Healing Together

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
Annual Report 2014/2015
VACCA is committed to providing accessible services to everyone, 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.

We would also like to thank the contributing photographers who provided their photos for this report.

We would like to thank the children, carers, parents and families that appear in the photos of this report. As well as the contributing Indigenous artists.

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Design
ACGD Design & Communications
creative@acgddesign.com

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Healing together is what VACCA is about - workers and our clients - community members - are all healed through our work at VACCA because we all have our issues and difficulties we are living with. We all need a helping hand and support at various times in our life. As long as one of us is oppressed so are we all.

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Welcome to this year’s report. This section reflects on some of the important milestones and steps forward in our journey of healing together as a community.

**Wominjeka and welcome...**

**CEO’s Report**

This year’s Annual Report fills me with joy and pride not just because of the theme we have chosen, but also because it shows off our children and young people and their talent.

The reporting period since July 2014 has been one of some change as well as frenetic activity. It has involved a lot of planning and thinking and of course activity delivering our services and cultural programs on top of the day-to-day tasks of running an organisation.

There were notable points during the year that require mention. Some are achievements of ours and others are key developments which have impacted on us. From the Commonwealth Department of Social Services we received a substantial boost to our Emergency Relief Program which has been very welcome.

**Chairperson’s Statement**

I have pleasure in presenting our report for 2014-2015. Over the last year we have made remarkable achievements and have achieved a great deal.

As a Board, we are continuously working hard on our Strategic Plan for 2015-2018, which includes increasing the numbers of our Aboriginal staff as this is what makes us different. Over the next three years we look forward to making significant advances in our service delivery as well as expanding the boundaries of what everyone understands as Aboriginal Child and Family Welfare.

In conclusion, I want to thank our Board, our CEO, Aunty Muriel Bamblett and all our staff, volunteers and carers for all their hard work and dedication to VACCA.
The feedback you provide enables us to improve our report so it best reflects the voice of our organisation and the community.

We received 43 responses about last year’s Annual Report. Through these responses we identified a number of positive aspects, which included; the photos of children and families from our community, the easy to read text, and the use of diagrams and graphs to explain data about our organisation.

Some responses suggested the report should have more personal stories. In response to this we have included more case studies in this report for you.

There were also a range of suggestions about making Aboriginal Culture more present in the report. So we refreshed the design to feature artwork from our young people, staff and programs.

We will continue to seek feedback and work with you to make the report more engaging.

To give your feedback on this report you can:
1. Complete our 2015 feedback survey
2. Email feedback@vacca.org

Your Voice Matters
(2014 Annual Report Feedback)
Vision
Our children, young people, families and communities are thriving - culturally strong, empowered and safe.

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

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

James Atkinson
(Yorta Yorta/Bangerang)
Chairperson
Currently employed as Manager, Koorie Education with the Department of Education and Training. Has worked across the Education sector from early childhood, schools, TAFE and the higher education in the fields of policy development, stakeholder and project management. He has a great deal of organisational experience and has served on Boards at a state and national level. Was one of the founding members of the first Victorian Aboriginal Youth Advisory Committee and a participant in the Koorie Leadership Program.

Helen Kennedy
(Trawlwoolway/Plairmairrener)
Vice Chairperson
Employed as Manager of the VAHS Family Counselling Service. Has worked in the Aboriginal community controlled sector for the last 17 years in a range of capacities in Aboriginal health, education and training. Has a BA Psychology; MA Indigenous Leadership and has completed Governance training.

Deidre King
(Gunditjmara)
Treasurer
Currently employed as CEO of the Aboriginal Community Elders Service. Was previously employed at the Aborigines Advancement League for 17 years and worked at VACCA. Is a Board Member of VACSAL and is a member of Koolin Balit. Has completed an Advanced Diploma in Business Management and completed Governance training.

Margaret Atkinson
(Yorta Yorta/Taungurung/Wurundjeri)
Secretary
Currently employed with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. as a Wurreker Broker. Was previously employed at the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-op and was employed at VACCA for 9½ years. Has completed governance training.

Daniel Kelly
(Mutti Mutti/Wamba Wamba)
Director
Was employed as Manager of the Balranald Aboriginal Health Service. Was previously employed at Mutti Miah Family Preservation and was employed at VACCA for many years.

Jason Kanoa
(Gunditjmara/Bunitj)
Director
Currently employed with VALS as the Koorie Caucus Executive Officer. Was previously employed with VACSAL as the Manager of the Aboriginal Centre for Males. Was previously employed with VAYSAR for 7 years. Has completed governance training and the Indigenous Leadership Network Victoria course.

Michael Graham
(Dja Dja Wurrung/Wurundjeri)
Director
Currently employed as a Koorie Education Co-ordinator with the Department of Education and Training. Has over 20 years of employment in Aboriginal community controlled organisations including VAHS, VAEAI, VALS and VACCA. Was previously Chairman of VAHS and is currently on the Board of the Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-op.

Our Board
VACCA’s Board represents our community, provides leadership, ensures our financial status is sound and meets all our legal obligations. They also keep us connected to our community by being true to our culture, history, aspirations and values.

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

The child and we commit to uphold Victorian Aboriginal cultural protocols in all our work. This includes the full recognition of the human rights of the child. It is our responsibility to ensure that children are safe and healthy, and that their rights and freedoms are protected. We are committed to empowering children and their families to participate in decision-making and to shape their own futures. We believe that children have the right to be heard, to be respected, and to be treated with dignity and respect.

Our commitment is to our children, young people, families and communities. We are committed to working with our communities to build strong and resilient communities. We believe in the power of collaboration and partnerships to achieve positive outcomes for our children and families. We believe in the importance of cultural knowledge and traditions in shaping who we are and who we want to be. We believe in the importance of education and learning for all children, and that all children should have access to quality education and learning opportunities.

We are committed to working towards social justice and equality for all Aboriginal people in our communities. We believe in the power of community to effect positive change, and we are committed to working with our communities to bring about meaningful change. We believe in the importance of community ownership and control of our own affairs, and we are committed to supporting our communities to take control of their own futures.

We are committed to working towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in our communities. We believe in the power of reconciliation to bring about healing and understanding, and we are committed to working towards a more just and equitable society for all.

We believe in the power of symbolism and culture to shape our identity and our future. We are committed to preserving and promoting our cultural knowledge and traditions, and we believe in the importance of cultural symbols as a means of self-expression and identity.

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This section is about our staff, carers and volunteers. It describes their work, the importance of their work and highlights from the last year.

Our people

Our community needed an Aboriginal specific refuge to suit the needs of women and children escaping family violence. Some women in the Morwell community had been fighting for 20 years to provide a culturally specific family violence service for Aboriginal women and children.

Previously all refuges were communal and although a safer place for families to go to, our women would not feel able to stay in that environment and would return to the violence as an only option to them and their children.

Eventually, last year we set up Orana Gunyah. Orana Gunyah is a culturally specific 5 unit Crisis Accommodation Service for women and children. There is 1 unit that is disability friendly with the option to expand for larger families and another 4 units able to sleep a family of 6.

Each unit is set up and equipped with all amenities they require, staff at Orana Gunyah make sure each unit is ready with everything the women and children require prior to arriving. The children are also given a very special bag from the Alannah and Madeline Foundation for them to keep.

Orana Gunyah has play areas outside and inside with a fully equipped activity room. Activities are run for both women and children during the week, these include Culture, Family Violence and bonding activities. This allows women and children to have the freedom to maintain a daily routine and access community activities.

It is well shown by the families we have already had stay with us that the need for a culturally appropriate, individualized and specialized service is needed.
As an Aboriginal organization we also need to ensure that as we grow we continue to bring in more Aboriginal people. We have an organizational development approach that addresses this need.

Our client profile is diverse including children and young people, carers and families. We support many people through our Emergency Relief service as well as our Koorie Connect Referral Service. Our Koorie Energy Efficiency Program (KEEP) also successfully met our targets.

The diagrams on these pages show where we assisted our clients across Victoria. We were very pleased to open our first Western Region service location to support that growing community.

Our community is also our client in the sense that we organize many cultural activities to offer children and families access to culture and community throughout the year.

VACCA's objective is to employ Aboriginal people in all positions. However this is not always possible in a sector that requires qualified staff and a high degree of compliance and regulation due to the need to manage risk to ensure the best outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

Planning for succession as well as considering recruitment and recruitment strategies are key to ensuring our organization remains strong and our services are delivered to our community.

Last year we served almost 2,750 clients.

Our Clients across Victoria by DHHS Area as of 31 July 2015 (active clients only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Region</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Region</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Region</td>
<td>1,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Region</td>
<td>1,341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne Region</td>
<td>1,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Gippsland</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Gippsland</td>
<td>1,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Gippsland</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Highlands</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulburn</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barwon</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Highlands</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovens Murray</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer Eastern Melbourne</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Eastern Melbourne</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bayside Peninsula</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume Moreland</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Eastern Melbourne</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western District</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallee</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loddon</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goulburn</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Hume Moreland</td>
<td>130</td>
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<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. Inner Eastern Melbourne</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Southern Melbourne</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Bayside Peninsula</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>160*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This discrepancy is due to clients located outside Victoria as well as some with insufficient information to determine their location.
Tribute

Dr Alf Bamblett Snr passed away on Saturday 6 June 2014, aged 71 years. Alf was an influential figure in the Aboriginal community, known for his commitment to social justice and his work in advocating for the rights of Aboriginal people.

Alf was a Yuin, Yorta Yorta, Wiradjuri, and Wemba Wemba man who lived in the country between the Shoalhaven and Nepean rivers and Sydney. He was a founding member of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association (VACCA) and served as its President for many years. Under his leadership, VACCA became the largest Aboriginal community controlled organisation in Australia, serving over 40,000 people each year.

Alf was a man of strong principles and unwavering dedication. He was a passionate advocate for the rights of Aboriginal people and was instrumental in the development of many programs and initiatives to support community members. He was a tireless worker for social justice and was always willing to put in the extra effort to ensure that his community was heard.

Alf's legacy lives on through the work of VACCA and the many people he inspired. He will be remembered for his contributions to the community and for his unwavering commitment to social justice.

Alf left a legacy that will inspire generations to come. He was a true community leader who lived a life of service and dedication.

Our People

Highlights and Initiatives

Our People

- VACCA Annual Report 2014-15
- Healing Together
- VACCA’s CEO
- University of Technology, Sydney
- Deakin University
- Wodonga TAFE
- Footscray TAFE
- Monash University
- VACCA’s people bring to their work.
- VACCA Annual Report 2013-14
- Healing Together
- VACCA’s CEO
- University of Technology, Sydney
- Deakin University
- Wodonga TAFE
- Footscray TAFE
- Monash University
- VACCA’s people bring to their work.
Group

• Victoria Aboriginal Health Council Advisory Group
• Aboriginal Health Council of Tasmania

Mentoring Program

• Aboriginal Health Council of Tasmania
• Aboriginal Health Council of Tasmania

Partnerships

• Aboriginal Health Council of Tasmania
• Aboriginal Health Council of Tasmania

Leadership in Partnership

• Aboriginal Health Council of Tasmania
• Aboriginal Health Council of Tasmania

This section is about how we lead through our work inside and outside our organisation including the way we work in partnership. VACCA’s directions over the years have been driven by our advocacy seeking improvements for our community. We are well aware of the impact of legislation and policy and service systems and structures on the day-to-day lives of our families and children. We work with our staff to be our advocates at every level we work. The scope of our leadership is most apparent through the work of our CEO and is clearly indicated by the Committees.

Committee Member

• Aboriginal Children’s Committee
• Aboriginal Children’s Committee

Committee Member

• Aboriginal Children’s Committee
• Aboriginal Children’s Committee

Leading by example

Youth

• My Moola
• OCOKT & SBS

Foster Carers

• 80 Participants Trained (Through workshops July 2014 - June 2015)
• Training Workshops Delivered (Externally July 2014 - June 2015)

Abbreviations:

• OCOKT - Our Carers for Our Kids Training
• SBS - Step By Step Training

Cultural Awareness

• 6 workshops

Nikara’s Journey

• 47 Workshops
• 652 participants

Child and family welfare workers
Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder (AC2K)

Challenges experienced:
After the launch of AC2K program interventions, the aim was to promote the program and encourage referrals into the program. Referrals were received from clients and through community and from potential clients self-referring. Twenty-two referrals were received and an additional 11 enquiries were made during the implementation period. The program aims to work with 24 young mothers leaving the Out Of Home Care system. Therefore, AC2K is now able to provide these vulnerable women and their children for families that are engaged in the prevention of children having a further baby up until their baby is 6 weeks old. The program aims to focus on the following outcomes:

- Improved education (e.g. childcare, Kinder) and health care supports (e.g. MCHN)
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Outcomes:
- Improved education (e.g. childcare, Kinder) and health care supports (e.g. MCHN)
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Future goals:
2015
2015
2014
2014

Children experienced:
The program aims to focus on the following outcomes:

- Improved education (e.g. childcare, Kinder) and health care supports (e.g. MCHN)
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AC2K Implementation

1. Family support
2. Parenting groups
3. Early childhood education
4. Health services
5. Social work services
6. Other support services

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Our Services

This section is about the programs we run and the outcomes they have achieved for our children and families over the past year.

VACCA continues to provide a range of cultural activities that connect Aboriginal children and youth to their culture and strengthen their identity. VACCA provides:

- **The Koorie Tiddas** - A weekly choir program for Koorie girls including performance outcomes such as the opening of the new Koorie Heritage Trust building in September.
- **Family History Project** - A family strengthening program which connects a sibling group (who are placed together) and their family to a cultural strengthening and healing based project in which one of the outcomes is a family history book that the family create together.
- **Possum Skin Cloak Project with Kinship Carers** - Together a group of Kinship Carers create three possum skin cloaks with guidance from Vicki Couzens and Esther Kirby, to be used by families for healing and celebrations.
- **Healing Stories** - Working in partnership with Kids Own Publishing and VACCA playgroups families will create two books featuring stories about their connection to culture, community and family, that will be printed and sold to the broader community.
- **‘Children Of The Sun’ film** - Children of the Sun film follows the journey of three young women who have been in VACCA out of home care over the last ten years. The film shares what is important to them and has kept them strong through challenging times. Both culture and family are strong themes and the girls reflect on how being culturally connected and knowing their identity has been critical to their wellbeing.
- **KYLA – Koorie Youth Leadership Program** - Is a weekly leadership program for vulnerable Aboriginal youth to strengthen their connection to culture, community and family. Modules on financial literacy, health and leadership are also covered.
- **NAIDOC Activities** - NAIDOC Activities were held in North, West, South and East regions; and also in Morwell.
- **Family Services Holiday Programs** - June: Cultural holiday day activity included jewellery making and weaving for a group of 10 young girls from the family services program. September: Bush tucker day where boys and girls from the family services program learnt about different foods from plants; how to use them and learnt to make and cook their own damper.

Cultural Activities
Link-Up Victoria
(2014/2015 Summary)

Link-Up Victoria has completed 12 family reunions for clients since July 2014 with all except two clients returning to Country. Many of these reunions have also included graveside visits to pay respects to family members that have passed away. The reunions respect and advocate for Aboriginal children and young people in the welfare system.

The Future

The current Aboriginal Child Protection Services (ACPS) framework is acknowledged to be insufficient to provide the care developed by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (VACCHS) to provide services in accordance with the Children Protection Act 1999 (Vic) requirements which are an increasing concern to the Victorian Government.

The framework, not only affects the VACCA's ability to provide services, but also affects the ability of the Victorian Government to meet the needs of the Aboriginal community. In the past 12 months, VACCA has completed 27 family reunions, and 10% of reports to the VACCA Annual Report 2014-15 have been submitted by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Protection Service (VACPS).

In conclusion, Victoria's experience has provided unique and interesting insights into the challenges faced by the Aboriginal community when it comes to Child Protection and the need for improvement in the current framework.

The past

Advice and Support Services (Link-Up Victoria)
Section 18: Aboriginal Guardianship

Aboriginal guardianship has been the term used to refer to Sections 18 (s.18) of the Children, Youth and Families Act. This section of the legislation allows the Aboriginal Principal Officer (or CEO) of an Aboriginal organisation to be authorised to perform the functions and exercise the powers of the Secretary for Aboriginal children on Children’s Court Protection Orders. For most children, their parent is their guardian. Sometimes, parents are not able to take care of their child and the child is at risk of being harmed. The responsibility for looking after these children has been held by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

This ‘guardianship by government department’ has not been positive for Aboriginal children and their families. There are some Aboriginal children under state guardianship who do not see or know their family; they do not know their Aboriginal community or their culture.

When the section 18 powers are activated, an Aboriginal child living with their parents, the family can be supported and assisted by an Aboriginal organisation under the leadership of an Aboriginal CEO.

For a child who needs to live away from their parents for their safety and well being, an Aboriginal person will have day to day and long term decision-making responsibility for the child. An Aboriginal ‘guardian’ will know and be involved with the child and will make sure the child knows their family, is connected to their culture and country, wherever that is.

An Aboriginal ‘guardian’ will seek out and support the child’s family to be involved in the child’s life, taking care of the child wherever possible.

VACCA believe that this will make an enormous difference in children’s lives – Aboriginal children will know who they are and where they belong. They will take pride in their cultural identity and will grow strong and resilient.

To prepare for the full implementation of section 18, VACCA operated a project to trial s.18 – Aboriginal guardianship – with a small group of Aboriginal children. The project focused on the implementation of section 18 to expand the family involvement of Section 18 children. The project aimed to build skills and confidence in Aboriginal children and their families and to support the child’s family to be involved in the child’s life.

VACCA believes that this will make an enormous difference in children’s lives – Aboriginal children will know who they are and what they belong.

Children’s Court Protection Orders have been made to protect the children and their families from harm. The project supported the Aboriginal children and their families to make decisions about what is best for their child, ensuring that the children’s culture and country are involved in the decision-making process. The project also aimed to prepare the families for the full implementation of section 18.

An Aboriginal ‘guardian’ will work with the child’s family to ensure that the child knows their family, is connected to their culture and country, wherever that is.

VACCA Annual Report 2014-15

Healing Together

Growth and strength for Aboriginal communities.
From the Evaluation

The organisation is sustainable and sound. Whilst it is essential for the organisation to maintain a strong balance sheet, which is essential for the organisation’s sustainability and longevity.

The organisation continues to be well managed and accountable. The organisation’s financial statements are publicly available, and the organisation is open to feedback and suggestions for improvement.

In summary, VACCA’s Aboriginal Children’s Healing Team and the Bouverie Centre, with their strong support network, provided a holistic approach to the needs of Sally and her siblings. VACCA was able to take a more decisive role in planning for Sally. Her case manager asked Sally what she wanted; Sally said she wanted to be with her family. VACCA convened a family meeting, involving Sally’s parents and other family members for VACCA.

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Sally, ten years old and one of nine children, was removed from her family’s care because of family violence and substance use. She and three of her older siblings were removed from their parents’ care shortly after her birth as a result of serious concerns related to her parents’ substance use, the children’s exposure to family violence and the family’s transience. At that time, Child Protection assessed Sally as suitable and Sally moved to live with her.

Sally has now been living with her aunt for almost 12 months; she has settled well in her new home and school and is having frequent and regular contact with her parents and siblings.

Following a recent foster care breakdown, VACCA were unable to find a foster family willing to accept Sally. VACCA assessed the aunt as not suitable to care for Sally. VACCA convened a family meeting, involving Sally’s parents and other family members for VACCA.

With s.18 involvement, VACCA were able to take a more decisive role in planning for Sally. Her case manager asked Sally what she wanted; Sally said she wanted to be with her family. VACCA convened a family meeting, involving Sally’s parents and other family members for VACCA.

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Sally, ten years old and one of nine children, was removed from her family’s care because of family violence and substance use. She and three of her older siblings were removed from their parents’ care shortly after her birth as a result of serious concerns related to her parents’ substance use, the children’s exposure to family violence and the family’s transience. At that time, Child Protection assessed Sally as suitable and Sally moved to live with her.

Sally has now been living with her aunt for almost 12 months; she has settled well in her new home and school and is having frequent and regular contact with her parents and siblings.

Following a recent foster care breakdown, VACCA were unable to find a foster family willing to accept Sally. VACCA assessed the aunt as not suitable to care for Sally. VACCA convened a family meeting, involving Sally’s parents and other family members for VACCA.

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Highlights and Achievements for 2014/2015 year:

Indigenous Governance Awards (IGA), in the category of Outstanding Indigenous Governance. Chaired by Prof Mick Dodson and chosen out of 113 nominees. Several Board members and executive management attended the evening hosted at BHP Billiton’s Head Office in Melbourne. VACCA Chair, James Atkinson, accepted the award from the Prime Minister.

2014 IGA finalist and working on selected projects to assist the organisation.

Presence and operating in the West.

Implementation of new asset management system, WSM, to enable efficient programming of asset maintenance and improved asset management across numerous sites throughout Victoria.

Strategy plan with major milestones achieved; co-location of VACCA’s server infrastructure, appointment of a new WAN provider, installation of a new software platform to provide VACCA with intranet and e-learning capability.

Improved mobility services for staff.

Successfully secured new premises for VACCA’s Melbourne office and relocated 106 head office staff and Northern office staff to new contemporary accommodation in Preston.

New negotiated mobile plans, and successful exemptions of motor vehicle registrations and property rates.

Information management; expansion of our client data base, improved archiving and document management.

3 year Strategic Plan; 2015-2018, which seeks to achieve stronger culturally embedded services, strengthening of our people through concentrated workforce development and succession planning, continued advocacy in Aboriginal Guardianship, Aboriginal service system accountability and sustainability through fundraising, social enterprise and continued systems development.

Growth and Strength

and Northern office staff to new

Received the award from the Prime Minister. Accepted the award from the Prime

Highlights and achievements for 2014/2015 year.

and takes me to another world.”

Art is my healing and escape from the world. It creates a calm place.

— Tia (Art Mentoring Program)
Planning for the future...

The new financial year has been a busy one for us with a number of statewide initiatives drawing us in over and above our regular work largely because of the election of a new State Government in November 2014. They include the Royal Commission into Family Violence, a number of reviews into Aboriginal services including a review of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, the formation of the Aboriginal Children’s Forum, the Mental Health Plan and the Roadmap to Reform. The conclusion of our Section 18 Guardianship Trial and the imminent publication of the final report has given greater impetus to our campaign to have this provision of the Children's, Youth and Families Act 2005 fully implemented. Measures are designed to give effect to the acknowledgement of the right of Aboriginal people to self-determination that is contained in the original legislation.

We anticipate a continuing growth in demand for child and family support and child protection services indicated by the continued growth in numbers of Aboriginal children entering care. The State and Commonwealth focus on family violence and ice addiction will offer additional opportunities for service responses and service reforms that are more targeted to our community. The Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse offers opportunities to strengthen our service responses as well as creating additional compliance demands on us.

The tighter government-funding environment will mean we will need to diversify our income sources if we are to promote and develop our innovative programs especially around cultural activities. This innovation will continue in our service responses. We will continue to advocate for Aboriginal children at risk especially those in care seeking a return of all Aboriginal children in care to their communities. Self-determination through the full implementation of Aboriginal Guardianship is likely to offer our children better outcomes. However, obtaining Government and DHHS commitment to its full implementation continues to challenge us.

2015 is also the first year of our next three-year strategic planning period. During this period we will focus on VACCA service improvement on culturally appropriate, responsive and accessible services. We will strengthen our efforts to keep children at home and reunify Aboriginal children in care with their families.

We will continue to advocate for Aboriginal people and services. Before on 10th of September we will release our annual report to the community an important part of our commitment to transparency. This report includes an overview of our improvements in service delivery and the role we play in improving the lives of Aboriginal children and young people. The report shows the progress we have made towards our goals and the impact of our work. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the challenges we face and the strategies we have implemented to address them.

The report also highlights the important role of research in our work. Our research and evaluation of our services is essential to improving our services and ensuring they meet the needs of our communities. Our research also helps us to understand the impact of our work and to identify areas for improvement.

The report also includes an overview of our work in the community. Our work is focused on building relationships and working in partnership with Aboriginal communities to address the needs of Aboriginal children and young people. We work with a range of Aboriginal organisations and communities to ensure that our services are culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.

The report also includes an overview of our work in the Commonwealth. Our work is focused on improving the outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people through partnerships with Commonwealth agencies. We work with the Commonwealth to ensure that our services are culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.

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The report also includes an overview of our work in the local community. Our work is focused on improving the outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people through partnerships with local Aboriginal communities. We work with local Aboriginal communities to ensure that our services are culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.

The report also includes an overview of our work in the international community. Our work is focused on improving the outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people through partnerships with international organisations. We work with international organisations to ensure that our services are culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people.

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Art means everything to me! It makes me drift into my own little world, which makes me forget about all the negatives and helps me stay positive.

- Jolene (Art Mentoring Program)

Contributing Artists

Jolene (Art Mentoring Program)
Birthplace: Melbourne
Tribe/People: Yorta Yorta
Art: Painting, Shield (b)

Emma (VACCA Staff Member)
Birthplace: Melbourne
Tribe/People: Yorta Yorta
Art: Painting

Latorya Pamela Lee Lovett Brown (Playgroups)
Birthplace: Melb, Mercy
Tribe/People: Gunditjmara
Art: Mixed Media Collage

John Elliot (Link-up Program)
Birthplace: Carlton
Tribe/People: Yorta Yorta
Art: Varnished Timber Woodburn (c), Vanished Acrylic Painting on Timber (d)

Aliyah (Art Mentoring Program)
Birthplace: Ipswich, Queensland
Tribe/People: Bundjalung
Art: Painting, Earings, Shield (a)

Tia (Art Mentoring Program)
Birthplace: Melbourne
Tribe/People: Gunai/Kurnai
Art: Dot Painting

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the assistance and support of the following:

Philanthropy

Research funder and partner

Government

Commonwealth

Minister and Cabinet Services

State and Human Services

Other agencies

For the current full list of our funders and partners please visit our website: www.vacca.org

Art: Dot Painting

The people created these works as part of the community. The vibrant colours and patterns are rich in meaning. They bring joy and hope to the community.

Art: Acrylic, Mixed Media

These works are inspired by the beauty of nature and the community. They use bold and vibrant colours to express the culture and values of the people.

Art: Woodburn, Acrylic, Mixed Media

These works are created using traditional techniques and materials. They showcase the skill and creativity of the people and their connection to the land.

Healing Together
Serving Aboriginal Children in the Community

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