



**VICTORIAN
ABORIGINAL
CHILD CARE
AGENCY**



Annual Report 2017 - 2018

Accessibility

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

Diversity and Inclusion

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

Photography

Deon Van Den Berg deonvphoto@gmail.com

Thank you to the community members and staff who volunteered and gave permission for their photographs to be published. In order to protect the identity of our clients names in stories have been changed in the interest of protection and privacy.

Design

ACGD Creative creative@adcgdesign.com



This report was printed on 100% recycled paper made carbon neutral.

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands across Victoria that we work on, and pay our respects to their elders, both past and present and to their children and young people, who are our future elders and caretakers of this great land.

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section one

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is Victoria's leading Aboriginal child and family services organisation. We are an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) and have been responding to the needs of Aboriginal children, families and other vulnerable members in the community for over 40 years. Our vision is Aboriginal self-determination - Live, Experience and Be. We work towards the healing of the Aboriginal community through strengthening the safety, wellbeing and cultural connectedness of vulnerable community members, particularly children.

We now deliver over 50 programs across Victoria primarily through seven locations in Melbourne and one in Morwell. Our range of services include intensive family services work, family violence services and prevention. These programs run alongside our home-based and other care programs for children. Our cultural programs for young people encompass art mentoring, Koorie Tiddas Choir, possum skin cloak making, return to country programs and cultural camps.

Our approach to our services is based on our cultural protocols and customs—there is no single answer to the complex issues faced in our sector in attempting to address the many problems our children and families face. However self-determination does empower us, as People and a Culture. We have a right and a capacity to use different approaches to these complex issues and that is what we do at VACCA.



OUR PERFORMANCE

Our annual year performance shows how we have contributed to the cornerstone aims of implementing self-determination and culture across our service to our community and in our relationships with our sector. Our advocacy and partnerships highlight the achievement of reforms in line with our aims. 2017-2018 was a seminal year in Aboriginal child welfare that was based on a strong partnership with our sector and government.

It was the year we launched the historic and landmark change to child welfare based on our right to self-determination. The Nugel Program transfers former guardianship powers from the Minister to the head of an Aboriginal organisation.

- ★ **6139 SUPPORTED CLIENTS**
and community members
- ★ **160 CULTURAL ACTIVITIES DELIVERED**
including cultural camps, art mentoring workshops, children's choirs, NAIDOC, Children's Days and Christmas activities
- ★ **TWO NEW REGIONAL SERVICES**
established in Melton and Frankston responding to community need
- ★ **\$43M+ GROSS OPERATING INCOME**
and a net operating surplus.
- ★ **465 STAFF EMPLOYED**

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

I am pleased to present this annual report for the 2017-2018 financial year. The year was one of extraordinary activity which included the implementation of significant reforms in child and family welfare and family violence services. Many Government reforms have been implemented in the last twelve months in which Treaty was a key focus.

The past year included the conclusion of our 40th Anniversary celebrations notably our wonderful gala dinner at the Melbourne Museum and the community event at the Aborigines Advancement League.

As a Board, we presided over a year of dramatic change resulting from an exponential increase in our budget and staffing numbers. Such change always affects an organisation and I am pleased to say that through the leadership of our CEO, Leadership Group and staff, we have come through a challenging time pretty well and ready for challenges the coming year may bring.

In this regard, the stability of Aboriginal leadership provided by the Board over the years and our focus on sound governance and systems continues to hold VACCA in good stead. It will enable us to strengthen our commitment to our

clients and community whilst ensuring we meet all our compliance demands.

What we have accomplished in forty years has been extraordinary given where VACCA started from to where we are positioned as a leading child and family service provider today. I know that our community recognises the proud resilience that VACCA demonstrates everyday, especially the work we do with our children and families. Our advocacy continues to enshrine a platform of influence over government policy and systems as it relates to children and families.

In the spirit of the theme for NAIDOC 2018 'because of her we can', I would like to pay tribute to all the women who work at VACCA and our life members especially Aunty Mollie Dyer. We are in a sector which embraces and captures the determination by women across the Aboriginal community. Our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, daughters, nieces and cousins have played leadership roles over the years in our community and continue to do so. Without them and their contributions we could not have realised all of our achievements as a community.

In closing I want to thank my fellow Board Members for their work during the year which as always is entirely voluntary and a testimony to their dedication and a demonstration of self-determination to our community.

James Atkinson Chairperson



*Figures are for 1st July 2017 to 31st June 2018

6139

people supported*

1077

people attended our external Cultural Awareness Workshops*

94

internal workshops delivered*

CEO REPORT

The last financial year (2017-2018) has been a year of major achievement for VACCA. I would go so far as to say it will be a year that will stand out in our history because of the strides we made in applying culture to so many aspects of our work. It was notable also for the commencement of the Nugel Program also known as "Aboriginal Guardianship".

VACCA campaigned for the "Guardianship" changes for over ten years and certainly since well before the Children and Young Persons Act of 2005 passed the Victorian Parliament. It is a historic achievement for the powers it gives to our community to make decisions about our children under certain child protection orders.

I am proud to say that I have been a part of VACCA for the past twenty years of our existence and service to the Aboriginal community.

VACCA has been and continues to be, an organisation that is committed to seeking change and advocates for the improvement of the circumstances of Aboriginal children and their families. This is what gives us and our work meaning.

I want to pay tribute to our staff this year again. Our Aboriginal staff especially keep the organisation culturally connected and relevant to our community as well as playing a big role in keeping all our staff culturally informed. All our staff are committed to our children and families. For our Aboriginal staff their work does occasionally involve their own community. This brings its own challenges with it and they display skill and resilience in working with our own people.

The reporting year was notable largely for the implementation of the child and family welfare and family violence reforms and for the Treaty discussions. The work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse also influenced our operating environment and I hope the changes that will be expected of us in our sector because of the Commission's recommendations will ensure that children in care are kept safe in the future.

A significant part of my role has been advocating for change across the spectrum of policy and services that affect our families and children. VACCA's work cannot just be about taking over existing child and family welfare services. We need to change the way we do the work within our sector across every level from high level policy to practice at a client level. This is why we have set ourselves the challenge of applying

the principle of self-determination for Aboriginal people to our service as well as pushing for this change within government and across the non-government sector.

I want to pay tribute to our staff for their dedication to their work and their clients. It isn't easy working in an organisation that is growing around you and where there is a lot of change. I am proud of the way we have done this over the last year. I want to thank our Board for their commitment to VACCA and to the Aboriginal community.

Prof. Muriel Bamblett AM CEO



"I am proud of the change we have achieved"

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Being accountable to community and our funders means our governance has two layers. Our systems enable our Board to monitor our compliance with regulations and standards and our community expectations.



James Atkinson Chairperson
Yorta Yorta / Bangerang

James is the CEO of Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, in his hometown of Shepparton. James has held many senior management roles across government. He has extensive policy, strategy and organisational experience, having served on Boards and committees at a state and national level. James is the longest serving member of the VACCA Board and has been Chairperson for the last three years.



Jason King Vice Chairperson
Gunditjmara

Jason is the Manager of the Aboriginal Water Program at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. He is an active community member having served on a number of Boards. Jason has a Diploma in Business Management.



Deidre King Treasurer
Gunditjmara

Deidre is the CEO of the Aboriginal Community Elders Service (ACES). Prior to this, Deidre worked for the Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) and VACCA for an extended period of time. Deidre is also an active community member serving on other Boards. She has an Advanced Diploma in Business Management and has completed Governance training.



Jason Kanoa Secretary
Gunditjmara / Bunitj

Jason is the CEO of the Gunditjmara Aboriginal Cooperative. Previously Jason was a Senior Project Officer, Indigenous Family Violence, at the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and has also worked at the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) as the Koori Caucus Executive Officer. Jason has a Diploma in Business Management, has completed Governance training and the Indigenous Leadership Network Victoria course.



Margaret Atkinson Director
Yorta Yorta / Taungurung / Wurundjeri

Margaret is a Wurreker Broker with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) where she builds strong links between Koorie communities and training providers to ensure better training and educational outcomes.

Margaret was previously employed at the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-op and at VACCA for over nine years. Margaret has completed Governance training.



Elaine Taylor Director
Wemba Wemba / Bunnerong

Elaine is currently serving as an Elder on the Koori Court and has been actively involved in the Dandenong Aboriginal community for most of her life. Elaine has worked in a number of Aboriginal organisations and has previously worked at VACCA. She is a long-standing Board Member on the Dandenong and District Aboriginal Co-op.



section two
OUR PEOPLE

CORPORATE SERVICES

This year saw us move into the second year of implementation of our Organisational and Workforce Development Plan across the Agency. The key purpose of this Plan is to strengthen our workforce capability, wellbeing, Aboriginal staff numbers, career opportunities and Aboriginal leadership opportunities within the organisation. The achievements and developments to date are many and lay the foundation for us to build upon our workforce plans, now and into the future.

Workforce achievements 2017-2018:

We were successful recipients of Workforce funding from the Aboriginal Workforce Development Initiative. These funds will be directed towards VACCA's Wellbeing, Diploma, and Traineeship Programs. The additional Workforce funds will enable VACCA to pursue its strategic workforce actions more vigorously.

Two additional Aboriginal Organisational Development officers were appointed to support our workforce development and training program. We have partnered with Swinburne University to jointly deliver our first inhouse Community Services Diploma, with 28 Staff completing over a quarter of the Diploma to date 90% of the Diploma participants are Aboriginal. VACCA became an accredited course and campus workplace delivery for Swinburne

which means the Diploma can be delivered from our VACCA premises.

We have had 14 residential staff complete the mandatory qualification, Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention with a further 12 due to complete this qualification by September 2018.

At VACCA we always aim to increase the number of Aboriginal staff, and this year we have increased our Aboriginal workforce by 21%. We now have 203 Aboriginal staff members. This places VACCA as one of the largest Aboriginal community sector employers in the state. Extensive work in Aboriginal recruitment has taken place and will continue to occur through student placements, internships and traineeships as well as through more traditional means.

VACCA is participating in the Enhanced Pathway to Family Violence Work program, this program has a dedicated resource to build capacity and capability of future student supervisors within the organisation, and to develop a more sustainable student and new learner program at VACCA. It is an exciting program and development for the organisation.

20 Training Packages were delivered over 69 sessions, with 517 Staff attending training. As an organisation we have completed 301 annual performance appraisals, and we are committed to biannual salary benchmarking having recently completed our second remuneration benchmarking exercise with five mainstream organisations in the sector. We continue strong wellbeing practices such as team building

activities and retreats for statewide staff, annual influenza vaccinations for all staff, quarterly lunch staff gatherings with presentations on healthy lifestyles, salary packaging, Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited (VACSAL) lunchtime yoga sessions, career development and a range of leadership and management training.

We continue to offer the Koorie Youth Traineeship (KYT) program, a partnership between Mackillop Family Services and VACCA, for the fourth year.



VACCA Annual Report 2018

Growth and Strength

VACCA's information Communication Strategy (ICT) is in its fourth year. Key activities in the last 12 months have been tendering and re-negotiating the outsourcing of our telecommunications and WAN services, implementing telecommunications management as a service (TMaaS) and strengthening information technology cyber security.

We have also comprehensively reconfigured and expanded our Preston office and negotiated and fitted out new office leases in the Eastern and Southern Regions to accommodate rapid staff growth. We continued configuration and implementation of our new client database in line with the Outcomes Project Framework, experienced expansion of broader corporate services to meet organisational growth and demand and we work to refine and revise policies, systems and processes.



FINANCIAL REPORT

The 2017-18 financial year was a year of continuing growth for the organisation, with gross operating income exceeding \$43m and a healthy net operating surplus of \$919,569.

A number of programs expanded into new regions during this past financial year including Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder and several pilot programs undertaken across metropolitan Melbourne. VACCA will continue to receive additional funding for our Nugel Program, as part of the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care and Family Violence services due to the State Government's commitment to Self-Determination, the Roadmap for Reform and *Dhelk Dja: Safe our Way, Strong Culture, Strong Peoples Strong Families 2018-2028* the Family Violence 10 year Plan. The combination of these reforms will continue to have a significant impact on the operations, workforce and future growth of the organisation in the coming years.

VACCA's gross operating income has grown 116% in five years, from \$20.3m in 2013-2014 to \$43.9m in 2017-2018, an average of 23% per financial year. In that same period, all staff numbers have increased by 181 people, from 254 to 435, an increase of 71%. Our Aboriginal workforce has increased by 54% from 132 to 203 Aboriginal staff members.

Gross operating income for the last twelve months has increased by 46%. With sustainable growth remaining key strategic priorities, the next three years will see continued enhancement and investment in workforce development and strengthened services to meeting growing community demands and challenges. Government service system reforms will also lead to increased demands in funding and the services we provide to community. Our healthy balance sheet and strong reserves is essential for the organisation's sustainability and longevity. It will enable us to continue to meet the demands and expectations placed on us as an organisation into the future.

GROWTH OVER FIVE YEARS 2013-2014 to 2017-2018

Gross operating income \$20.3m	Increased 116% to \$43.9m
All staff numbers 254 people	Increased 71% to 435 people
Aboriginal workforce 132 staff	Increased 54% to 203 staff

SUMMARISED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (BALANCE SHEET) as at the Year Ended 30 June 2018 (\$)

	2018	2017
Total Current Assets	23,630,003	16,993,208
Total Non-Current Assets	2,435,373	1,256,496
Total Assets	26,065,376	18,249,704
Total Current Liabilities	18,178,851	11,325,082
Total Non-Current Liabilities	782,169	739,994
Total Liabilities	18,961,020	12,065,076
Net Assets (Liabilities)	7,104,356	6,184,628
Total Equity	7,104,356	6,184,628

SUMMARISED STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE for the Year Ended 30 June 2018 (\$)

	2018	2017
Total Income	43,964,159	30,110,371
Total Expenses	43,044,589	29,285,278
Net Income	919,569	825,094

TRAINING

2017-2018

INTERNAL TRAINING

Our Internal Training team has delivered targeted, staff capacity building training to more than 1,000 attendees. The training that has been delivered internally this year has sought to build a shared understanding of knowledge, language, culture, values and practice with staff, with the aim of continual improvement. Each training session has emphasised self-determination and been framed around the intention of delivering service that ensures the best interests of our children are protected; that our children, young people, families and communities are thriving, culturally strong, empowered and safe.

Each training session has also reiterated to our staff that they can exceed their own expectations to provide a better service for our clients. We have also secured an in-principle agreement with Melbourne Polytechnic for VACCA to deliver the Diploma of Community Services.

Internal Training sessions have included, but are not limited to; Cultural Awareness, Supervision at VACCA, Induction, Genograms, Growing Up our Boorai – A Trauma Informed Approach to Supporting our Child Development, Staff Wellbeing and an Introduction to the Child Protection System in Victoria.

'The Diploma is set up well. I'm able to do my studies efficiently and effectively with the support provided. Attending class each month, provides insight as to what I'm required to do to complete my studies. I'm really enjoying doing this diploma... I love how Swinburne and VACCA have incorporated the work we do in class around Aboriginal culture and VACCA's work ethics and values.'

- Diploma in Community Services Participant

EXTERNAL TRAINING

Over the last financial year VACCA has provided a range of learning opportunities for external organisations and their staff, along with the foster and kinship carers of Aboriginal children. These development opportunities are designed to build skills and knowledge for workers and carers of their capabilities in the field of child and family welfare, and to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal organisations, families and communities.

We delivered the following training:

Cultural Awareness: An Introduction to Working Respectfully with Aboriginal Children, Families and Workers

Nikara's Journey: Introduction to Caring for Aboriginal Children in Out of Home Care

Koorie FACES: Positive parenting program for Aboriginal Carers

Our Carers for Our Kids: Train the Trainer program for Aboriginal organisations

Step by Step: Foster Care Assessment Tool Familiarisation Training for Aboriginal organisations

We delivered 178 external training workshops

Approx. 1st July 2017 to 30th June 2018

62

were Cultural Awareness Workshops

1077

people attended our Cultural Awareness Workshops

46

Nikara's Journey Workshops were delivered

section three

OUR SERVICES

Our client services aim to fulfill our purpose of “supporting culturally strong, safe and thriving Aboriginal communities” through our broad and varied range of programs. Children and families can be supported by more than one program at a time. There are also many specific region and area based programs that are offered locally, to provide a full wrap around service for our Aboriginal clients and community members.

VACCA has programs supporting children and or their families, we also have adult-focussed services such as our Link-Up service for Stolen Generations and our Royal Commission Support Service which has been supporting people who had been abused in institutions and who presented their stories to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.



LAKIDJEKA ABORIGINAL CHILD SPECIALIST ADVICE SUPPORT SERVICE (ACSASS)

The VACCA's Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice Support Service (ACSASS) - Lakidjeka provides specialist advice on the Best Interests of Aboriginal children when the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection Program is involved with Aboriginal families and their children. This advice focuses on all aspects of Aboriginal children's safety including their cultural safety, right to grow up with their Aboriginal family and right to remain within their Aboriginal community when they are unable to safely remain with family.

Lakidjeka works to ensure families are fully informed of the role, powers and processes of the child protection system and advocates that all decisions made by child protection in relation to families and children focus on:

- children's best interests and right to safety
- doing all that is possible to keep children safe with their families
- where Child Protection decides to remove children focusing on keeping children and families connected and working towards reunification
- adhering to all five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) and prioritising placement with extended Aboriginal family and kin while pursuing reunification.

We responded to 7,533 reports to child protection

1st July 2017 to 30th June 2018

Across Australia, Aboriginal children are overrepresented in child protection and the number of Aboriginal children being reported to child protection continues to rise. In Victoria Aboriginal children are 14.5 times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be removed from family, the second highest level of over representation in Australia. VACCA has been working with government to reform systems to stem the flow of Aboriginal children into child protection. Information shows that the rate of entry is slowing down but we are hopeful that policy and program reforms implemented in the last year and more recently will start to show results in the forthcoming years.

Investment in early intervention and family support remains relatively low. In Victoria less than a third of all government funds invested in child protection and care are directed towards early intervention and family support, across Australia the figure is less than 20%.^[1]

Lakidjeka-ACSASS has a vital role to play in keeping children safe, with family and out of the child protection system. VACCA will continue to provide this service and will advocate that funding be aligned to the increasing numbers of children and families that rely upon its support.

^[1] All data from SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children. The Family Matters Report 2017. As accessed at familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Family-Matters-Report-2017.pdf





CONNECTING SIBLINGS - KYOCHE'S STORY

After receiving reports of concern for a young 13-year-old Kyoche and her safety while living with her parent, Child Protection (CP) and Lakidjeka ACSASS undertook a number of visits. The aims were to keep Kyoche safe and support her to go home with family. CP and Lakidjeka helped her move to her Aunt and Uncle's home in Darwin together with her siblings. This was a positive outcome that avoided a court order. Plans were made for our worker to accompany Kyoche back to Darwin - a return to county and family.

Lakidjeka ACSASS workers across three teams also helped to reunify another family - three older siblings with their younger brother. All children had been placed in separate foster care placements. Their baby sister was reunited with them all a few months later.

Alongside this, workers also worked tirelessly finding and reconnecting another sibling - children's older brother, who lives in NSW. Tragically the older brother had never met his four youngest brother and sisters and had not seen or had any form of contact with the other two siblings for approximately 5 years.

Our workers advocated strongly with child protection workers in New South Wales. Working over many, many months, the worker finally met up with this young boy, his carer and child protection worker to discuss sibling contact. From here the sharing of photos and information, Facetime and phone calls took place. It was amazing for all to finally have the opportunity to meet up in person later in 2017 after so many years apart.

FOSTER CARE

VACCA Foster Care aims to meet the demand for carers for Aboriginal children who are culturally aware and connected to children's families. We do this by supporting carers to nurture the core principles of respect, self-determination and observance of Aboriginal culture, in their relationship with the child or young person in their care. The Foster Care team had many significant successes this year, and were able to grow, and broaden our reach into the outer areas of Victoria. Recruiting, assessing and training foster carers to understand the significance and importance of cultural connectedness for Aboriginal children in their care was a large component of their work, doubling the number of assessments and accredited carers from July 2017 to June 2018.

The team continue to build strong working relationships with other ACCOs across the state to collaborate, share knowledge, expertise and resources.

We are continually aiming to align the best interests of the child in care with the best intentions of the carer, so that the home environment is one where healing and empowerment are embedded.

There have been 14 carers assessed and accredited in the last financial year, with seven Our Carers For Our Kids training sessions. The foster care team had 127 enquiries registered during the year.

It is so important
that Aboriginal people
foster Aboriginal
children.

- Aunty Elane, Foster Care



LINK-UP REUNITING OUR FAMILIES

Link-up Victoria's main focus has always been supporting the Stolen Generations to find and be reunited with their family. Our work involves applying for our client's records, carrying out research to establish family connections and the location of their traditional country. Once this is completed we begin a search for living family. The journey a client takes with our service is usually a long and emotional one. It is our job to do whatever we can to help both our client and their family so that they are finally able meet one another.



This past financial year has resulted in a number of highlights for our Link-Up program especially around the 16 reunions we were able to plan and organise. This was a remarkable effort given limited resources. All of our reunions confirm that the story of the Stolen Generations is not over and we are still bringing our mob back home.

Each year Link-Up Victoria is involved in organising events that commemorate the Stolen Generations so that the history and stories are never forgotten, such as The National Anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations which is held on 13 February every year. This year was special because it was the tenth anniversary of the long-awaited apology on behalf of the Australian Government by the then Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin

Rudd to the Stolen Generations and their families. The celebration was held in partnership with the City of Darebin and Connecting Home and was attended by approximately 250 people from all walks of life who listened to speeches and participated in a very touching ceremony around the Stolen Generations marker located next to the Civic Centre in Preston.

For National Sorry Day on 26 May, Link-Up Victoria partnered with the City of Yarra and Connecting Home for the unveiling of a marker in Fitzroy that honours the Stolen Generations and their families. Created by Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi artist Reko Rennie it is called "Remember Me" and with the surrounding landscape it is a truly beautiful place of reflection for everyone. This marker was two years

in the making and was a result of work between the council and community. It is hoped that the next marker will be created in the City of Melbourne who were approached by Link-Up Victoria some two years about the importance for the Stolen Generations to be commemorated this way.

16
LINK-UP
reunions

took place
1st July 2017 to
30th June 2018

IN THEIR OWN
HEARTFELT WORDS
HERE IS WHAT OUR
LINK-UP CLIENTS
SAID ABOUT THEIR
REUNIONS...



Saying “mum”
now has
meaning.

Being around
my sisters it was
like we were
never apart.

It was great to
learn about my
mother’s traditional
country and history
and meet many of my
family.

I met my baby,
I didn’t want her
to go.

“We’ve learnt from the apology
so it influences us today. We’re
doing better today because of the
stories of the past”

- Muriel Bamblett



ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

VACCA's Royal Commission Support Service program has been supporting Aboriginal people in telling their stories to the Royal Commission for the past five years. Our service supports Aboriginal people in a culturally safe ways respecting their healing journey and empowering them.

Over five years we have supported nearly 90 Aboriginal people to tell their stories, including 15 men who participated through the Beyond Survival Prison Program.

This has been a significant area of work for VACCA so that Aboriginal people who have experienced this form of trauma had an opportunity to be heard.

During the last five years, VACCA provided submissions on ten policy and research reports to the Royal Commission and gave evidence at six public hearings and contributed to many roundtables.

The Royal Commission provided us with the opportunity to review our policies and practices to ensure children in our care today are heard and protected and less likely to suffer the abuses that many experienced in the past.

Last year included two Royal Commission Healing events- one was a community event held at Lake Eildon and a Women's Healing Retreat held at Daylesford. These events provided attendees a chance to include their family and broader community in their healing. The women's group were able to come together in their healing journey through a shared experience of culture, art and massage.

The Royal Commission concluded its work in December 2017, reporting through 17 Volumes and 409 recommendations. VACCA's Royal Commission Support Service has also now closed.

In that time we significantly influenced the report and recommendations made by the Royal Commission. We'd like to thank all Aboriginal community members who we were able to connect with, support, and in some way assist in coming forward and telling their story in the past five years. The courage and trust displayed by all was extraordinary.

Since the conclusion of the Royal Commission we have set up a Redress Support Service to support people who wish to seek redress for their past abuse. Our Redress Support Service will continue the important work of helping people heal as they seek redress.



Beyond Survival

Beyond Survival assists and supports Aboriginal people in prisons to tell their stories to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Our work identified the need for so many men and women in prison to access healing. In 2015 we received three years of funding for the Beyond Survival program from the Kaka Wangity Wangin-Mirrie (Come Listen Hear), Corrections Victoria.

VACCA now runs 12 men's and four women's programs supporting Aboriginal people across prisons and Community Corrections each year. This year we received funding to run a further three programs in Ravenhall Prison. The programs run over three consecutive days and work with 16 men and 12 women per program.

Participants gain an understanding of their past behaviors and challenges by learning about colonisation, stolen generations and intergenerational trauma, and how these issues have continued to impact them daily. With this understanding participants considered new and much healthier ways to manage challenges and issues. They have become strong in their identity and culture.

Over the past 12 months the program worked with a further 173 participants and 90% of participants wanted to continue the program. Expectations of the program have been exceeded, with many prison staff reporting changes in the attitudes of participants. Leading to further support for the program within the prisons.



PERMANENT CARE

VACCA believes that placement stability is important for children; however, stability also comes from family and Community relationships. These provide the child with a sense of safety and security in the knowledge of who they are and where they are from, a sense of belonging to their family and Community, and a spiritual connectedness to Country. From March 2016 amendments to the Children, Youth and Families Act were designed to require decisions to be made in a timely manner, with an emphasis on promoting stability and permanency for children. At the same time, amendments were made to improve cultural connection

and support for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. There is a trend across Australia towards Permanent Care. Given the number of Aboriginal children entering child protection, VACCA has a real concern that this legislative mechanism will lead to further permanent separation of Aboriginal children away from community and country.

The permanent care program builds on work undertaken through case planning, Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making and cultural support. It considers the understanding and commitment of carers to the cultural needs of children.

Our permanent Care team responded to 37 referrals

Approx. 1st July 2017 to 30th June 2018

Great care is taken when applying for a Permanent Care Order (PCO) for an Aboriginal child, which is also outlined in the legislation requirements relating to the permanent care of Aboriginal children. The Children's Court in Victoria cannot approve a PCO without VACCA approval.

VACCA's Permanent Care service will advocate for post care support and funding which will meet the needs of children. This may include brokerage for Return to Country trips, and access to specialist services and support. As an organisation we will continue to further grow and resource this area.

In 2017-18 financial year the Permanent Care team responded to approximately 37 referrals, in addition to referrals from the previous year. Several Permanent Care Orders were put in place, with six others being approved by the VACCA panel pending court approval. The program and panel takes pride in making sure only those carers who demonstrate a commitment and understanding of Aboriginal stability and where a Permanent Care order is viewed the most appropriate order will the assessment be approved.





Siblings in permanent care connected to their culture

VACCA has been supporting a sibling group of four children who are on Permanent Care Orders since 2014. The carers wanted to connect the children to the Community of their cultural heritage. We helped them be part of a Return to Country and they now participate every year. The carers make arrangements directly with the children's family who have ownership of the annual trip.

With the consent of the children's mother, in September 2018, the carers and children travelled to New South Wales to visit their grandfather's Country. We identified an Aboriginal Elder from the family who introduced and guided the children. This was facilitated through the local Ranger and the Historic Site (jointly managed by the Ngijaampaa Traditional Owners and the NSW Department of Environment).

The children were introduced to a local dance program in Western Melbourne. Since beginning the program the children have been dancing at community events. The eldest child has danced at approximately 50 events, including at the 2018 NAIDOC Ball at Crown, when she danced with her Aunty (her father's sister). The carers have said that the children's connection to Community has really strengthened through the dancing. The children were asked to dance at the opening of the Melbourne Festival as a part of Tanderrum in October of 2018.

The carers of these children demonstrate strong commitment to ensure they grow up with strong relationships, connections to family and Community.

.....
The carers have gone above and beyond with their efforts to ensure the children have their parents in their lives - driving them every three weeks to the inner-city to spend time and connect.
.....

ABOUT NUGEL

Nugel is a new program that empowers Aboriginal people to oversee and support our kids in care. Funded through the State Government's Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) Program, VACCA has named our ACAC funded program "Nugel" the Wurundjeri word for "Belong". The Program is authorised under Section 18 of the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 and is sometimes known as Aboriginal Guardianship.

Through Nugel, VACCA supports children in out-of-home care to be safe and to connect to their culture or to stay connected. We support children to see families as frequently as the law allows and we work towards children moving home to parents or families. With Nugel, kids are much more likely to go home and are much more likely to live through their culture and be proud in their culture.

VACCA does not make any decision about who should be removed into out-of-home care or where they should be placed. This is a Government/Court decision.



Isaiah's story

When Isaiah first came across to Nugel, he had been having contact with his mum, Ruby only once a month, with no phone contact in between. These meetings were taking place at a fast food chain. Based on descriptions from the care team provided to Nugel, this was a tense experience for all.

During contact, he would regularly repeat stories and questions about past experiences of family violence from his father and there was concern that his mother Ruby would not respond appropriately to this. Additionally, Isaiah and his mother would become very distressed, often 'wailing', when it was time to say goodbye. Following contact, Isaiah would be described as 'heightened' and there was a general sense that contact was not a positive experience for Isaiah.

Because of this, when Isaiah was hospitalised and then placed in secure welfare due to mental health concerns, the care team argued that his mum should not be allowed to visit him

believing he would not be able to cope with the contact. Three months passed without any contact with his mum.

Since coming across to Nugel, there has been a significant change for Isaiah in relation to his connection to family. Following consultation with VACCA's Healing Team, Isaiah's Case Manager organised for contact to be moved to VACCA where Isaiah and his Mum could connect and engage through art activities. These activities are facilitated by an art therapy student, take place on a fortnightly basis. According to his Nugel Case Manager, "they come and sit close together in the room and paint. Usually they'll swap their art at the end, so that his mum will take something of Isaiah's, and Isaiah will take something that his Mum has done."

Although this is supervised by staff, everyone in the room is engaged in the art activities alongside them. As a result, Ruby has described this contact as a "freedom" where "I can be myself."

This is different from her previous experience of contact where she described feeling scrutinised and monitored explaining that "even if she went onto the playground with Isaiah, supervision staff would follow them asking her to come back down so they could hear every single thing that she said to her son." Goodbyes have also become a lot easier.

Isaiah's Case Manager reflects that, "they've had a much more positive, calming, connecting experience, but also it seems that they trust that they are actually going to see each other again. Previously there was a sense that Mum had to prove that she was in a 'good space' for contact to go ahead. Now there is a sense that this is just what we do."

Recently Isaiah was in hospital again for his mental health. He wasn't doing well. This time it was different. "I just called Mum on the phone and she was amazing with him and so reassuring and soothing. You could just see him physically relax."

INNOVATION



FAMILY VIOLENCE PROJECT

The **#itswhatyoudontsee** family violence campaign featured four short clips that focus on an Aboriginal family and their exposure to family violence in particular the impact of family violence on children. Commonly, family violence media campaigns tend to focus on the impact of family violence on adults. Our campaign highlighted one Aboriginal family and told the story of how family violence in the home impacted on the children and their relationships both inside and outside the home. These impacts included decreased concentration and behavioural issues at school, anxiety, anger, repeating learnt behaviour and the cycle of family violence. The Hon. Jenny Mikakos launched the campaign clips on 20 March, 2018 at the Melbourne Art Centre. The clips have had over 3,000 views and are available on VACCAs YouTube Channel and our Website.



DEADLY STORY

The Deadly Story cultural portal was launched in November 2017 in partnership with the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), The Koorie Heritage Trust, the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners Corporation and Brightlabs, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services. It is a cultural information website developed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the Victorian out-of-home care system connect with their Country, their Communities, and their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and identity. It is a tool for practitioners, carers and young people with information and resources.



CARERS EDUCATION FORUMS

VACCA developed an online resource which delivers a range of scenarios exploring cultural safety for an Aboriginal child in the context of the Child Safe Standards, this was also uploaded to our YouTube Channel and website. Mainstream organisations can utilise this resource in their own organisational training and professional development. This project was funded by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Additional Support Services

For expectant or new mums

VACCA's **Cradle to Kinder program** visits and supports new parents and their children from pre-birth to kindergarten. We also run **playgroups** for families with pre-school children. Playgroup is a great place for children and their mums, dads and carers to meet new people, join in cultural activities and learn about parenting, health, wellbeing and culture.

For young people and adults who are homeless

Our homelessness program provides advocacy, outreach, support and referral to help young people and adults who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.

For families who need support

VACCA's family support program helps parents safely care for their children. We visit families and offer parenting advice and support; and we link families with other programs and activities to help with things like housing, education and income security.

VACCA's family mental health program provides support to families where the mental health of a child or parent affects the family.

For young people leaving their placement to live independently

VACCA's leaving care program provides support and brokerage to young people aged 16-21 to find independent accommodation.

For Aboriginal people struggling with drug and alcohol addiction

VACCA's drug and alcohol program supports people experiencing problems with drugs use and helps families through delivering education and support programs.

For Aboriginal people in the youth or adult justice system

VACCA runs programs to divert Aboriginal people, who are at risk, away from the criminal justice system.

We support those in prisons across the state and people in post release services.

If you need help

Koorie Connect provides a culturally friendly space for community members to use the internet and get help. We refer to culturally appropriate mainstream and Aboriginal services like housing, education, health, employment, financial relief and legal. We also provide emergency relief for families in financial crisis. We can provide shopping vouchers and can help you purchase things you need.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

We are always keen to hear how we can improve our services to better meet the needs of Aboriginal children, family and communities living in Victoria. We welcome your feedback.

Also if you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and over 18 you can become a VACCA member.

Visit vacca.org for more information.



CULTURAL PROGRAMS FOR KOORIE KIDS



BARRENG MOOROP

Barreng Moorop is an early intervention youth justice program. Throughout the year we have worked with 10 children and their families by engaging young people in activities to help them develop life skills, encourage motivation and practice their culture. The program helps youth to stay in school and prevent engagement with the justice system through weekly boys' cultural programs where participants are making and learning to play didgeridoos, boxing sessions and cooking programs with a mum and her three daughters. The program is run in partnership with Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS).



KOORIE YOUTH HEALTH MATTERS

Funded through Koolin Balit, Koorie Youth Health Matters (KYHM) was run from Barbeenin Beek in Heidelberg from October 2017 to July 2018. Weekly sessions took place, covering topics such as mental health, sexual health, cultural practice, healthy relationships and film making. The aim was to help young people develop strategies and build relationships to support them through any challenges they may experience. The young people created four YouTube clips to share with other young people on the themes of anxiety, bullying, healthy relationships and sexual health. These will be available on our website with accompanying fact sheets.



KOORIE TIDDAS CHOIR

The Koorie Tiddas Choir gives a voice to Aboriginal girls and young women giving them a opportunity to participate in a positive, fulfilling and creative after-school activity. The Choir gained three new members this year, and continued to meet weekly during the term. They were led by Monica Weightman, and had guests musicians such as Uncle Kutcha Edwards. The Merinda's facilitated a songwriting workshop with the Tiddas. Throughout the year they performed four times, which included a performance as a part of the White Night celebrations at Melbourne Museum.



NARRUN YANA ART COLLECTIVE

Narrun Yana translates as 'spirit journey' in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri people. Narrun Yana it is a safe space for young people to work together in a creative environment that supports economic independence as well as professional development within the arts and cultural sector. Mentored by Quandamooka artist Megan Cope, the young people in Narrun Yana had their first exhibition at the Footscray Community Arts Centre in may, selling a number of pieces. One of the young artists has launched a baby range which includes cushion covers and tote bags.



KOORIE KIDS STAY @SCHOOL

The Education Support Worker in Koorie Kids Stay @ School has been working with 12 young people across schools in the Northern Region. We have facilitated trauma training at three schools and organised the Victorian Aboriginal Health Services (VAHS) Healthy Lifestyle Team to run traditional games in two schools the first half of 2018. As a part of this program, six young people received a repurposed laptop, provided by SEEK to support them with their learning at home.



ART MENTORING PROGRAM

Our fourth Art Mentoring program kicked off in February 2018 with six new young people mentored alongside artists Maree Clarke, Peter Waples-Crowe and James Henry in weekly workshops. The six month program which will culminate in an exhibition of the young people's work at Neon Parlour Gallery in Thornbury in September 2018.

OUR VISION, PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES

OUR VISION

Aboriginal self-determination
- Live, Experience and Be.

OUR PURPOSE

Supporting culturally strong, safe and thriving Aboriginal communities.

PRINCIPLES



Self-determination

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



Respect

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



Aboriginal cultural observance

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



Best interests of the Child

Our children 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 Aboriginal identity and connection to their community and to be with their own families.



Excellence

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



Healing and empowerment

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

section four

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Our services based in seven key locations across Melbourne and Victoria have been responding to the needs of our community. Their performance demonstrates greater engagement with our community through cultural activities, working with locally-based services to deliver improved services and delivering stronger advocacy based on the principles of self-determination and culture.



The graphic features a stylized map of the Northern Metropolitan area of Melbourne in orange, overlaid on a background image of three people standing on a rocky hillside looking out over a valley. The text 'NORTHERN HIGHLIGHTS' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, with '2017-2018' below it in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. A decorative orange border curves along the right side of the graphic.

NORTHERN HIGHLIGHTS

2017-2018

VACCA's Northern service is located in Preston, and delivers a range of community service programs for the Aboriginal community of Melbourne's Northern Metropolitan areas. Our programs span the spectrum of community services, and work together in an integrated way to facilitate the best outcomes for the Aboriginal community. We work towards self-determination and healing of the Aboriginal community by embedding culture and strengthening the safety and well-being of vulnerable community members, particularly children.

Our programs have a strength-based approach that aim to provide empowering, healing services to repair damage done to the Stolen Generations and the community by policies of removing Aboriginal children.

In June of this year we held our first cultural camp in Glenmore, as a part of the Northern Cultural Support Program. There were nine young people who attended, with a Welcome to Country performed around the campfire by proud Wurundjeri woman, Kellie Hunger. Koorie Connect fully transitioned this year from being a referral service, to operating as a case management service. Throughout the last year 751 community members were supported, more than double the funded target of 354. The Wilam Support Service supported more than 150 people with housing and homelessness concerns. Our services support a wide range of community needs. We found transitional housing for a family of six after spending a long period of time in a small hotel room. We were able to arrange accommodation for a teenage girl who was experiencing family violence at Marj Tucker, and Bert Williams Hostel provided housing for a homeless teenage male.



The Family Services and Aboriginal Liaison Worker (ALW) teams held a successful Annual Alliance Day with agencies from North-East and Hume Moreland areas, with representatives from Anglicare, Berry Street, Kildonan and Children's Protection Society (CPS) in attendance. The event provided mainstream agencies with information and education on effective delivery of culturally appropriate services to the Aboriginal Community, enabling us to increase our Alliance's members' understanding of our programs and other Aboriginal Services.

The Intensive Family Support (IFS) Program received a high number of self-referrals from Aboriginal community members who have felt comfortable to reach out to access supports without the involvement of the Department of Health and Human Services or other referral services. The team's Aboriginal staff provide support and guidance to non-Aboriginal colleagues and work together to ensure the needs of the child and family are met through our case management.

FAMILY VIOLENCE THERAPEUTIC PROGRAM

Our Therapeutic Group Worker, a proud Aboriginal woman is responsible for women's, children's and women in prison groups. Our worker has provided group participants with an exceptional experience of understanding the impacts of family violence through a culturally appropriate lens. The group created a space to empower women to become more confident and proactive in achieving their goals and contributing to their journey of healing.

The first group had 12 women attend, and the worker created a model that allowed for continued support after the completion of the program. As a part of the Northern Family Violence Therapeutic Program the women's group participated in six sessions of basket weaving. By the group meeting, they were able to build strong relationships with each other through these cultural activities, and as a result the women reported that they felt less anxious.

"I love the work I am doing within the family violence therapeutic space. I admire the strength and resilience that the women have shown. When women support each other, incredible things happen."

- Kikki Bamblett, Therapeutic Group

EASTERN HIGHLIGHTS

2017-2018



The Eastern Region office opened in 2011 in response to a demand in the Child Protection system. The office is now located in Chirnside Park and provides services to Aboriginal children, families, and community members residing within the area. A core component of this region is its seven programs model which focuses explicitly on vulnerable and at-risk children, young people and their families.

The Eastern Region hosted a Carers Dinner this year, where all carers of Aboriginal children and young people in Community Service Organisations (CSOs) were able to gain an insight into VACCA's role and update them on the transitions project. This was a positive night where carers were able to share valuable experiences and insights to VACCA.

The Eastern Region supported a number of reunions this year, with a highlight being a young girl in Kinship Care returning home to Western Australia. The Region's cultural camps also saw some great successes with an increase in engagement of young people, with camps throughout the year growing in attendance. With a camp at the beginning of 2018 at Camp Jungai having 25 young people attend.

The Eastern Region also had the privilege of a young seventeen-year-old Aboriginal man complete his year ten work experience with the team. During his time with VACCA he attended the Police Academy, and consequently secured a school based traineeship with Victoria Police.

BINDI'S STORY

Late in 2017 we were able to reunite a young girl in her early teens back into the care of her mother. This was made possible through significant support including; counselling, improving the mums ability to self-regulate, set appropriate boundaries, develop an ability to use language around emotions for herself and with her children. Mum was able to gain an understanding of how her words and behavior impacts on her children, along with the ability to reflect on her children's experiences, feelings and needs. Her 14 year old daughter who historically wouldn't engage in

counselling, was able to engage with a worker. Family work is commencing, including with siblings, and this has seen their sibling relationship improve. Her brother has also been able to attend two of our Cultural Camps and a photography course, 'Through our Eyes' with Boorndawan Willam.

Multiple programs worked together holistically to support this family, seeing positive outcomes, to the point where they no longer have the Department of Health and Human Services' involvement.

.....
Multiple programs worked together holistically to support this family, seeing positive outcomes.
.....



SOUTHERN HIGHLIGHTS

2017-2018



Morwell

Our Southern Metro Office was established in Dandenong in 2000, and covers a large area from South Melbourne to Pakenham and the Mornington Peninsula and Bayside areas. The services in this region provide support to Aboriginal children, young people and their families and individual community members. This support often includes early years support, playgroups, cultural activities, case management, emergency relief, counselling and advocacy. We also offer crisis support and family violence assistance.

Cultural camps in the Southern Region have been a positive experience for the local community, with increased attendance. The camps provided an opportunity for the children and young people to make friends through positive cultural experiences. Participants were taken to sights of historical significance; guided in cultural activities; introduced to local Elders and Aboriginal leaders; and taught about Aboriginal culture. At the camps, ten young leaders were identified and supported to take on mentor roles with other young people.

One of the achievements of Southern has been the development of a strong youth focus. At least 50 young people have been involved in our youth programs and camps with a 100% increase in participation. Through these experiences young people have been able to access help when needed, make friends with their Aboriginal peers, learn about culture and participate in cultural activities. The impact of these experiences has been overwhelmingly positive for the young people resulting in the identification of 10 young mentors who will continue to be involved in our activities in the area.

In addition, we have also been involved in piloting evidence-based programs through a partnership model with Oz Child, Mackillop and Queen Elizabeth Centre. These include Functional Family Therapy, Safe Early Years. VACCA Southern has also been part of the regional demonstration pilots addressing empowering youth, kinship reunification, sibling support placement, mentoring and learning.

MORWELL

Our Morwell service has grown markedly over the last year mainly because of the 'Principle 5' transfer of kinship care children to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. Morwell has also been chosen as one of the new 'Orange Door' sites, a new service gateway for women and children experiencing family violence. Gippsland also runs diversion and other justice related programs for our community.

Morwell also operates our Orana Gunyah (meaning 'Welcome, Place of Shelter' in the Wiradjuri language) service. Orana Gunyah is a purpose-built, cluster model facility, that provides short-term accommodation and support-services for up to five women and children who are escaping or experiencing family violence.

Helping our young men become strong and deadly

The Strong and Deadly program has been successfully running since its commencement in August of 2017. The program is a partnership between Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Limited, Ngwala and the City of Casey. The program engages at risk Aboriginal young men between the ages of 10-24 who are or at risk of offending. The program incorporates activities such as boxing, basketball and other sports and recreational activities to help keep youth off the street. Since the program's implementation, evaluation and feedback has demonstrated an increase in the school retention rate for young males in the Dandenong region.



WESTERN HIGHLIGHTS

2017-2018

The Western Region has grown significantly since the restructure in 2014 saw the inception of its first local office. Now programs are delivered across two locations in Werribee and Melton – both high population growth areas.

The programs and services delivered in the Western Region have increased in the past year, and staff have undertaken training to further their understanding of the impact of intergenerational trauma on the children, young people, families and adults we work with. The region has appointed a Clinical Psychologist to work on evidence-based programs, along with being a part of a team delivering the Unite program working in prisons, helping them to strengthen and reconnect with their families. The Western Region also have a strong Cultural Support Program, and Camps that provide an opportunity for children and young people to strengthen their identity and cultural connectedness.

In this financial year the Western Region have accepted 27 children in alignment with transitioning Aboriginal children and young people on protection orders to be case managed by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. The region supports self-determination through their family support, early years and family violence programs where families are empowered. In addition to this the region's Out of Home Care program has increased, and will continue to do so with another 40 children to be transitioned in the coming months. This year saw a Return to Country trip took place for a 13 year old girl to Northern Territory, the trip helped her to make lifelong family connections for herself and her 16 year old foster brother who also met some of his family. There were also four cultural day camps over the Easter school holidays, where children and young people were able to make new friends, learn more about their identity and their culture.



WORKING TOGETHER FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

Late in 2017, with Christmas drawing near, a family experiencing severe family violence was referred to our service as a high priority. It was important to make certain the family stayed together whilst ensuring their immediate safety. Temporary accommodation was arranged at a motel over the Christmas period.

The family were continually supported during this time with accommodation, storage, relocation and assistance for their family pets. With the client's consent, our worker spoke to UnitingCare Werribee where they provided much needed additional financial support to facilitate the move.

After a brief stay with one of their family members, the family decided to safely relocate to a regional town where they could make a new start. We supported the move with accommodation and other support services before referring the family to a local Aboriginal Co-op and Family violence support service. The family and children are happy in their new home and the children are looking forward to starting school.

The collaborative approach together with a wrap around service were essential in delivering successful outcomes for this family. All involved helped to minimize further stress and empowered the family to make safe lifestyle decisions.

.....
"I am so appreciative of all the work and support of VACCA, I could not have a better outcome for my family."
.....

- VACCA Client

CLIENT SERVICES PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT

Client Services Practice and Development was created in 2017 to strengthen and improve our cultural practice and create uniformity in service delivery across all our programs. It combines Continuous Quality Improvement, Internal Training, Principal Practitioner, the Aboriginal Children's Healing Team, Lead Practitioner Family Violence, Foster Care Recruitment Assessment Training and Retention, In-House Legal Counsel, Projects and Reform, and outcomes and evaluation.

We have also established an in-house Legal Counsel team who provide advice and representation in Court for Nugel. A new Principal Practitioner role commenced provision of clinical and practice leadership across the organisation, as well as cultural leadership more broadly.

During 2017-2018 we undertook considerable work on an organisation-wide change management plan, building upon culturally specific practices, providing a new technical system to deliver outcome focused services. This work will ensure the organisation continues to operate in a culturally specific and sustainable way, underpinned by principles such as the rights of the child and self-determination. Recognising that self-determination requires appropriate governance structures to allow individuals to have a say, be heard, and make decisions that affect their own life.

Over the course of the next three years we will implement our Outcomes Project, incorporating the Cultural Therapeutic Ways, across the organisation. This is an important phase for the organisation to secure new and ongoing funding, with a strong evidence informed approach where we can show outcomes being achieved by the Community we support.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Projects and Reform

The Project and Reform team provides support to the organisation and community around advocacy for self-determination, sector reform and policy direction with government.

Business development and service implementation

The business development and service implementation team has been extremely busy this year, having written over 50 submissions to ensure the continuation of new and existing services provided through our local offices funded by Commonwealth, State Government and philanthropic funders. The current State Government has a strong agenda for self-determination and implementing family violence reforms which has seen an increase in funding opportunities for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). The team also provides support to our offices in implementing all new programs and successful submissions. This includes the development of program manuals, forms and practice tools.



40th Anniversary Celebrations

The latter half of 2017 culminated in celebrations of our fortieth anniversary. In 1976 Aunty Mollie Dyer, with other Victorian Aboriginal community members founded VACCA, the first Aboriginal-run agency to support Aboriginal children and families in Australia. VACCA has now grown to over 500 staff and assisted over 6000 clients across the state.

Our anniversary celebrations included a gala dinner at Melbourne Museum which was attended by almost 600 of our current and past staff, board members, sector partners, funders, supporters, suppliers and community members. We were privileged to have Uncle Archie Roach, Isaiah Firebrace, Stray Blacks and Maylene Slater-Burns performing that evening. We wish to thank everyone for joining us and honoring our proud history of service and accomplishments for the Aboriginal community. In December we held a free community event at the Aborigines Advancement League which was headlined by Uncle Kutcha Edwards.

At the gala dinner our Chairperson announced the establishment of the Mollie Dyer Awards for 2018 in honour of our extraordinary founder. The awards will celebrate Victorian Aboriginal people's excellent work in supporting Aboriginal children, young people and families to feel safe, strong and proudly connected to culture and community. The first awards will be conducted in the second half of 2018.



section five

OUR ASPIRATIONS



VACCA Annual Report 2018

THE YEAR AHEAD

As we head into the new 2018-2019 financial year, we also commence our new strategic planning period. The next twelve months will include a State and Federal election, which inevitably creates some uncertainty, but also the prospect of new opportunities particularly at the Federal level. VACCA is optimistic that, whichever party wins government in Victoria, they will continue to support the reforms that have been introduced in the child welfare, family violence, self-determination and treaty space. In any case, we will not support a retreat from the new reforms which have already set in train a new standard in Aboriginal affairs. Aboriginal Children and families who use our services need medium to long term support to address some of

the issues they face, and we are hoping for continuity of the programs and services our clients can access. VACCA will continue to support the Treaty discussions through the continued involvement of our CEO and staff. As an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO's) providing services to our communities, we are also keen to be involved in the treaty discussions about the role of ACCO's in a Treaty framework.

In the next period we will continue to demonstrate that culture makes a difference and works for our children and families.

VACCA's Cultural Therapeutic Ways project -including our Outcomes Framework - will be implemented at all stages of

program design and delivery via the development of Cultural Therapeutic Implementation Plans within the newly developed Evaluation Framework. This is the mechanism through which VACCA will measure the outcomes we achieve with, and for our clients.

We will continue to develop evidence informed practice underpinned by the principles of human rights, community benefit and rigorous practice. Evidence informed practice combines three core concepts that prioritise context and consultation as enshrined in the Cultural Therapeutic Ways: practice wisdom, client preference and best research.

Read VACCA's
strategic plan
2018 – 2021
[vacca.org.au/
aboutus](http://vacca.org.au/aboutus)



Our community and its needs are constantly changing and we will need to respond if not anticipate these needs by offering the right kind of services in the right places.

The key developments in service reform that we have pursued, and achieved, over the last few years including Nugel, as part of the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care Program, Transitioning Aboriginal Children to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOS), family violence services and others will become a permanent part of the fabric of services we offer. This combination of services will lead to further innovation, which is all part of our drive to find better solutions to the issues facing our children, young people, families and communities.

We are well aware of the continuing needs of our communities in relation to family violence, homelessness, mental health and substance abuse. Our community

and its needs are constantly changing and we will need to respond if not anticipate these needs by offering the right kind of services in the right places. We have key work to progress in service delivery, continuing to influence and advocate, work in partnership with and support others to address the needs of Aboriginal communities. We will continue to work with government at all levels necessary to achieve change and better outcomes for our families and children.



thank you...

We are very grateful for the contribution our Supporters, Donors, Fundraisers and Clients make to our organisation and the work that we do. VACCA would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you.

Some of the programs that you have assisted us by supporting are our Cultural Strengthening programs such as the Art Mentoring, Narrun Yana Art Collective, Koorie Tiddas Choir, Return to Country, and Cultural Camps. We have also seen amazing support for our NAIDOC Children's Events and Christmas Gift Appeal.

If you, or your organisation would like to learn more about how to support our crucial work, please contact 03 9287 8847 or supportus@vacca.org



OUR SUPPORTERS AND FUNDERS

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

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

Sector Organisations

Berry Street, MacKillop Family Services, Ozchild, Foster Care Association, Anglicare, Breakthru, Centre of Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, Child First Partners, Create Foundation, Family Life, Fostering Connections, Jesuit Social Services, Latrobe Valley Community Health, Latrobe University, Life Without Barriers, Queen Elizabeth Centre, Uniting Vic Tas, Westcare, Youth Support and Advisory Service, YouthWorx.

Philanthropy

Bell Charitable Trust, Creswick Foundation, Equity Trustees, Gandel Foundation, The Geo Group, Healing Foundation, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Packer Family Foundation and Crown Resort Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund, Westfield Doncaster.

Pro bono services - Ashurst, Neon Parlour

Fundraising – Evelyn Hotel, Gasometer Hotel, Lucky Coq, Tote Hotel.

40th Anniversary Sponsors

Jesuit Social Services, Ricoh Australia, Uniting Vic Tas, Preston Toyota and Toyota Motor Corp, Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners, OurKloud, Moore Stephens.

Government

Commonwealth Department of Social Services

Commonwealth Department of Employment

Local Government Councils

Prime Minister and Cabinet

State Government of Victoria



Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



VACCA

Connected by culture

**Serving Aboriginal Children
in the Community**

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