated a large portion of her life to improving the lives of Aboriginal children and their families. Kylie has a passion for Kinship carers and advocating for children to be with their kinship networks when they can't be at home with mum or dad. Being employed at VACCA for over 10 years, Kylie continues to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to Aboriginal self determination and this is evidenced through her tremendous leadership and dedication she has invested into the Nugel program and VACCA's Section 18 Journey. Over the

past 18 months during the COVID-19 Pandemic, she has continued to demonstrate unwavering leadership to her team and together this has allowed the Nugel program to continue the work of keeping Aboriginal children and young people safe and connected to their Culture and Country.

## Adrienne Lidscomb

### Wiradjuri

Adrienne (Adi) is passionate about trauma informed culturally responsive care. Adrienne has an impressive skillset, a deep knowledge of attachment, trauma and mental health/SEWB for Aboriginal people, coupled with a very humble approach to her work. As a senior Facilitator in the training team she was instrumental in the design and update of the "Yarning up on Trauma" package and facilitates this training externally and with staff across the organisation. In her roles in the Aboriginal Children's Healing Team she plays an important role in capacity building through leading Group Reflective Practice as well as supervising and mentoring students on placement. Adi shows leadership and service excellence in her work every day. She is currently supporting a project on designing and delivering suicide and self-harm training to VACCA staff as a direct response to the increased need for mental health support, especially during the pandemic.

## Emily James-Kennedy

### Yorta Yorta & Gunditjmara

After many years as a frontline worker, Team Leader Emily displays great leadership, compassion, and empathy. Emily nurtures a culturally safe and inclusive environment, not only for VACCA staff but the many families and communities we work alongside. Emily's leadership in the Nugel program was seen in July 2021, when she and a colleague attended Marram-Ngala Ganbu (Children's Court) to advocate for three children (from two different families) to return home to their parents' care. Due to Emily's outstanding advocacy, leadership, and determination, all three children were successfully reunified with their parents on Family Preservation Orders. Emily received great feedback from Magistrate MacPherson, who expressed she had never seen three children return to their parents care in one day.

# KINSHIP CARERS

**VACCA's Kinship Care program provides care and support for Aboriginal children who are unable to live with their parents. The children are cared for by a relative, close friend or a member of their community in the carer's own home.**

Children may be in kinship care because of concerns about their protection, or because their parents are experiencing difficulties and need a break. VACCA's Kinship Care program offers placement support and case management, information and advice to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kinship carers, support for Kinship Care families, cultural connection support and group support and activities.

Kinship carers took on additional responsibility while raising our children with remote learning and full-time childcare for younger children when restrictions were in place. With fewer opportunities to connect to culture and Community, and support fostering connections with the children in their care.

VACCA Kinship Northern supported their kinship carers throughout the pandemic by creating online yarning circles. This initiative was funded through Hume Council's COVID-19 Community Connections and Partnership fund. Six Yarning Circles provided an opportunity to connect, share their journey and resources and to build connections with each other, to County and to culture.

Storytelling sessions for children were run alongside art activities, with wellbeing packs delivered to each carer's home. Each pack included books, art supplies and other resources. Sessions were facilitated by Yarn Strong Sista.

These sessions enabled workers to better identify carer needs so they could be linked to necessary support services, as well as providing much needed peer support. The sessions built a sense of trust and rapport amongst carers and workers.

The yarning circles built a circle of care and an extension of the child's community, kinship care has always been a central part of Aboriginal child rearing practices. The yarning circles strengthened the understanding that children are loved, protected and cared for by the whole community.

## Jamara's story

**Jamara was removed from his parents when he was 13 months old and placed with his maternal aunt and her partner and their children in Melbourne. Jamara's parents faced challenges with drugs and alcohol and were only able to have limited contact with him.**

When six years old his parents attended an AFLDM where contact between Jamara and his parents re-commenced, supervised by the maternal family. Contact was initially by telephone and quickly progressed to video contact and then face-to-face.

The Kinship team continued advocating for the strengthening of the relationship between Jamara, his parents and his grandfather. In doing this it became clear that the Permanent Care Order was no longer appropriate. The team was mindful Jamara had been in his current placement for over six years and was settled and had built a strong attachment to his maternal aunt and his cousins.

A gradual reunification plan was developed, and Jamara returned to the care of his parents in 2020. In making an order returning Jamara to the care of his parents, the Magistrate was overwhelmed and in tears and praised the parents for the great work that they had achieved.



# FOSTER CARERS

**The Foster Care Recruitment, Assessment, Training and Retention (FCRATR) team is responsible for recruiting foster carers and ensuring they are the right people to keep Aboriginal children connected to their culture and their community while in care.**

Potential foster carers are trained, assessed and then accredited as foster carers. The wellbeing and support of new and existing Foster Carers is a key focus area. The team operates statewide with positions in Preston (North), Werribee (West), Frankston (South), Chirnside Park (East), Morwell (Gippsland) and Ovens Murray (Wangaratta).

## Foster Care Week Celebrations

Foster Care Week (12 September-18 September) raises awareness about foster care in the wider community, and the events held during Foster Care Week aim to celebrate and appreciate our foster carers and the invaluable contribution they are making to the lives of vulnerable children, young people, and the community.

This year's theme was **'Adaptability: Caring through COVID'**. The team organised an online celebration of VACCA carers which included a moving Welcome to Country from Auntie Diane Kerr, as well as a number of thank you videos featuring Auntie Muriel Bamblett, Uncle Dave Arden and songsters The Merindas that were posted on our social channels throughout the week. Every carer also received a gift, which in a time of lockdown was very much appreciated.

## Recruitment campaign

In collaboration with Little Rocket and Brightlabs we created a new recruitment campaign that was adapted to conform to COVID-19 constraints. The campaign saw record numbers of enquires following the launch. Since February 2021 there have been 3,057 landing page views, where the social campaign reached more than 250,000 people. From the campaign we received 240 formal submissions during this period. The team has continued to process enquiries, conduct information sessions, host training sessions and assess applicants. VACCA was the first agency in Victoria to successfully transform face to face Foster Care training online; this has made it more widely accessible to carers from across the State.

## Care Innovations

**OVENS MURRAY** Yarning Circle for carers commenced with seven carers attending and facilitated by Yarn Strong Sista Olivia Donnini, a qualified counsellor. The carers were provided with iPads and resources.

**WEST** carers were given additional resources, information and opportunities for training. A trialling of "carer development plans" is in place for at high risk placements to minimise placement breakdown and to enhance quality of care for children and young people where concerns exist.



## Good news story

*Foster Carers who provide care for a young child with complex needs have made a long-term commitment to continue to provide care and, as such, have taken steps to obtain a bigger home, to be able to facilitate the care needed. This is a positive step as the carers have considered relinquishing care previously and, with the needs of the child, it would have been difficult to find a suitable placement.*



# OUR MEMBERS

As an Aboriginal Community Controlled organisation, Aboriginal community members and staff make up our growing membership.

“

I came back and re-joined because I realised VACCA was where I was meant to be, and it did and will always feel like home. Watching VACCA change over the years with the programs and services we provide to our Aboriginal community is why VACCA was established back in 1976 and that's the reason why I am a member at VACCA.”



*Auntie Narelle Slater, proud Kamilaroi woman and dedicated VACCA member of 14 years. Initially joining for three years when first commencing at VACCA in 1986 and re-joining in 2010 when returning from working across the broader community sector.*

“

When I came down, I was always going to work in the community sector and wanted to be part of the VACCA community. I became a member to have a voice and to be part of the decision making. When I'm at the meetings I'm always putting my hand up to second a motion- if I'm going to be there, I'm going to be active.”



*Paul Ferris, proud Aboriginal man, born and raised in Cairns, home of Yidinji and Tjapukai tribes in North Queensland, and a member of VACCA for 10 years.*

“

Being a member means knowing I am part of something bigger and I am very passionate about what VACCA stands for. Their vision and purpose really resonate with me, not just professionally but personally. Everything VACCA strives to do for community, our children and families is very close and dear to me.”



*Beck Ogden, a proud Ngarigo and Wiradjuri woman, has been a VACCA member for three years and is devoted to giving back to her Community, Ancestors and Country.*

“

I am passionate about children's safety and wellbeing and ensuring children and young people have a voice. That's what drives me to work at and to be a member of VACCA, working for my community and making a difference where I can.”



*Paula Crilly, a strong Yorta Yorta/Wemba Wemba woman and one of VACCA's longest standing members of 21 years- joining after hearing about VACCA from Community and later coming to work in the Continuous Quality Improvement Team as an Investigator.*

“

Being a member is important, but it wasn't until I went to an AGM and discovered we have the ability to help make changes at VACCA and to have a voice to vote. One of the main reasons I love being a member is it brings VACCA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community together, where we get a chance to catch up and have a yarn.”



*Chie Bourke, a proud Yawuru woman, joined VACCA in 2016 and currently works as a Senior Project Office for Cultural Therapeutic Ways and has been a VACCA member for four years.*

# FROM INTERN TO POLICY OFFICER

**Brigalow McIntosh, a proud Muruwari man and a second year Bachelor of Arts student at the University of Melbourne majoring in Criminology and Indigenous Studies, completed an internship with VACCA's Policy Team through the CareerTrackers program.**

*"During my internship I worked on a policy brief about data sovereignty and its implications for VACCA which complemented my university studies as I had just written an assignment on decolonising research methods. The internship was a real eye opener for me to realise that working in an Aboriginal organisation was what I wanted to do. I am very passionate about advocating for Indigenous issues and I was able to explore how this looks in a professional setting at VACCA."*

Clare, Brigalow's supervisor during his internship, reflected that Briggs was happy to rise to the challenge, taking on any task required which is a useful skill to have in a new work environment.

Following the internship, a new Policy Officer role within the Policy Team was funded and Brigalow was invited to apply.

Brigalow noted that, *"I was hesitant at first to apply because I thought there was no way I could get the job while studying but I applied and VACCA was incredibly accommodating for my studies and allowed me to achieve a healthy work life balance with part-time hours."*



*"This new role is challenging but incredibly rewarding. At VACCA I can learn and grow in an environment that is very supportive and it's great to know that the work I do benefits our children, young people and families."*

# ORGANISATIONAL AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**VACCA has a new Organisational and Workforce Development plan 2021-25 that will cement VACCA's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination and provide a highly skilled and qualified workforce to support Aboriginal children, young people and families.**

## Workforce

VACCA has continued to expand and grow over the last 12 months, adding many new programs and expanding activities across the regions.



## Organisational capacity building

VACCA obtained sizable funding to promote organisational development, enabling employees to gain valuable skills and advancements in training and wellbeing. VACCA has been fortunate to be successful in receiving very necessary workforce funding from both the

Dhelk Dja Family Violence Workforce Funding and the Aboriginal Workforce Fund. This funding will be used towards creating positive employment pathways, investing in upskilling, training and supporting staff wellbeing.

- **20 VACCA staff successfully graduated in the Diploma of Community Services** during 2019/20. This adds to the 26 staff who successfully graduated in 2018/19. In total now, 36 staff have completed this qualification.
- **11 staff have successfully completed the Certificate IV in Business Administration** at Melbourne PolyTechnic
- **7 Staff completed the Diploma of Leadership and Management** at Melbourne PolyTechnic
- **24 students (10 Aboriginal) have been employed at VACCA** following student placement and **four Aboriginal students have been employed following internships**
- **20 staff employed under the Working for Victoria initiative** with five progressing to permanent roles

Despite a very challenging year we are thrilled to see all staff completing their qualifications online while working from home. This is a wonderful demonstration of their commitment and determination to succeed in their studies.

## Diploma

The latest group of VACCA staff to complete the Diploma came together to discuss the proud moments, challenges and the achievements. For some staff, it was their first time studying since high school but, as a group, by supporting one another, have proven to themselves how capable they are.

*“I’m proud of achieving this diploma with kids at home and working full time. I left school very early, but I can now show my kids that you can get this far if you work hard.”*

## Ngulunbarra Leadership Program

VACCA's new internal Ngulunbarra Leadership Program (Dja Dja Wurrung word for 'Coming Together') has been launched to further develop current team leaders and program managers and create a talent pool to draw on for future succession planning. Participants will engage in a wide range of developmental activities such as mentoring, challenging projects, additional responsibilities, work placements, shadowing, higher duties and workshops led by senior Aboriginal leaders from within VACCA.

# WELLBEING

**Staff Wellbeing is widely supported throughout VACCA and has become a prominent discussion feature during COVID. Our focus during the last 12 months has been on keeping staff connected with each other and their supervisors and providing supports in the form of resources and team wellbeing activities.**

The Healthy Workplace Wellbeing Coordinator used our Message Stick newsletter to connect with staff and provide Wellbeing Updates around maintaining a healthy work-life balance when working from home. Seau Geas reminded us to remember the little things such as having a healthy breakfast, hydrating, setting alarms to remind us to stretch, leaving our home office at the end of the day, having online lunch with colleagues and stepping outside.

Regional wellbeing representatives, and a dedicated Wellbeing Coordinator have been employed to progress a comprehensive Wellbeing Plan. A Wellbeing Committee was established to coordinate this work. A specific agreement has been made with VAHS to provide EAP counselling services for Aboriginal staff. This Aboriginal EAP partnership was a first in Victoria. It is also in addition to an existing EAP counselling service which provides a broader service for the whole organisation.

## A spotlight on Ovens Murray

*Never has staff wellbeing been more important than through the pandemic. We developed innovative ways to keep teams empowered and safely engaged with each other and our community. Huge benefits came from simple activities.*



- **Stop the Clock**, a half-hour fortnightly virtual catch-up, usually themed, allowed staff to down tools and have a yarn
- The quirky **Bring your Pet to the Screen** idea boosted energy and lifted spirits. Starting each week with an emailed Affirmation was appreciated during lockdowns
- Monday morning **sharing of photos or videos from our weekend** was popular
- **We celebrated Easter with bags of goodies to 'share' online**, the best virtual Easter Bonnet parade, and a highly competitive treasure hunt
- **We celebrated Wear it Purple with some very creative wardrobe ensembles**, and for RUOK we wore yellow and played themed-games
- **Local Elder, Uncle Chris Thorne spoke to the importance of reaching-out to each other**, not just on this day but every day, and we shared a video on different ways to ask "are you OK?"
- Our region is famous for Autumn colours, so our teams banded to **walk the beautiful Bullawah Cultural Trail**



# OUR SUPPORTERS AND 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. In particular, we would like to acknowledge that partnership with the Victorian Children's and Young Person's Alliance. Also, Bendigo and District Co-operative for the partnership on the Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification Program and the Child Protection Response Pilot. VACCA would also like to acknowledge all ACCOs across the state as we have documented cultural practice elements as part of the Family Preservation and Reunification Response, published as Cultural Elements Approach: A Guide to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families.

## Partners and sector organisations

Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health Initiative - Wyndham City Council, Anglicare, Austin Health – Child and Youth Mental Health, Australian College of Agriculture and Horticulture, Berry Street, Bridge Darebin – Preston, 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, Empower Australia, Family Life, Family Safety Victoria, Food Ladder, Foster Care Association, Fostering Connections, Gateway Community Health, IPC Health, Jesuit Social Services, Kids Under Cover, Koorie Youth Council, Latrobe Community Health Service, La Trobe University – Bouverie Centre, Life Without Barriers, Lowitja Institute, MacKillop Family Services, Mallee Sexual Assault Unit, Melbourne City Mission, Melbourne Polytechnic, Merriwa Industry, The Orange Door Network, Orygen, Ovens Murray Child and Family Service Alliance, Quantum Support Services, Queen Elizabeth Centre, Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne – Wadja Aboriginal Family Place, Swinburne University, SNAICC, 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, Westcare, WestCASA, Women's Health West, Youth Support and Advocacy Service, Youthworx.

## Philanthropy

Australian Communities Foundation - EM Horton Family Fund, Bendigo Bank Victorian Bushfire Appeal, Equity Trustees - David Taylor Galt Charitable Trust, Gandel Foundation, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, Inner North Community Foundation, The Jack Brockhoff Foundation, Naylor Stewart Ancillary Fund, Sidney Myer Fund, William Buckland Foundation.

## Pro bono services and gifts in kind:

Ashurst, Blak Dot Gallery, Good360, Impact For Women, Share the Dignity, Pinchapoo, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Toy Drive, Backpacks 4 Vic Kids.

## Supporters:

Triple R Broadcasters (3RRR), GM Leasing, Kia Motors Australia, Mattel, Kmart Australia, Target Australia, St Kilda Football Club, Toyota Fleet Management, Seb Brown Jewellery.

## Government

Federal Government: Department of Social Services, Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, Department of Education and Training, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications - Office for the Arts, National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

Victorian Local Government Councils

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency acknowledges the support of:





# Our Community





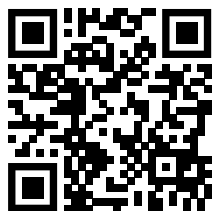
# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

Throughout the year, VACCA has continued to innovate to support our Community. The resilience and strength shown by both our staff and community as we find new ways to communicate and engage with one another has been inspiring. VACCA continued to invest in digital spaces and events to keep our community connected, informed and close to culture.

## Our Cultural Hub

Our Cultural Hub continued to grow as a resource for all ages, providing cultural activities for kids at home and resources to help young people learn, get creative and stay close to culture as many of us isolated at home.

The Cultural Hub was visited by close to 4,000 children, families and young people during the year, and as it grows it continues to provide a much needed and culturally rich resource or our community.



Scan the  
QR code to  
access our  
Cultural Hub



## MobTalk podcast

Created as a space for young people to celebrate culture, for the 20 episodes that have been created they have been downloaded over 3,000 times.

## COVID-19 information

We continued to provide resources and information around COVID-19 to support our community, sharing regular health, safety and wellbeing messages with our online audience of almost 25,000 (across all social platforms: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn).

## VIDEO: VACCA-Time to get vaccinated!

A video was created to address vaccine hesitancy in the Gippsland and Ovens Murray regions. Lionel Rose, a well-known local artist from Drouin also works with young people through VACCA's Family Violence Therapeutic service in Morwell. He wrote the rap, 'Time to Get Vaccinated', as a way to connect with young people on this issue. "I fell in love with music at a young age, growing up around family members who played guitars and sang, mostly country music. I believe young people can express themselves, their fears and hopes for the future through music."

This video reached 6,900 people in Gippsland and 6,680 in Ovens Murray.

## Check out the video

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY (CONT.)

**During the year celebrations and commemorative events went online, with thousands of community members joining us for live streamed events and to observe important cultural dates.**

- More than 3,500 people tuned in to our first ever online Koorie Christmas Carols event, adding some much-needed festive cheer to the end of a challenging year.
- Our NAIDOC week series "What Heal Country Means To Me" reached over 11,000 people as we were unable to return to Country, family and community.
- More than 8,000 people honoured and paid respects to the Stolen Generations via live stream on National Sorry Day.
- Our Safe Koorie Families video series launched to create conversations around healthy and respectful relationships for young mob. Close to 175,000 people have viewed the three videos.

### Deadly Story

**Over the past year Deadly Story has been able to successfully engage with Bangerang, Taungurung and Wudawurrung Traditional Owners so that their specific nation information can be included in the Aboriginal Country Map.**

Deadly Story is working with an additional six Nations for their approval to include their information on their own Aboriginal Country page. Additional information has been included in the history timeline as well as adding various missions and stations to the relevant countries on the Aboriginal Country Map. Deadly Story's Instagram account strengthens the opportunities for connection and reach with almost 4,000 followers.

Over the course of the last financial year, Deadly Story saw an 85 percent rise in unique page views, as well as a 50 percent increase in



Scan the  
QR code to go  
to the Deadly  
Story website

its newsletter subscriptions. Deadly Story sends out a weekly newsletter to all VACCA staff, 'Keeping Culture', which includes events and resources.

During COVID-19 the Deadly Story team worked collaboratively and built connections with ACCOs and the broader Aboriginal community across the State to promote virtual cultural events and initiatives for Aboriginal children and young people to attend across all platforms.



# NAIDOC – HEAL COUNTRY

**The 2021 theme Heal Country is a call by Aboriginal people to the rest of Australia to recognise, protect and maintain their land and heritage.**

To 'Heal Country' means to resolve outstanding injustices experienced by this country's Indigenous people, to recognise and respond to the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Heal Country, heal our nation. It's past time.

VACCA created cultural packs of resources and vouchers which were delivered to families to help them celebrate NAIDOC together at home. The resources included clap sticks, books and videos specifically designed for children and young people in celebration of their cultural identity. We produced over 3,000 T-shirts, which we delivered to children and young people in care across all VACCA regions. Response to the T-shirts was overwhelmingly positive across the State.

COVID-19 restrictions made it impossible to hold our usual events. So we created some special tributes. One was a video series featuring interviews with Aboriginal leaders speaking to what Heal Country means to them and their community. The featured leaders are well known for their work and dedication in key Aboriginal family and community services.

- **Muriel Bamblett** a Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Bunnerong, Taungurong woman, CEO of VACCA and Chairperson of the peak body SNAICC, who also serves on over 30 advisory groups and is a strong advocate for the protection of Aboriginal children, families and communities
- **Fay Carter AO** a respected Elder of the Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung clans who helped reform welfare programs and Aboriginal aged care services
- **Jodie Chatfield** a proud Wiradjuri woman who works in the justice sector
- **Kevin Russell** a proud Yorta Yorta man from a family famous for fighting injustice and who now works to reunite members of the Stolen Generation
- **Wally Harrison** a proud Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung man who has many years' experience working in family violence services, and understands how the deep wounds of the past continue to impact the lives of many Aboriginal people.

[View the series on our website](#)



Scan the QR code see the full series of videos



*Going out on to Country and walking Country is the most wonderful spiritual experience. To actually walk on the country, to walk in the footsteps of your ancestors, you get the feeling of being there with them, of understanding them, of feeling them. To walk Country is very, very spiritual, very important. You can talk about Country, which is also important, but to walk it and talk it, it's an amazing experience.*

– Auntie Fay Carter

*That Country is what keeps us all coming back. We all moved away. Especially growing-up in a rural town, you move away for opportunities. But there's something ... I feel complete. I feel whole. I feel 'me' when I'm actually back on Country. When I drove over the border, I just felt a whole heap of calmness.*

– Jodie Chatfield

*I believe that the whole healing of Country, healing of community, healing of individuals is interwoven. It's that very holistic understanding of connection, that one thing can't be out of whack otherwise it will affect everything else. As we heal, Country heals, we heal as a people, and as a community. We all benefit from that.*

– Uncle Kevin Russell

# NARRUN YANA – ART COLLECTIVE

**From the Woiwurrung language of the Kulin Nation, Narrun Yana translates as ‘Spirit Journey’. This is fitting for members of the Collective because it reflects their journey from out-of-home-care and high school into adulthood. It also reflects their journey as artists and contributors to their community.**

The second exhibition of Narrun Yana, ‘Roots of Identity’, was held as part of the Yirramboi Festival in February 2021. The exhibition reflected the artists’ “personal journeys and experiences, and represents what community and home means to each of us, examining the roots of who we are as artists and First Nations people.”

Narrun Yana allows the Collective artists to create work “in a culturally safe environment that supports us to become economically independent, as well as well as providing professional development opportunities within the arts and cultural sector.”

The artists in Narrun Yana have recently finished working with Torres Strait Islander business woman Kerry Kennell, and completed their first business plan. Workshops were held over the last eight months, and the Collective now has an 18-month business plan to execute, in order to see the viability of Narrun Yana as a small business and attract more young people to the Collective.

We have reshaped the model based on a better understanding of profit and loss through sales of products and artwork. Next step is to employ a project worker to support implementation of the plan.

Looking to the future, Narrun Yana members Teaka Williams, Rubii Red, Chelsea McGinty and Nakia Cadd reflected that “Our goals for the future are to create opportunities for each other and other young blackfullas, and to be recognised as artists. We hope to create a successful independent black arts business for youth. We invite you to join us on our journey.”



# NGARRA JARRA NOUN

**Ngarra Jarra Noun, which means 'remedy heal' in Woiwurrung, is VACCA's statewide support for Aboriginal survivors of institutional sexual abuse to access and apply for redress through the National Redress Scheme.**

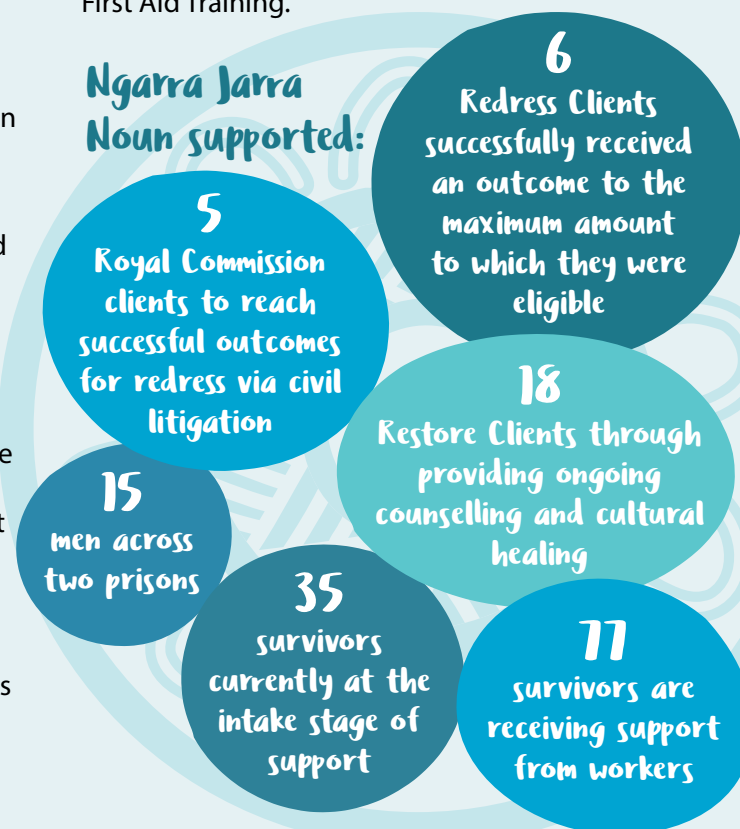
Due to COVID-19, Ngarra Jarra Noun adapted their support services to online and were able to deliver Group Yarning Circles and individual counselling sessions that were culturally safe. Some of the biggest challenges faced over the past year were due to not being able to see clients face-to-face, which impacted on their healing journey. As part of our outreach work during this period, we saw an escalation in clients needing emotional support.

Ngarra Jarra Noun was able to provide iPads to clients to ensure they stayed connected, delivered food vouchers and art supplies, and provided additional emergency relief support. Between lockdowns, Ngarra Jarra Noun visited all prisons across the state to talk to Aboriginal inmates about their options for seeking redress. Out of these sessions, 12 clients came forward and we are now supporting them in their claims. However, restrictions impacted our access and engagement with survivors who are incarcerated, with limitations on visitors and telephone calls.

Ngarra Jarra Noun partnered to deliver Stolen Generation Reparations Community Consultations

across the State and, from these forums, we received 15 referrals and continued to build strong working relationships with Bringing Them Home Workers. These relationships were critical when completing welfare checks on clients who were based regionally as, due to restrictions, our workers were unable to visit. The Ngarra Jarra Noun team's wellbeing is critical to the success of their work, so wellbeing activities were scheduled throughout the year. These included team lunches, facilitated wellbeing sessions by Sue-Anne Hunter, attending an art exhibition and completing Mental Health First Aid Training.

## Ngarra Jarra Noun supported:



Our Community

## Redress

K came to Ngarra Jarra Noun via referral from the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS). The lawyers progressing K's National Redress Scheme claim had re-traumatised K due to their lack of cultural safety and education.

Over weeks of us getting to know each other, K finally felt up to telling the story in the comfort and safety of home. Thanks to other supporting agencies working with us, we collected enough evidence to ensure K received a maximum outcome a lot sooner than usual. K is very grateful for our support.



# JUSTICE

**VACCA is one of the largest providers of justice support and advocacy to Aboriginal Community involved in the justice system in Victoria, both directly through our youth and adult justice programs and as part of our response more broadly to vulnerable children and families in our other services.**

This past year VACCA has been leading the way in rolling out an innovative Youth Through-Care program pilot, funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, which aims to reduce recidivism through the provision of intensive case management and holistic wrap-around support to Aboriginal young people, both pre- and post-release from custody.

VACCA has campaigned strongly to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years of age. Jail is not the appropriate place for children to be. Aboriginal children and young people who come into contact with the justice system, more often than not are struggling with compounding, complex issues; having experienced significant trauma, family violence, poor mental health or substance abuse or have a disability.

VACCA has built a suite of Justice Programs that connect Aboriginal peoples to culture, family and community, allow for healing, address the impacts of trauma and support positive SEWB, are key to preventing offending behaviours and recidivism. Being immersed in culture and traditional forms of healing creates a safe space to tell their story free from judgement and acknowledge the trauma of their history. It helps to build identity and develop trust to maintain engagement with support services.

## VACCA justice programs include:

➤ **Youth Through Care:** works to reduce reoffending of Aboriginal young people through an intensive, holistic, client-centred, culturally appropriate and trauma informed model with a strong connection to family and Country. The model is based on offering support through intensive, individual case management from entry into detention and then for up to 24 months or as required during the post release period including cultural connections work.

➤ **Local Justice Worker Program:** provides culturally appropriate supports to Aboriginal adults who are subject to community corrections or parole orders or have outstanding fines or warrants. The primary function of the program is to work with our partners to provide help for Aboriginal people to successfully complete their orders or resolve fines and warrants, and to provide appropriate support and supervision for clients undertaking mandatory community work.

➤ **Youth Justice Program:** This program commenced in August 2020 and, similar to the Local Justice Worker Program, provides critical culturally safe and appropriate supports with a focus on Aboriginal youth in the Southern region. VACCA's Southern youth justice team is currently delivering this program to 29 clients, with an overarching target of 40.



- **Beyond Survival:** delivered across Victorian prisons Beyond Survival is a 3-day group program that provides trauma informed facilitation of narrative group work for prisoners including yarning circles to support healing and strengthen each person's connectedness to family, community and culture. The program also provides a point of contact upon release for people who have attended the yarning circles to support access to local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services and to connect to family, community and culture upon their release. This approach sustains the changes they have made in prison, builds protective factors to maximise effective reintegration into the community and reduces the likelihood of reoffending.
- **Barreng Moorop Youth Justice Program:** an early intervention program that supports Aboriginal people aged 10-14 years where they or their families are involved in the justice system. We help young people to address issues behind offending, such as inter-generational trauma. We also address mental health issues, provide access to education support, and activities to strengthen cultural and community connections. We can supply families with service information and referral advice for supports such as counselling, health-checks and cognitive assessments. VACCA runs the program in partnership with Jesuit Social Services and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service.



# BALIT BAGGARROOK – KOORIE WOMEN'S DIVERSION PROGRAM

**Balit Baggarrook is an intensive case management service working with Koorie women aged 18+ who have entered or are likely to enter the criminal justice system.**

We help to create case plans and provide support for legal and corrections matters, advocating with Child Protection and VACCA's Nugel program, support service liaison (housing, rehabilitation, health and mental health wellbeing, counselling, family violence), and programs including behaviour change, living skills, and family and cultural strengthening support.

This past year, we further supported clients with referrals to an array of culturally-specific and appropriate local support services. This included Aboriginal cooperatives, community-run women's support, and cultural strengthening groups such as Djirra, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) in addition to a range of VACCA internal programs.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions and remote work, we maintained connections with key stakeholders and services, regularly met with other support teams, and connected with services to enable networking, collaborative case practice and referral pathways.

## Case study

*Our client, a Gunai Kurnai/Wiradjuri woman, was referred by her lawyer while in custody and granted bail. She presented with complex needs including substance dependence, mental health concerns, long-term homelessness, a history of offending, and experiences of childhood trauma.*

The woman engaged with the program team who assisted her to action her goals. This included finding stable housing, seeking support for substance use, finding part time employment, and seeking reunification with her children. The woman has been supported by a multi-service team including Balit Baggarrook, a VAHS GP, AOD support worker, Launch Housing, Djirra, ReStart and Women's Housing.

This support enabled the woman to successfully transition from a Homeless to a Home Package, which entitled her to case management support and secure, stable housing for a period of 18 months. This was a significant stabilising factor for her and helped to facilitate contact with her children. She has attended weekly telephone counselling appointments for support with her AOD and has a mental health care plan with VAHS. This enabled the woman to seek psychological support for her trauma, depression and anxiety. The woman attended important court hearings and consistently engaged with Balit Baggarrook, making significant progress.



# MEN'S YARNING CIRCLE

## – YARNING STRONG

VACCA secured funding from the Victorian Aboriginal Community Initiative Fund to run a Men's Yarning Circle pilot program in our Ovens Murray region.

The project, with a focus on men's behavioural change, brought together Aboriginal men in a safe environment to participate in cultural activities which enabled healing, helped them to understand and be accountable for their offending behaviours, and supported them to build self-confidence.

Due to the pandemic the project was delayed, but we kept connected to community and guided participants through pre-screening assessments. Between lockdowns, the eight-week program ran at the Wangaratta Men's Shed with five participants. It was facilitated by local Aboriginal Elder Chris Thorne, who is experienced in Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation and mentoring youth within the Aboriginal community.

A revised version of the Growth Empowerment Measure tool helped to capture each participant's growth and, at the end of the program, the men invited family to celebrate their success, with each man awarded a trophy and certificate of participation.

On the first night participants were given a rough-cut boomerang.

***"Why it's a rough cut boomerang is because this is how I see the men as they come through the door on the first night. The idea of this program is to get these fellas to change their boomerang into a beautiful piece of work. Everything they learn whilst creating this piece of work, hopefully, they take on board the tools from our yarning session ... the idea is back at home, when a participant has experienced a trigger to old behaviours, he can look at the finished boomerang hanging on his wall and hopefully remember some of the tools he learnt from the program."***

– Uncle Chris Thorne



***"I like the closeness of the group, I don't like talking in front of large groups of say like 10 or more, so I like that it's a small group that I feel comfortable in."***

***"I like it, I enjoy it, it gives me a chance to say things that are on my mind to a group of fellas that don't judge me."***

# KOORIE KIDS HOMEWORK CLUBS

**Our Koorie Kids Homework Club provides a culturally safe space where children aged 5-12 years can do homework, participate in cultural activities, and connect with community Elders, volunteers and VACCA staff.**

In lockdown, we developed culturally appropriate resources, including workbooks and activity packs, which we sent to children to help keep their connection to community. Online service delivery was a challenge during the pandemic; replacing that important one-on-one contact with online sessions in which some families and children had to be encouraged to participate, introducing new clients is isolation and, most of all, ensuring that the needs of every family were met.

A big hit was the introduction of a book club. Our first ever Book Club included titles from Aboriginal authors and illustrators, which were great tools for reading and activity learning. We also gifted our students with a T-shirt designed by Auntie Margaret Harrison. The meaning behind the design is 'Mob comes

together'. It richly depicts a holistic view of the Homework Club; the feet walking into a circle are all the children and Elders together, the circle in the middle is the Club where everyone gathers and learns, nurtures and connects spiritually, and the feet walking out represent abundance, a feeling of 'one', connected to each other, community and Elders. The design is surrounded by blue because we live by the sea in the South.

We also sourced a tutor to support remote learning, and introduced online tutoring outside of the program for children who had fallen behind with online learning at school. We also supported families to participate in virtual forums, to access important information and continue their connection to culture and community.

It was wonderful to see children in the program embrace their cultural activities, to find a voice, and to have real ownership in this program.



Students were gifted with a T-shirt designed by Auntie Margaret Harrison. The meaning behind the design is 'Mob comes together'



# VACCA KOORIE KIDS SUPPORTED PLAYGROUPS

**The VACCA Koorie Kids Supported Playgroups are an Early Years-focused program for children aged up to five years. It is delivered in all regions across Victoria and funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency.**

We support children to prepare for Kinder and school, by planning and mapping each term, and focusing on the needs of each child and their family or carer.

The playgroups provide a culturally safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families and carers to come together to build connections with each other and their culture, encouraging a deeper sense of belonging to community and culture. Here they can also share stories, and participate in cultural arts, crafts, and dance opportunities. Our program is designed to bring family members together to yarn while their children participate in the Playgroup Program.

During COVID-19 restrictions, our program quickly changed to an online delivery method for the continued support of families and children to reach important milestones and outcomes during these challenging times. We were aware that families had been separated from supports on which they had always relied, and many families were feeling isolated from extended family members and friends in the community. In many areas, like our western metropolitan region, demand for the playgroups increased significantly during this time.

Between lockdowns, we welcomed the opportunity to again deliver in-person sessions and activities. In our northern metropolitan region, this included the Darebin Spiritual Healing Trail led by Elder Uncle Trevor Gallagher, where our families walked the land, listened to stories, had a Smoking Ceremony, used clap sticks, and danced together around the fire; connecting to Country, culture and themselves. We continued

to assist with referrals to crisis programs including Family Violence and supports for Family Services and Emergency Relief. In our western metropolitan region, the team helped families as far away as Geelong.

As a supplemental support tool, our Facebook social platform proved a big asset. In the northern metropolitan region our team created online videos for the page, which included activities and special appearances from high profile people such as Eddie Betts, who sent well wishes and words of encouragement. While in our western metropolitan region, families used our Facebook page to access health updates, local news and support services information. We also included links to other urgent needs such as food banks, clothing, counselling and housing. And many families took the opportunity to share ideas, photos and experiences. The response from families in all areas was very positive, including feedback that they felt supported and comforted in being able to stay connected.

VACCA created activity packs which we delivered fortnightly to families at home. The packs contained activities and tools to assist family bonding. We also produced books titled Let's get ready for Kinder and Let's get ready for School, to help children develop routines and prepare for early steps on their education and learning journey.



# TREATY AND YOO-RROOK

## **The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria has progressed significantly in preparation of treaty negotiations. The journey towards treaty has been strengthened with the establishment of the Yoo-rrook Truth and Justice Commission.**

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is a democratically elected body representing Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Victoria in our pursuit of treaties. Auntie Geraldine Atkinson and Marcus Stewart are the Co-Chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. VACCA CEO Muriel Bamblett is one of the 31 elected Assembly Members, representing the Metropolitan region.

The Assembly's core work is to establish the Treaty Negotiation Framework, the Treaty Authority Self-Determination Fund. Some of the foundational work required to make this process effective has been implemented, including a dispute resolution process supported by negotiation conduct protocols. These were formally agreed in 2020.

This past year the Assembly led and will continue to lead considerable community engagement to inform each aspect of the treaty process, with self-determination as the guiding

principle. In doing this, the Assembly has forged strong relationships with community members, allies and government in Victoria, nationally and internationally.

An interim Elders' Voice was established as part of the commitment to establish a permanent body. Auntie Charmaine Clarke and Uncle Andrew Gardiner are the Co-Chairs of the interim committee. Significantly, the mandate was given by community to push for statewide treaties, alongside local treaties. This will ensure there are rights and protections for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Victoria.

The Assembly established a number of 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, Cultural Governance and Data Sovereignty. Auntie Muriel is a member of several of these committees and has provided significant input into the Assembly's work and discussions.

It is clear there cannot be treaty without truth and justice, so VACCA welcomed the establishment of the Yoo-rrook Truth and Justice Commission. Both processes, working alongside each other, will ensure a fair and just treaty process with the State of Victoria.

We see the truth and justice process as an opportunity to highlight past injustices, the structural violence and discrimination that has enacted upon Aboriginal peoples will finally be understood. We know from the Bringing Them Home Report, the impact uncovering the truth of the experiences of Aboriginal children, young people and families.

Yoo-rrook is also an opportunity for healing. While there have been many atrocities committed against Aboriginal people, there are also incredible stories of resilience, innovation and leadership, and these must be told too. VACCA is committed to supporting and engaging in the Commission's process, the Commission's goals of truth, understanding and transformation.

VACCA has hosted two Treaty Yarning Circles for staff in the past year, where Marcus Stewart, Co-Chair of the Assembly presented alongside Auntie Muriel and other Assembly staff. VACCA believes we have a role in supporting staff and Community to understand the treaty process. We actively share information from the First Peoples' Assembly across VACCA's social channels and via our internal newsletter, Message Stick. We will continue to encourage staff and Community to be engaged and informed throughout every step of this historic process.







# Our Story





# OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**All VACCA programs and services aim to keep Aboriginal children, young people and families safe and connected to culture and community.**

VACCA's Cultural Therapeutic Ways (CTW) framework is a whole of agency approach to guide VACCA's practice of healing for Aboriginal children, young people, families, Community members and carers. It also frames the way we create a culturally safe and supportive workplace for staff.

To learn more about VACCA and our work, please contact [vacca@vacca.org](mailto:vacca@vacca.org) or visit our website [vacca.org](http://vacca.org).

If you would like further information or referral details, please contact your closest VACCA office. Please note that not all services are available at all locations.

## Family Services

- › Family services
- › Intensive Family Services
- › Aboriginal Family-Led Decision Making
- › Parenting Groups: Koorie FACES, Mums and Bubs Groups, Windook Dad's Group
- › Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification Response

## Child Protective Services

- › Nugel
- › Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service (ACSASS)

## Out-of-Home Care, including Better Futures

- › Kinship Family Finding
- › Cultural Support Planning
- › Koorie Cultural Placement and Support
- › Aboriginal Therapeutic Residential Care
- › Aboriginal Kinship Care
- › Kinship First Support Program
- › Aboriginal Foster Care
- › Foster Care Recruitment
- › Targeted Care Packages
- › Lead Tenant
- › Better Futures – Leaving Care
- › Carer Support Groups
- › Sibling Support Service

## Cultural Strengthening Programs

- › Return To Country
- › Cultural Camps
- › Art Mentoring
- › Community Garden
- › Narrun Yana Art Collective
- › Koorie Tiddas Choir
- › Cultural Hub at [www.vacca.org](http://www.vacca.org)
- › Deadly Story Website: [www.DeadlyStory.com](http://www.DeadlyStory.com)
- › VACCA Shop at [www.vacca.org/shop](http://www.vacca.org/shop)

## Cultural and Family Events

- › Anniversary of National Apology Day
- › National Sorry Day
- › Reconciliation Week
- › NAIDOC Children and Family Day Events
- › Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Day
- › Wear It Purple and Harmony Days
- › Koorie Christmas Celebrations

## Early Years Services

- › Footprints for Success
- › Koorie Kids Playgroups
- › Intensive Family Services
- › Growing Up Aboriginal Babies at Home
- › Mums' Groups

## Education Services

- › Homework Clubs
- › Books In Homes
- › Koorie Families as First Educators
- › Koorie Kids Stay at School
- › Navigator
- › Side by Side

## Youth Services

- › Koorie Young Women's Dance
- › Cultural Camps
- › Engage Youth Yarnin' Strong
- › Youth Services

## Mental Health, Wellbeing and Disability Services

- › Disability Family Services
- › Disability Support Workers
- › Family Mental Health Support
- › Koorie Youth Health Matters
- › Aboriginal Children's Healing Team

## Alcohol and Other Drugs Services (AOD)

- › Adult and AOD Services Eastern Region

## OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES (CONT.)

### Emergency Relief, Housing and Homelessness Services

- › Koorie Connect
- › Koorie Connect Elders Program
- › Emergency Relief Support
- › Housing and Homelessness Support
- › Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program
- › Wilam Support Service
- › Kurnai Youth Homelessness Service

### Family Violence Services

- › Family Violence Case Management Services – for people and their families experiencing violence
- › Family Violence Case Management Services – for people using family violence
- › Aboriginal Therapeutic Family Violence Service
- › Aboriginal Therapeutic & Case Management Family Violence Service for young people using FV
- › Family Violence Community Based Prevention
- › The Orange Door – multiple locations
- › Orana Gunya Crisis Accommodation and Support Service Gippsland - for women and children experiencing family violence
- › Holistic Healing Groups for Men

- › Holistic Healing Group for Elders
- › A Better Way - A men's behaviour change program
- › Healthy and Respectful Relationships Camps for young people

### Justice Services

- › Barreng Moorop
- › Youth Justice Programs
- › Youth Through Care
- › Staying Strong and Staying Out of Trouble
- › Beyond Survival
- › Local Justice Worker Program
- › Dardee Djeetgun - Koorie Women's Diversion Program

### Stolen Generations and Redress Services

- › Ngarra Jarra Noun - Redress Support Service
- › Link-Up Victoria: [linkupvictoria.org.au](http://linkupvictoria.org.au)

## CULTURAL THERAPEUTIC WAYS

**VACCA's Cultural Therapeutic Ways (CTW) is our whole-of-organisation commitment to strengthening and growing cultural safety, competency and wellbeing. The approach applies Aboriginal wisdom across all of VACCA's practice, bringing together theories of self-determination and trauma with culture.**

This past year, we continued to formalise existing cultural wisdom, develop new tools to support staff to work in a culturally-therapeutic way, and build an Aboriginal evidence base for our practice. To the families and children we support, we deliver culturally-appropriate services designed around their needs, supporting them to make decisions that affect their lives.

We have undertaken intensive development of our foundational work and finalised our Outcomes Framework with two tiers of focus:

- › Our Organisational Outcomes ensure that VACCA advocates for Aboriginal ways of doing business, that is focused on staff wellbeing and Aboriginal leadership
- › Our Community Outcomes outline what Aboriginal children and families can expect from our services as we heal, protect and connect.

It has been an exciting year, implementing our Community Outcomes across programs that include Child and Family Services, Better Futures, Koorie Kids Supported Playgroups, and Lakidjeka. We have engaged with staff to determine what and how we measure our practice. This sets us apart from mainstream services, in positioning families as the key decision-makers.

We continued to build our new custom database CSNet, so we have ownership of the data we collect to illustrate the effectiveness of our services. This helps us to achieve the best outcomes for children and families, and to continue improving our services. This ground-breaking work will continue to make an important contribution to building an Aboriginal evidence base for practice, nationally and internationally.

# RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

## Community Outcomes Framework

To inform VACCA's work in building an Aboriginal evidence base, we have developed an Outcomes Framework. In line with self-determination, this Framework articulates key outcomes that are important to Aboriginal people accessing child and family services:

- **Connect** – We are guided by the six connections of Yinga (This Way) – Kinship, Community, Country, Mind and Emotions, Spirituality and Body which nourishes and holds us together with a shared sense of belonging.
- **Protect** – We provide safe spaces, stand-up for culturally appropriate ways of doing, support informed decision-making, and ensure the rights of Aboriginal children to be safe and raised in their own family, culture and Community.
- **Heal** - We acknowledge the impacts of intergenerational trauma and we work with Community to support healing, strengthen our cultural, social and emotional wellbeing.

Sourcing a psychometrically validated tool to measure the outcomes that matter to VACCA has proved challenging. Western validated tools are largely not designed for and by

Aboriginal people, do not measure outcomes that are relevant, or do not use indicators which are culturally safe and appropriate.

In view of this, VACCA committed to the long and important process of developing a measurement tool to capture the change programs are seeking to achieve with community members. This process has been led by Aboriginal managers and practitioners within the organisation. Recognising the expertise required to ensure that VACCA develops a robust tool, we have sought the support of Aboriginal psychologist, Dr Graham Gee, who developed the Aboriginal Resilience and Recovery Questionnaire. The tool has been drafted and is currently being piloted within the organisation.

### Cultural elements of practice

VACCA has embarked on the exciting and ambitious project of describing and disseminating Aboriginal-specific evidence-informed 'elements of practice' that go to the heart of our cultural work. This project is a core part of our ongoing work.

Beginning with the Victorian Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification Response where the 'common elements of practice' were being implemented as part of the Response, VACCA wanted to adapt this

approach by developing, from the ground up, a small set of cultural-specific elements which are core to Aboriginal ways of working. These elements have been part of practice wisdom for a very long time but, to date, had never been 'packaged' in this way for training, coaching and roll-out to the ACCO sector. Co-design workshops conducted include the common elements approach. Funding through the Lowitja Institute has enabled us to continue to grow this suite of cultural elements for the benefit of the ACCO sector in Victoria.

### Growing our Research Footprint

VACCA has become more proactive, strategic and self-determining about research that involves our children, young people and families. Key ways in which we have begun to do this include:

- Developing a VACCA research agenda with 13 priority theme areas
- Developing a guide for potential research partnerships
- Establishing key enabling partnerships with research bodies to build our capacity and impact
- Establishing a VACCA Aboriginal research advisory group.



# EVALUATIONS

Building the Aboriginal evidence base is a key priority in which VACCA has invested over the last few years. Here are some examples of our Evaluations.

## ➤ YOUNG FULLAS: Building safe and strong futures

**Designed in response to the need for young Aboriginal females and males for culturally appropriate psychoeducation on healthy, respectful relationships.**

**This two-year project employed several cultural activities including:**

- Three cultural camps (10-17 years)
- Camp fire yarns
- Three scenario based clips based on young people's voices
- Resource booklet

### **Methods**

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of participant surveys were used to evaluate the program. Four family violence prevention strategies were evaluated:

- Cultural strengthening
- Community information and education
- Self-esteem and resilience building
- Raising community awareness

### **Results**

Project implementation differed from the original plan due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, participants' response indicated that the project was effective as:

**100%** increased knowledge of where and how to get culturally safe help and supports

**100%** increased knowledge of early indicators of family violence

**87%** agreed that because of the program, they feel more proud of their cultural identity

***"Connection feels really good and it makes you feel like you're a part of something, just bigger than yourself. It opens your eyes and shows that the world isn't surrounded by just you or technology or anything. There're other parts of this world that people don't know about. So, yeah, that's really cool."***

## ➤ DANCE MOVEZ

**Run over 26 weeks, the Dance Movez program utilised therapeutic dance workshops to support young women currently in or who have been in out-of-home-care, who are disengaged or at risk of disengagement from education or employment, in contact with the justice system and at risk of family violence in the Bayside-Peninsula region.**

**The Dance Movez program aimed to:**

- explore issues relating to self-esteem, gender inequality and relationships
- explore and provide psycho-education on early indicators of family violence for young women
- support the development of a strong cultural identity
- Provide positive female adult role models and mentors

## EVALUATIONS (CONT.)

### Methods

The evaluation was both clarificatory (documenting the model) and outcomes focused (documenting the emergent benefits to the participants). Three family violence prevention strategies were evaluated:

- Cultural strengthening
- Responding to grief & trauma
- Self-esteem and resilience building

### Results

- Strengthened recognition of the importance of culture as a protective factor in relation to family violence
- Strengthened pride in cultural identity and participation in cultural practice
- Strengthened connection to Peers
- Strengthened self-esteem

*“These girls have friendships for life with young Aboriginal women in the same area for them which is just something that money can’t buy because there’s not a lot of young Aboriginal people who identify or who wanna connect, so having a supportive group of girls that they know that they can turn to is super positive.”*

## ➤ Windook Dad’s Program

**Running now for over five years, the Windook Dad’s program provides a culturally safe space for fathers and male carers of Aboriginal children and their children to:**

1. strengthen their connection to culture
2. increase parenting confidence for the fathers and male carers
3. enhance parent/carer and child interaction

### Methods

The process evaluation collected both quantitative and qualitative data through the design of two data collection tools. A Sense Making Workshop was organised with program staff involved in the management and implementation of the program.

### Results

- Created an opportunity to learn more about Culture in a culturally safe environment
- Meaningful connections with other Aboriginal men and children and with Community
- Dads had learnt a lot from other dads and felt their parenting skills had improved through acquiring new knowledge and skills to engage with their children
- Development of two data capture tools

*“The Windook Dad’s program it’s a safe place for dads to come with their children so they can build a bond, learn cultural knowledge, share stories, have a yarning circle in a safe environment.”*

# STRENGTHENING CULTURAL SAFETY

**The Strengthening Cultural Safety Project focused on ensuring that cultural safety was embedded in mainstream organisations funded for Family Violence programs across the State.**

The far-reaching project engaged Board members, CEOs, senior leadership teams and staff groups to apply the Strengthening Cultural Safety Assessment Tool against five Aboriginal-designed service standards and a total of 34 detailed objectives, in order to develop a comprehensive action plan for each organisation.

VACCA also delivered a series of online 'continuum of learning' sessions to build the capability of participating organisations to improve cultural safety more broadly and to ensure that Aboriginal communities have choice in service access and employment options within culturally safe organisations.

The overall feedback from staff across participating organisations was positive about the experience and learnings offered by the project. As the training required participants to explore and reflect on their own unconscious bias this was challenging for some but essential for strengthening cultural safety in the sector. The training was also a powerful opportunity to highlight the disproportionate gaps for Aboriginal women experiencing family violence. It was also a valuable opportunity for staff to learn about the impacts of cultural load on their Aboriginal colleagues and how they will approach their practice differently.

Results from the project include:

82  
completed  
action plans

89%  
completed  
self-  
assessments

100%  
allocated  
organisations  
participated

97%  
participated  
in CO learning  
sessions





# FAMILY VIOLENCE

**VACCA is the largest provider of Aboriginal Family Violence services in the state. We work holistically with women, men, young people, and children affected by family violence providing support in prevention, early intervention, intervention, and crisis family violence programs.**

## MARAM

**MARAM** (*Multi Agency Risk Assessment Management*) has become VACCA's Family Violence resource hub, developing Family Violence policies and procedures, and a complement of tools and resources.

Significant work has been undertaken to align the MARAM framework across VACCA as it has implications on policies, practices, tools and workforce. The team have embedded culturally adapted tools into CSNet and amended Family Violence referrals and secondary consultations referrals as well as implemented an internal auditing review system.

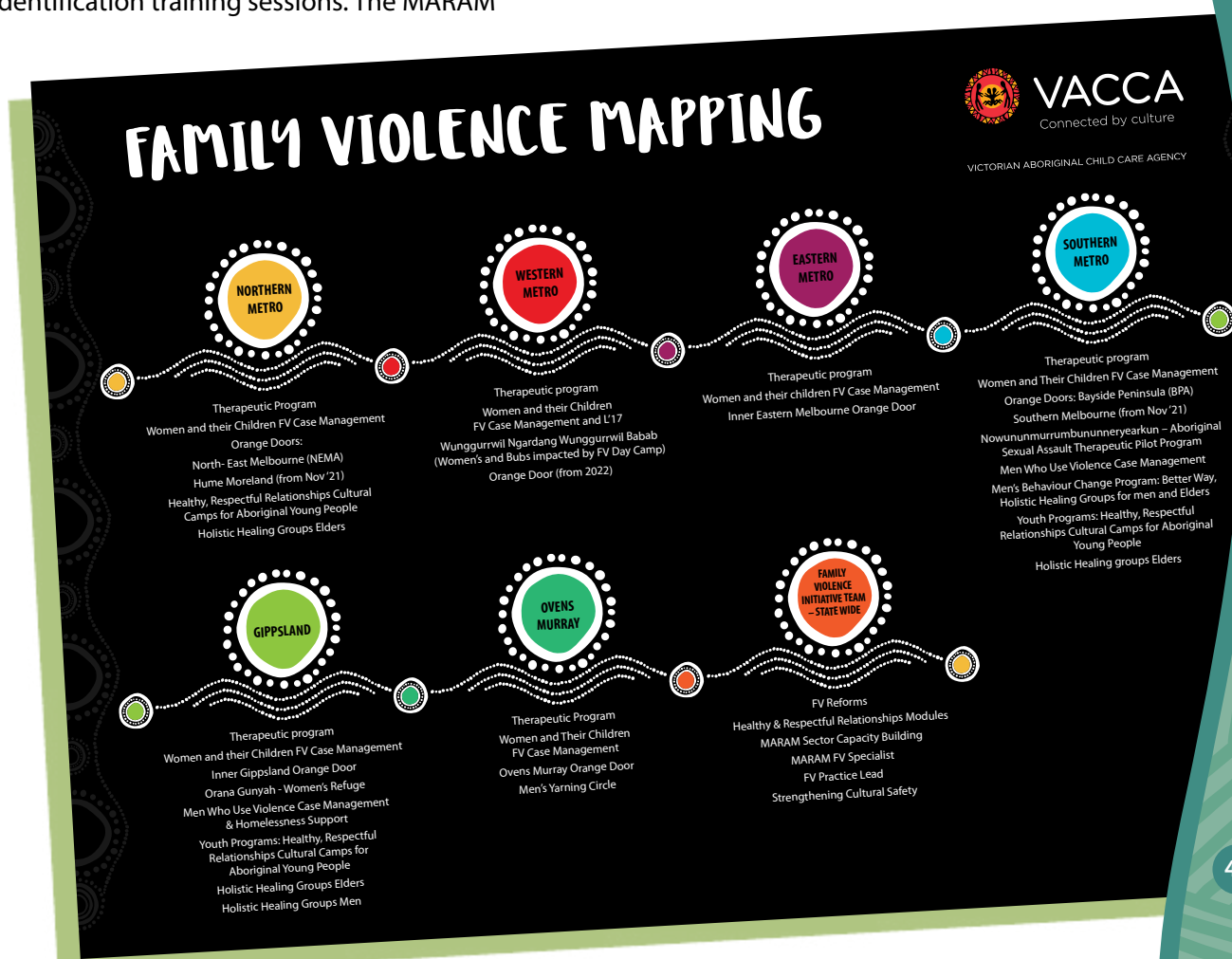
The Family Violence Initiatives team finalised the internal Family Violence training suite in collaboration with the Learning and Development Team. They developed e-resources that are easily accessible to all staff

on the VACCA intranet, and they are embedded in the Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification programs, and in all VACCA Family Violence Specialist programs.

The team co-facilitated 24 closed webinar intermediate training sessions and, with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, as well as MARAM Screening and Identification training sessions. The MARAM

training has so far been completed by 105 staff and an additional 17 staff members, who do not work directly with children and families.

The team developed initiatives including VACCA's Family Violence Impact model, newly adapted MARAM practice manuals, Family Violence flowcharts, and lifecycle case management models.



# FAMILY VIOLENCE THERAPEUTIC

**Our biggest challenges included meeting increased demand, accommodating funding-gaps in family violence case management, and staying connected in a time of isolation due to COVID-19.**

In Melbourne's south, the pandemic saw an increase in demand for family violence case management. We continued to safely deliver services to clients through every lockdown by adapting to online service delivery and were pleased to see that clients were receptive to online meetings.

VACCA's Cultural Therapeutic Ways is an important part of the way we do business; including collaboration with Aboriginal staff for cultural guidance and having a community Elder regularly attend the women's group.

We helped to make a difference in our community in three main areas; empowering women and children, making sure the child's voice is heard, and prioritising safety planning and risk assessments. We did this in part by providing a safe space for women affected by family violence, enabling them to tell their story, and we spoke with families about creating safety plans within the home.

**20**  
clients attended  
Groups

Exceeding our  
target of 17

**118**  
clients provided with  
individual counselling/  
case management

Exceeding our  
target of 58

## Gippsland: Men's Perpetrator Family Violence / Behavioural Change Program / Homelessness Program

*Gippsland's Men's Behaviour Change Program is new to the region, it is an eight week, therapeutic, trauma informed program. There has been good uptake of the Men's Behaviour Change program in Gippsland with eight men starting the program.*

The impact of this program is evident. We have supported a man who had experienced repeated intergenerational family violence trauma when he was young. He has acknowledged the need for such a program in the LaTrobe Valley to provide support and intervene so that Aboriginal men can recognise that their emotions and behaviours are linked. The program was able to support a father access suitable housing, which meant he could meet the conditions of his parenting arrangement, and to support him from breaching his intervention order with the mother of his child. One client reflected, "Finally, men have a support service that supports them to recognise and control their feelings, emotions and actions".

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic meant the Men's space had to put on hold their programs, however staff continued to engage with clients virtually. Gippsland and Frankston staff members were able to jointly deliver sessions which provided additional support.

### Western Family Violence Therapeutic Counselling

*The service ensures that people are connected to culture through the counselling process.*

Delivering sensitive services online posed a significant challenge, especially in forging strong connection. But young people are adaptable and proved to be accepting of the necessary changes in the counselling approach. This was critical in helping us to provide emotional support and counselling interventions for young people with emotional and behavioural needs.

Maintaining consistency was key to success. We utilised the preferred platforms where young people felt comfortable. We also used counselling models and approaches tailored to support young people and their needs. Invoking culture as a driver to influence safety, we were able to create a place of belonging and self-worth.

VACCA's Cultural Therapeutic Ways Model provided a solid foundation to incorporate cultural protocols within sessions and identify cultural safety needs by applying Aboriginal wisdom and theories of self-determination and trauma with culture.

## VACCA'S FOOTPRINT IN THE ORANGE DOOR

**VACCA is a key partner in The Orange Door safety hubs, an intake service model for individuals and families experiencing or using family violence services and referral pathways across the State.**

We provide specialist advice and support to Aboriginal families to access culturally responsive services in times of crisis, with a focus on establishing safety and pathways to recovery.

VACCA partners The Orange Door services in North East Melbourne, Bayside Peninsula, Inner Gippsland, Inner East and Ovens Murray with four additional sites next year (2022).

Aboriginal family demand for Family Violence support is significant, with 2036 referrals this past financial year for the Northern and Southern Metropolitan sites alone. Many come from Victoria Police after attending call-outs, indicative of the crisis-driven work the team undertakes. The critical nature of a culturally responsive service for Aboriginal families on the frontline when statutory services intervene, demonstrates a new approach to ACCO influence for outcomes for families impacted by family violence.

VACCA's Family Violence team provides short-term support to families and referral pathways to longer-term service options. Aboriginal Practice Leads advise our team and mainstream services working with Aboriginal families, also helping to build workforce capacity. We work closely with local Aboriginal Advisory Groups to ensure local planning develops with a strong Community voice represented.

Our work with The Orange Door hubs is far-reaching, as many families engaged with VACCA are impacted by family violence. Ensuring their experiences are culturally appropriate and tailored to their needs remains paramount.



# ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S HEALING TEAM

**The Aboriginal Children's Healing Team (AHT) is a specialist multidisciplinary team from a range of disciplines that include Family Therapy, Art Therapy, infant mental health, child mental health with staff representing the fields of Paediatrics, Psychiatry, Mental Health Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Mental Health Social Work.**

We provide online support across all regions, with outreach in Preston, Chirnside Park, Werribee, Melton and Dandenong. Our clients are children aged 0-18 and we also support their carers, families and their case workers. It takes a village to raise a child. Most of our work is with VACCA's out-of-home-care, Nugel and therapeutic cultural practice services. We have also been supporting the implementation of the Aboriginal Family Service Response.

The team serves two purposes within VACCA. Firstly, capability-building staff to provide

'trauma informed care' to better meet the needs of children who have experienced complex developmental trauma, including the impacts of intergenerational trauma. Secondly, working therapeutically with children and their important adults who may be experiencing social and emotional wellbeing issues often related to impacts of trauma.

In the past year we have found safe ways to make sure children and young people still get the support they need during the pandemic. We helped schools and carers to better communicate with children, and supported adults, carers and professionals involved with the child to better understand their needs. The team adapted to be able to deliver Group Reflective Practice virtually, which enables greater regional support.

One of the biggest challenges has been able to meet the demand for consultations and assessments, while also being able to deliver culturally appropriate, trauma informed treatments to Aboriginal children, young people and their families virtually.

112  
secondary consults  
and 59 group  
Reflective Practice  
Sessions to the  
Response

220  
therapy hours  
provided

>240  
secondary  
consultations

105  
Therapeutic  
Assessments, Speech  
and Language, OT  
psychiatry and  
Healing Plans  
developed

121  
Group Reflective  
Practice sessions  
to OoHC, Nugel  
and TCP

# NUGEL

**The Nugel program is the first of its kind in Australia. Meaning 'belong' in Woiwurrung, after 10 years of lobbying, Nugel was established in November 2017. Since then VACCA has been authorised to support 133 Aboriginal children on court orders. Currently we have 108 children in the program.**

Over the July 2020 - June 2021 period, Nugel was successful in closing involvement with 18 children who were on Family Preservation Orders; eight children have been reunified with their parent(s) on long-term out-of-home-care case plans, and 10 children were reunified with their parent on Family Reunification Orders.

The Nugel program is well regarded in the Children's Court. On one day, three children on Care by Secretary orders were returned to their parent, which is very unusual. VACCA has received positive feedback about the impact of the team's work with parents through Nugel, as opposed to cases managed by the Department of Families Fairness and Health.

*A Magistrate reflected on the high quality of the reports provided:*

*"they were all rich with stories about the family, how things were improving and reported really good outcomes for these kids. I am really impressed."*

Nugel is preparing to launch a new program in Inner Gippsland in the 2021-2022 Financial Year, and Nugel North is supporting the team in Morwell to establish themselves. From February 2022 Nugel North will be piloting a response to the Children Protection Reports program. It is hoped that by becoming involved earlier with families who are known to Child Protection, we will be able to prevent children from needing to be removed, by providing early intervention and prevention support.

During the mid-year school holidays, two families attended individual possum skin cloak workshops facilitated by Illuka Sax-Williams (Yarn Strong Sista facilitator, proud Tibrean and Taungurung man). The sessions provided significant healing and strength to the families, sharing stories and strengthening connections. The families were supported by Illuka to burn and mark possum skin pelts with ochre and the pelts were sown together and provided to the families. These cloaks will remain with the families during their significant moments in life, giving them strength and connection to each other and their culture.

## Jack's story

*This year, Nugel was able to reunify 10-year-old Jack\* and eight year old Mia\* to the care of their young mum Sally\*.*

Prior to authorisation to VACCA Nugel, Mia and Jack had resided in out of home care for approximately five years and had non-reunification case plans. Jack and Mia were on track to be placed on Permanent Care orders with their non-Aboriginal foster carers.

Upon authorisation, VACCA Nugel was able to review Mia and Jack's case plans and assessed that it would be possible for Jack and Mia to be safely reunified into their mum's care. After a slow transition period of approximately three months, Jack and Mia were able to be safely reunified to their Mum's full-time care.

VACCA Nugel returned to court and applied to have Jack and Mia's Care by Secretary orders revoked and replaced by Family Preservation orders, which would allow Nugel to continue supporting Mum for a period of up to 12 months.

VACCA Nugel will soon be authorised in relation to Jack and Mia's older sister Tamioka\*, who is currently on a long term Care Order. VACCA Nugel will be actively seeking to reunify Tamioka into her mum's care, where she can also be reunited with her younger siblings.

Jack, Mia and Mum are very excited to have their family back together and VACCA Nugel will continue to support the family to stay together.

*\*Names and identities have been changed to protect the privacy of this family.*

# BRINGING UP ABORIGINAL BABIES AT HOME (BUABAH) PROJECT

**Now in its second year this crucial system changing project has moved through its research and stakeholder engagement phase. Next phase will begin towards the end of 2021.**

We dedicated the first year of our Innovation Grant from the Out-of-Home Care Philanthropic Funders' Network (the Network) to understanding the factors that contribute to the high number of Aboriginal babies being taken into care and the grief, loss and trauma caused by baby removals. One-in-nine Aboriginal babies, a total of 176, were admitted to care in Victoria in 2019-20. This is 17 times the non-Aboriginal rate.

A VACCA project team formed a consultation group with over 25 representatives from Aboriginal programs in Bayside Peninsula to explore the system level factors that cause this over-representation. The group met several times and worked out of session to identify the policies, practices, power-dynamics and mindsets that contribute to this problem, and design initiatives that could prevent Aboriginal

baby removals and promote reunifications with parents and family. Initiatives will be piloted in Bayside Peninsula in 2022 and evaluated to assess their sustainability and potential for scaling-up. The University of Melbourne has been engaged as the evaluator for this project.

The Network funders for this project include Equity Trustees - The David Taylor Galt Charitable Trust, Gandel Foundation, 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 their commitment to self-determination, collaboration and innovation, plus the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW) for its support and facilitation of the grant.

**1 in 9**  
**Aboriginal babies, a**  
**total of 176, were**  
**admitted to care in**  
**Victoria in 2019-20**

**17 times the**  
**non-Aboriginal rate**



# HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

**VACCA delivers a number of culturally strong and community based housing and homelessness support services, crisis support and case management to Aboriginal families, young people and adults who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.**

**These programs include:**

- Kurnai Youth Homelessness Program (Gippsland)
- Orana Gunyah (Gippsland)
- Wilam Support Service (Northern)

The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework reported that over 4,000 Aboriginal households, roughly one in five, have sought social housing through the Victorian Housing Register and roughly another 4,000 are currently accommodated by Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) and public housing. Aboriginal peoples make up 10 per cent of peoples accessing homelessness services, a six per cent increase over the past ten years, giving Victoria the highest and fastest rising rate of Aboriginal people contacting homelessness services in Australia.

We understand the contributing risk factors to rates of homelessness for Aboriginal young people, families and adults to be their experiences of systemic and social disadvantage, poverty, insufficient and inadequate housing, family violence, involvement with child protection particularly when leaving care, involvement with the criminal justice system, systemic racism and disconnection from culture and Country.

Aboriginal self-determination in the housing sector must include access to safe, stable, secure, affordable housing at all entry points from social housing, crisis accommodation, transitional housing, rental and home ownership.

**1 in 5**  
Aboriginal households  
have sought social  
housing through the  
Victorian Housing  
Register

**~4,000**  
Aboriginal households  
are accommodated by  
Aboriginal Housing  
Victoria (AHV)

**10%**  
of people accessing  
homelessness  
services are  
Aboriginal

## Francis' story

*Francis first approached Wilam Support Service in 2016 looking for emergency accommodation due to being chronically homeless. His engagement with the program was sporadic and crisis driven over a number of years. Francis had been violently attacked for being a brotherboy (transgender man).*

Workers were able to refer him to LGBTIQ+ housing services and support groups. In mid-2020 Francis agreed to ongoing case management. He was suffering with mental health issues which led to housing breakdowns.

Eventually workers were able to secure short-term private rental, but unfortunately Francis was remanded in custody for over 100 days. Francis received outreach support through Flat Out and upon release was accepted into public housing after a 12 year wait.

Wilam Support Service and Flat Out worked collaboratively to provide support in helping Francis set up his new home and was able to access Emergency Relief support during this time.

Francis has reflected the positive engagement he has experienced with VACCA over four years, he is now in stable housing and feels safe and supported.

# ABORIGINAL FAMILY-LED DECISION MAKING (AFLDM)

**VACCA's Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making (AFLDM) program provides a culturally safe decision-making and planning process for children and families involved with the Child Protection system.**

The process builds on the strengths in family and kinship networks to meet the safety, stability and developmental needs of children, empowers families to make good decisions and plans for the safety and wellbeing of their children. It is guided by and is respectful of the family's culture, and actively involves a child's family, Elders and other significant people in the child's life.

Going online during the pandemic has not affected the efficacy of the program, which continues to exceed its targets. The challenges of increased demand, operating in the online environment, and managing changing COVID-19 restrictions have all served to increase the flexibility of our team.

Significantly, we were able to work intensively with a pregnant mother who was subject to an unborn report notification, which resulted in her and baby being able

to stay together as a family and safely bond. We are so proud of the mother for being able to undertake the necessary work and that our program was able to support this young family to stay together.

During the pandemic we have continued to be innovative, dedicated and adaptable. We developed processes to assist families to attend meetings, such as ensuring access to apps. More people are attending AFLDM as a result of online adaptations that allowed them to access meetings during lockdowns and from the safety of their homes.

The introduction of the CRISP system, a flexible client information and case management system developed by the Department of Human Services, has provided a wide range of functions that have further helped to improve our processes. Our collaboration with the Department continues to be greatly valued and beneficial.

## Case Study

An unborn child report was made in an attempt to prevent removal of a newborn baby from a young mum who had been a Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH) client since childhood herself. This was the first-ever unborn AFLDM to occur in the Southern region. The baby was born in May.

A DFFH Senior Practitioner Community-Based Child Protection Convenor agreed to alert the AFLDM program of any unborn reports, to begin the process of having a plan in place prior to a baby being born. This early intervention is hoped to reduce newborn babies being removed from their mother, supporting mothers to develop parenting skills and confidence, while addressing any risks. Keeping mum and baby together allows connection and bonding at this critical time.

The AFLDM program started a process for children having contact with their Aboriginal side of the family, which had not been the case before AFLDM involvement.

# EDUCATION

**The Education Team was created to increase the educational engagement and progress of children and young people in VACCA's programs, as well as building the capacity of VACCA staff and carers in supporting Aboriginal children and young people engaged in learning.**

We know there has been high levels of absenteeism and disengagement from school, particularly with the impact of COVID-19, for Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria. VACCA has been developing a VACCA Education Strategy in consultation with Social Ventures Australia. Part of the strategy is to raise awareness of the work that VACCA is doing in the education space and to identify strategies and outcomes to implement.

The Education team has grown significantly in the past year with two additional positions being funded for a Senior Education Advisor and a Senior Education Project Officer (Partnering Agreements). Some of key priorities moving forward are to continue to build the capacity of VACCA staff and carers to become more confident as advocates for Aboriginal children and young people through early years to tertiary education.

Support from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust means we are now able to deliver a comprehensive Education Strategy, focused on the needs that Aboriginal children in care and in our programs are facing, so they may be able to reach their potential. Funded in June 2021, the Strategy will be finalised in November 2021.

**The Education team has undertaken a number of surveys, firstly with a focus on Early Childhood; it found that:**

- 97%** of children are up to date with their immunisation schedules
- 69%** of children are engaged in Maternal Child Health Services, or referred into an enhanced MCH program
- 89%** of the children had not had a comprehensive health assessment
- 47%** of 3-year-olds are engaged in Early Start Kindergarten
- 100%** of 4-year-olds are attending a kindergarten program

**The second survey was focused on school aged children; it found that:**

- 69%** of respondents knew about the LOOKOUT Centres
- 90%** of students have an established Student Support Group meeting at their school
- 23%** have an allocated Learning Mentor from their school
- 44%** of students have an Educational Needs Analysis
- 86%** of students have an Individual Education Plan



# TRAINING, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Learning and Development team is responsible for the development and management of key functions that guide VACCA's growth and development as Victoria's lead Aboriginal child and family organisation. The team provides a suite of training programs to all VACCA staff, designed to strengthen the capacity of staff to achieve VACCA's vision.

## Internal Training

**105**  
Internal Training  
Workshops  
delivered to  
VACCA staff

### Some examples of training offered to VACCA Staff:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid
- COVID-19 Infection Control Training
- COVID-19 Safety at Work
- Cultural Awareness
- Demystifying the APDR
- Family Violence: Information Sharing Schemes - Modules 1-3
- Genograms
- Health and Safety
- Introduction to Child Protection System
- Introduction to the Carer Compliance Database 2.0
- Introduction to the Children's Court
- LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Practices Training
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) eLearning
- Sexual Harassment
- Supervising Students at VACCA
- Transition to Leadership
- Understanding cultural connection for First Nations children and young people in Victoria
- Washing Hands Effectively

## External Training

**122**  
Cultural Awareness  
workshops  
delivered  
externally

**20**

Nikara's Journey (2 day workshops) delivered to VACCA carers, public sessions and through Carer's Kafe

### Cultural Awareness Workshop feedback

“ Learning more about the history of colonisation and its impact on Aboriginal peoples today. There's a difference in being aware and actually understanding and I feel like I've taken a step towards that understanding from this training. ”

“ There is always more to learn. My motivation to be involved in anti-racism work is stronger and clearer. ”

# BINBEAL MURRUP

**VACCA's Binbeal Murrup (which means 'Rainbow Spirit' in the Woi wurrung language of the Wurundjeri people) team provides guidance and support to the organisation around diversity and inclusion. It is an organisation-wide approach to improve the safety, inclusion and affirmation of LGBTIQ+ service users and staff.**

The team consists of staff who identify as being a part of the LGBTIQ+ community and their allies and informs staff members who want to learn more about LGBTIQ+ inclusion. Among our successes was the completion of LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Practices Training. LGBTIQ+ resource materials are available to all VACCA sites. Resources include posters designed by VACCA, Pride flags, brochures and flyers, client factsheets, and children's books for the Orana Gunyah support for women and children escaping family violence.

VACCA has demonstrated a passion for inclusion and we are in a very strong position as we move towards our goal of Rainbow Tick accreditation.

**VACCA aspires to be a safe, inclusive and affirming service provider and employer for all LGBTIQ+ mob. This year we:**

- ✓ provided staff with the knowledge and skills to better support the LGBTIQ+ community
- ✓ ensured VACCA offices are welcoming for LGBTIQ+ mob
- ✓ identified and addressed barriers to achieving meaningful inclusion
- ✓ worked with other VACCA programs and services to ensure inclusion organisation-wide

**The efforts of our team are appreciated by our LGBTIQ+ staff members.**



“Thanks so much for the training ... The knowledge shared was great, the group activities felt relevant to the material, and it was engaging from start to finish. Great work!”

Staff engagement

Making a difference

One staff member 'came out' to their co-workers because VACCA feels “so safe and inclusive because of the work [we] have been doing in this space.”

Our Story

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Summarised Statement of Income and Expenditure for the Year Ended 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
Total income	81,857,828	70,239,039
Total expenses	76,978,984	69,289,090
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of VACCA</b>	<b>4,878,844</b>	<b>949,950</b>

## Summarised Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) as at 30 June 2021

	2021	2020
	\$	\$
Total Current Assets	42,297,924	28,495,861
Total Non-Current Assets	10,650,555	13,290,829
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>52,948,479</b>	<b>41,786,690</b>
Total Current Liabilities	33,710,126	25,152,511
Total Non-Current Liabilities	4,805,054	7,079,723
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>38,515,180</b>	<b>32,232,234</b>
<b>Net Assets (Liabilities)</b>	<b>14,433,300</b>	<b>9,554,456</b>
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>14,433,300</b>	<b>9,554,456</b>





# THANK YOU

**A big thank you to our donors and funders for their continued support throughout the year for Aboriginal children in care and in our programs, and for assisting vulnerable families.**

Your continued support helps to heal and connect children with their culture and community. The social, psychological and economic effects of the pandemic are still being felt by our most vulnerable in the Aboriginal community. VACCA will continue to work closely with community to stay healthy, safe and strong, but the increased demands on our services and growing need for extra assistance is still at its highest level.

Our essential services like Foster Care, Kinship Care, Emergency Relief and Family Violence programs have continued to be delivered and significantly expanded over the past year, so they have needed further support.

**If you, your workplace, school or group would like to make a donation, bequest or support a particular program, please contact [supportus@vacca.org](mailto:supportus@vacca.org) or call 0429 576 392.**

**To support our work and make a tax deductible donation, please visit [vacca.org/donate](https://vacca.org/donate).**

**Donors to VACCA's fundraising campaigns this year have supported us in the following ways:**

**Emergency Relief** – Our **Winter Appeal** raised funds to provide essential relief for our most vulnerable community members. These include items such as toiletries for a young person entering a new foster care home, or groceries and other basic needs for parents and children seeking assistance from our family violence programs. Other vulnerable clients in need of urgent assistance this year included Elders, and members of our community who were experiencing extreme hardship or family violence.

**Christmas Support** – Our **Christmas Appeal** in December 2020 reached a new milestone by raising \$94,000 for Christmas presents, extra support for vulnerable families over this very challenging time. Our donors truly know the value of Christmas, with being so generous and helping over 2,500 children and families experience joy and hope over the Christmas Season. We even had a great online event with a visit from Koorie Santa himself.

**Cultural Programs** – Our **Morning Tea For Culture** fundraising activity and donors from **Run Melbourne** and other fundraising activities over the year have helped to support crucial cultural programs. These programs include; our NAIDOC program of activities, resources for in-home cultural practice, and access to artists and performers to increase children and young people's cultural knowledge and the development of new cultural resources.

**NAIDOC Support** – This year while we were not able to deliver our NAIDOC events, we ensured 3,000 children received a NAIDOC themed T-shirt especially designed by Nakia Cadd with the theme Heal Country! We also collated thousands of cultural resource packs for vulnerable families across Victoria. A big thank you to our sector supporters who sponsored our NAIDOC Activities including; Family Life, Life without Barriers, OzChild, MacKillop Family Services, Department of Families Fairness and Housing - North, East, West, South regions, and the National Indigenous Australians Agency - NIAA.

## VACCA Shop

The VACCA Shop sells a range of useful educational resources and Aboriginal-designed merchandise available online. Visit [vacca.org/shop](https://vacca.org/shop) or email [resources@vacca.org](mailto:resources@vacca.org)



Scan the QR code to go to the VACCA online shop



## 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

### 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

### 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

### Preston

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

### Werribee

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



# VACCA

Connected by culture

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