



Connected by Culture

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
Annual Report 2011/2012



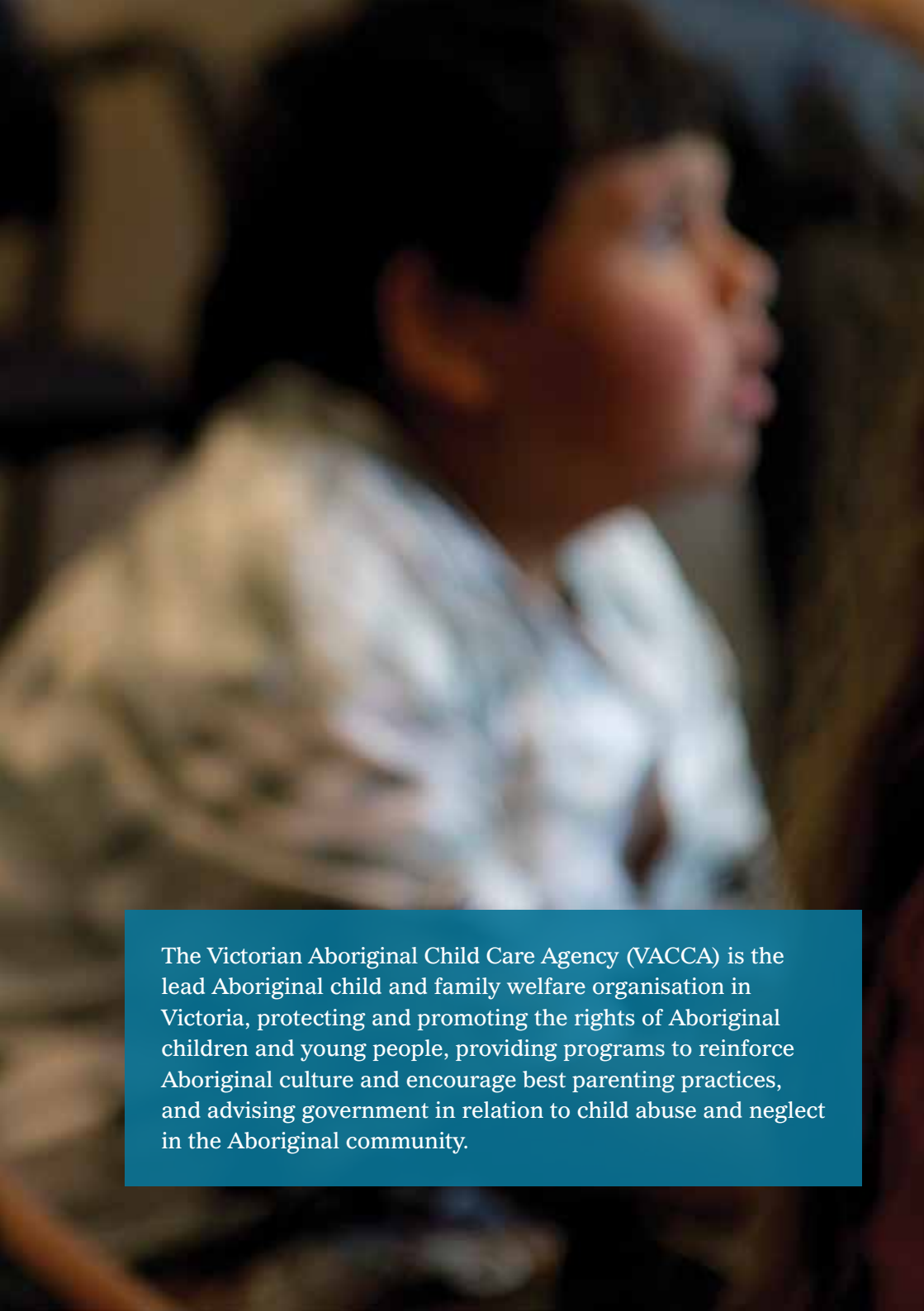




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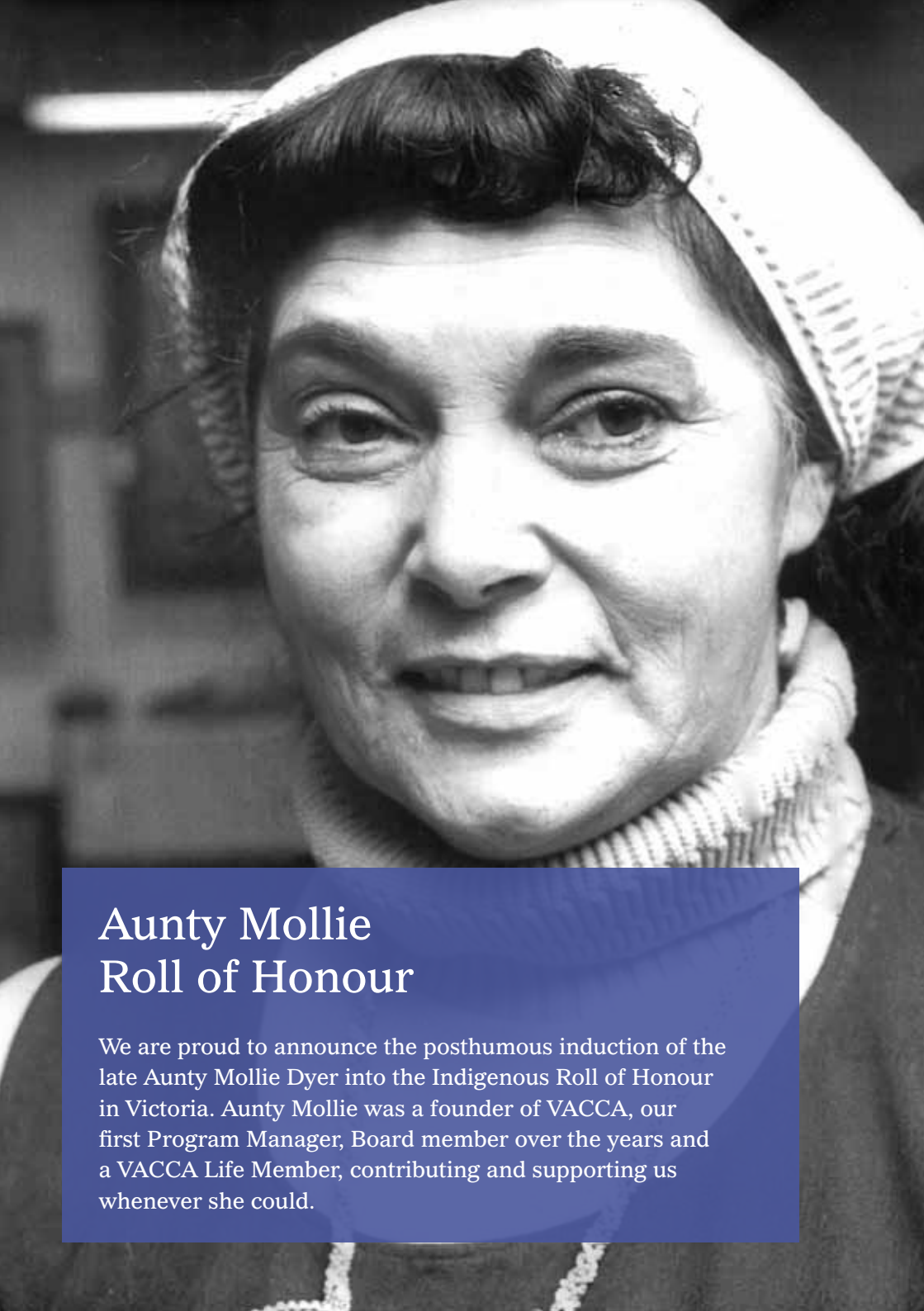
The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is the lead Aboriginal child and family welfare organisation in Victoria, protecting and promoting the rights of Aboriginal children and young people, providing programs to reinforce Aboriginal culture and encourage best parenting practices, and advising government in relation to child abuse and neglect in the Aboriginal community.

We are a statewide Aboriginal-community controlled organisation whose mission is to advocate for the rights of Aboriginal children, young people and families, and provide them with services premised on human rights, self-determination, cultural respect and safety.





Our vision is a community that is strong in culture; that values their children and young people, and recognises the importance of the whole community in raising children and keeping families together.



Aunty Mollie Roll of Honour

We are proud to announce the posthumous induction of the late Aunty Mollie Dyer into the Indigenous Roll of Honour in Victoria. Aunty Mollie was a founder of VACCA, our first Program Manager, Board member over the years and a VACCA Life Member, contributing and supporting us whenever she could.

Aunty Mollie, a proud Yorta Yorta woman, and the daughter of the late Aunty Marj Tucker, a prominent Aboriginal leader, was born in 1927. She spent the majority of her life in Melbourne fighting for the rights of the Victorian Aboriginal communities; however her influence was on a national scale.

She had six children of her own and fostered twenty. She visited the United States and Canada on several occasions and used her experience there to help fundamentally influence change in Australia. Aunty Mollie believed that, "Our kids are the most viable enterprise we can be engaged in." This was her unwavering belief and focus in her drive to improve the lives of Victorian Aboriginal families, their children and communities. Her determination to change and break cycles of racism was paramount, "As long as I have breath in my body I'll speak out against those forces trampling us, whether those forces be black or white."

Aunty Mollie played pivotal roles in the establishment and operations of other organisations including the United Council of Aboriginal Women, the Aborigines Advancement League, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, the Aboriginal Hostels Ltd and the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care.

In 1976 at the First National Adoption Conference, one of the first platforms offered to Aboriginal people to speak about their concerns over the high rates of adoptions of Aboriginal children, Aunty Mollie spoke about issues

around cultural identity, confusion and genealogical bewilderment of the Stolen Generations and the need to show caution when placing Aboriginal children in white foster families.

Within three years of the formation of VACCA there had been a forty percent reduction in the number of Aboriginal children in children's homes. By 1979 the Victorian Social Welfare Department adopted policy guidelines on Aboriginal adoption and foster care. Aunty Mollie's lobbying then led to the inclusion of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in the Adoption Act of 1984, being incorporated into the Children and Young Persons Act 1989 a decade later.

In 1980 Aunty Mollie was awarded the Order of Australia, the International Year of the Child Award and the Advance Australia Award, all for her dedication to services for children. She was also awarded the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE), as her mother had already been awarded. Initially she declined this award and later accepted it, "... on behalf of all the people, Koorie and non-Koorie."

The legacy of Aunty Mollie can be voiced in her own words "When people co-operate and try and solve problems, rather than condemn each other, things happen."

Aunty Mollie's autobiography "Room for One More: The Life of Mollie Dyer" was published in 2003, an engaging and insightful life story which showcases the undeniable impact and legacy of a life committed to bettering the lives of Victorian Aboriginal peoples.

Highlights of 2012

“Our key highlights for the past year shows how VACCA straddles two worlds - our duty of care towards children in our care including services to Aboriginal families; and how we respond to need in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way in a rapidly changing technological environment.”

Muriel Bamblett – CEO



- VACCA restructure – investments in infrastructure, strategic and program development program, client services and strengthened our administration and support infrastructure to help deliver services across the state as well as build for the future.
- Launch of Koorie Connect Referral Service and Internet Cafe and rapid growth in take up by community of the service.
- A comprehensive internal review of the whole of the VACCA organisation. This was completed in June and follows VACCA's very successful external registration assessment in 2010.
- Very successful Children's Cultural Festival in October and the Children's Art Exhibition at Bunjilaka in November 2011 showcased some fantastic work. Two great children's days for NAIDOC Week and National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day have been held in 2012.
- Completion of the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan.
- Premiere of Link-Up film "Fractured" at ACMI, Federation Square.
- Launch of Eastern VACCA Regional Office.
- Robin Clarke Memorial Awards to Dotty Bamblett (Aboriginal Carer of the Year) and Connie Salamone (Inspirational Leadership).
- Commencement of Guardianship under the provision of Section 18 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005.
- VACCA Morwell overall achievements.
- Strengthening Aboriginal Cultural Practice including Smoking Ceremony and Naming of VACCA's Therapeutic Residence "Bunjil Burri".
- Auntie Mollie inducted posthumously onto Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll.
- Establishment of Healing Unit.
- Input into Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children.
- Aboriginal Guardianship study tour Canada.



Jarred Harrison: 17 April 1984 – 26 May 2012

Our esteemed colleague, friend, cousin and nephew passed away earlier this year. Jarred brightened up our lives and we miss him and will always remember him.

Chairperson's Report

It gives me great pleasure to present the VACCA Annual Report for 2012 . It highlights our major achievements since the last report in 2011 and outlines our future directions.

I want to begin by acknowledging the active engagement, involvement and ongoing commitment of the Board of Directors in the governance of VACCA. The Board recently held a two day retreat in Warnambool where we were briefed on key policy directions of government. We were also able to have an informed discussion about, and resolve a number of key challenges for the Agency.

Of particular concern to the Board is how we acquit our obligations and responsibilities to Aboriginal children within child protection and ensure they have their cultural rights complied with. The Board has introduced policy that all children in VACCA's care are to have a genogram detailing their Aboriginal history, including information about their people and lands. We have also stipulated that children, as part of their cultural planning, are to have Aboriginality confirmed by the Board of Directors.

The Board undertakes seriously its role in driving the directions of VACCA including the development of our strategic plan for the next three years. We have a strong sense of purpose and values that our staff and Board are committed to. Our strategic directions reflect our role as community leader, innovator, planner and social developer. It is the considered opinion of the Board that VACCA is currently well positioned to positively influence potential donors, clients and community more broadly and to engage government.

Like the rest of the not-for-profit sector, VACCA is faced with a set of complex and interrelated challenges in an uncertain political and economic environment. These are due to increased demand on services and greater compliance. We therefore need to maximise limited resources to network and position the organisation strategically through partnerships and collaboration. There are also increasing pressures and costs with the changing role and impact of technology.



Achievements:

It is difficult to appropriately recognise all of VACCA's achievements and acknowledge each and every one who on a daily basis contribute to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's operations. Nevertheless, there are some exceptional achievements that need particular mention. They include:

- VACCA's work on Constitutional Recognition for Aboriginal and TSI Peoples and policy work
- Link-Up Quality Assurance – Achieving Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) Accreditation
- Connie Salamone, VACCA Executive Director, Strategy and Services awarded the Robin Clark Award for Inspirational Leadership in Child and Family Welfare
- Dotty Bamblett, VACCA Kinship Carer awarded Robin Clark Award for Aboriginal Carer of the year
- Official opening of Reservoir Therapeutic Residential Unit

I believe we have established ways of working together as a Board that reflect the goals of our organisation and that we strive to ensure that our policies, processes and practices are inclusive, transparent, responsive and always centred on the needs of our Aboriginal community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff of the Agency for their continued commitment to delivering outcomes for Aboriginal children, their families and the community.

Deidre King
Chairperson

CEO's Message



This has been an exciting year at VACCA. One in which we have seen the agency take a further step in its maturity as a strong Aboriginal organisation through its investments in infrastructure, strategic and program development, client services and community engagement activities. It has been a year when we have seen further investment by government in growth of existing programs and in those aimed at working innovatively with families with complex needs.

Two key documents have been informing VACCA's work this year, they are the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry Report and the State Government's Directions Paper outlining the Victorian Government's first-year initiatives and longer-term commitments including their response to the Inquiry. It is important that we inform Government's planning and directions to ensure that any new developments are inclusive of and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

We have contributed to the Department of Human Services Strategic Framework, Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework and into key policy directions such as 'The Case for Change'. VACCA continues to be seriously concerned about the over representation of Aboriginal people in tertiary service systems and conversely in our under representation in accessing helping and supportive services.

VACCA enjoys a range of partnerships across the sector. These partnerships enhance the impact and effectiveness of our Agency through combined and more efficient use of resources. These partnerships are also opportunities to promote and share innovation and are distinguished by a strong commitment from our partner organisations. Our partnerships are collaborative and are often based on social justice principles.

In a field where we have few role models we must be innovators. This year we have introduced a Healing Unit which we believe will address intergenerational trauma. We have also been working hard on implementing section 18 of the

Children, Youth and Families Act. This section in the Act allows the Secretary of the Department of Human Services (DHS) to transfer their powers and functions for an Aboriginal child on a court (protection) order to the CEO of an Aboriginal organisation. This is referred to as Aboriginal Guardianship. Through this VACCA continues our commitment to Aboriginal people making decisions for and about the wellbeing of Aboriginal children.

We thank Berry Street for their work with us in facilitating an Aboriginal panel with Bruce Perry leading a thought provoking presentation whilst here on a speaking tour.

We continue to be challenged by the complexity of issues that our families and children are presented with, however I believe our current mix of services provides us with a great opportunity to bring about strong outcomes for our children.

Culture and connection to culture remains a strong underlying principle of all our work. The past year has been notable for the level of cultural activities we have organised. With funding from the Department of Health through the Closing the Gap initiative VACCA has been able to deliver the 'Healthy & Culturally Strong Koorie Kids Having Fun' project, with a focus on cultural safety, culture as a protective factor, food insecurity, trauma and healing and voice. This is a truly amazing program with great outcomes.

Philanthropic Foundations and Trusts have made a strong contribution to our cultural work strengthening our

engagement with children building their positive sense of Aboriginality and helping us demonstrate that strong culture builds resilience.

Our purpose is to strengthen the safety, wellbeing and cultural connectedness of Aboriginal children, individuals and families in their community. I believe that our staff and volunteers across our programs and services are able to connect our everyday activities to our purpose driving their passion and commitment to Aboriginal children .

As CEO I often hear about examples of staff who go over and above their duty statements. This year I was particularly moved by the Stronger Families Program presentation of VACCA's Early Intervention and Prevention team about their work with a family bringing about important changes for them. What was most powerful for me was the words of the young mum which have stuck with me. She said, "My worker has listened to me, taken on board what we say and has worked well with my family." She further stated that, "Since VACCA has been working with my family I feel I have been given an opportunity to care for my children."

In a field where we see and experience a lot of misery and heartbreak we are thankful for the successes we have when trying to bring families together.

Muriel Bamblett
CEO

The Board



Deidre King

(Gunditjmara)

Chairperson

Currently employed as CEO of the Aboriginal Community Elders Service. Previously employed at the Aborigines Advancement League and at VACCA. Has completed governance training.



Rod Monohan

(Taungurung)

Vice-Chairperson

Currently employed as the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer with the Northcote Police Complex. Was previously employed at the Aboriginal Community Elder Service and was employed at VACCA for 12 years.



James Atkinson

(Yorta Yorta & Bangerang)

Treasurer

Currently employed as Manager, Koorie Education with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Was a member of the Koorie Leadership Program and has worked with a number of Aboriginal organisations across the State.



Margaret Atkinson

(Yorta Yorta/ Taungurung/Wurundjeri)

Secretary

Currently employed as Administration/ Receptionist at the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-op in Morwell. Was employed at VACCA for 9½ years. Has commenced governance training.



Daniel Kelly

(Mutti Mutti & Wamba Wamba)

Director

Currently employed as Manager of the Balranald Aboriginal Health Service. Was previously employed at Mutti Miah Family Preservation and was employed at VACCA.



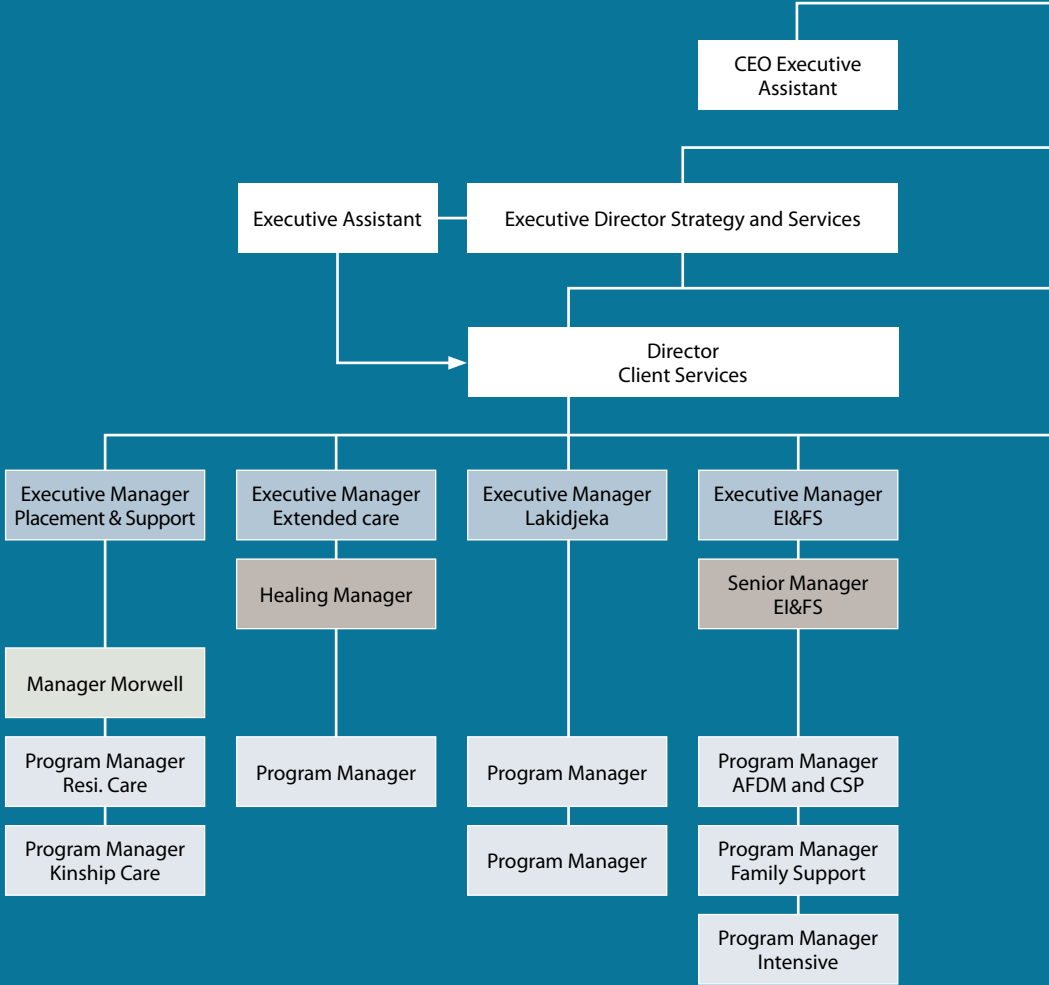
Jason Kanoa

(Gunditjmara/Bunitj)

Director

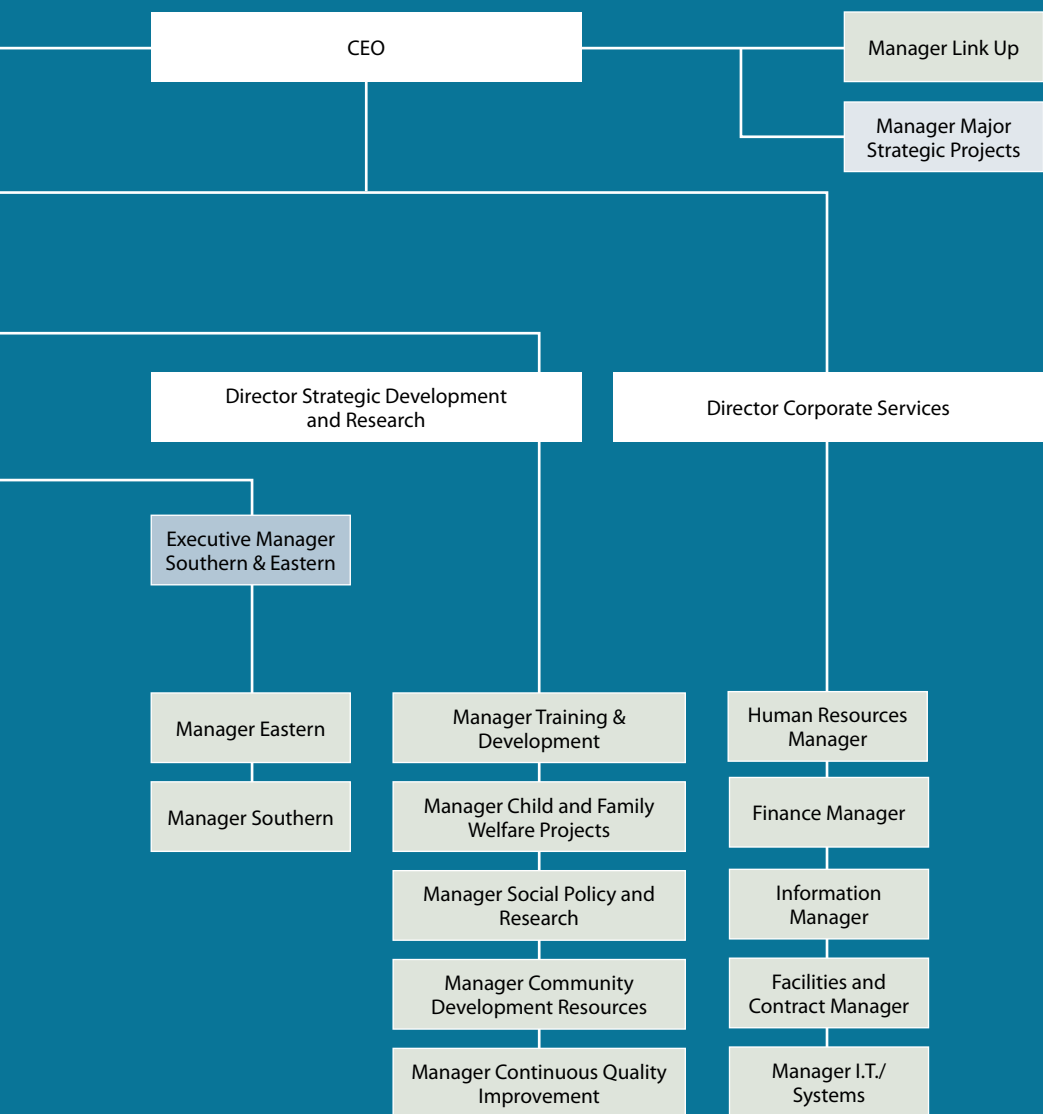
Currently employed as Manager of VACSA's Aboriginal Centre for Males. Was previously employed with Victorian Aboriginal Youth, Sport, and Recreation for 7 years. Has completed governance training and the Indigenous Leadership Network Victoria course. Current player of the Fitzroy Stars Football Club.

Our Structure



Senior practitioners and Team Leaders

Case Workers







The Moondani Aboriginal Family Centre

Strength through cultural knowledge



Moondani is the Woiwurrung word for 'embrace'. The Moondani Aboriginal Family Centre will be a landmark – a meeting place that celebrates Aboriginal family values in Victoria, and invites everyone to experience the richness of Aboriginal culture.

The vision for Moondani goes beyond simply building another Aboriginal community centre. It is a vision inspired by the traditional Aboriginal home and the sense of belonging and confidence that comes from being part of a family – and a community.

Moondani will be a place that encourages people to share stories, experiences and art; a place that welcomes Aboriginal people from across Victoria and encourages the wider non-Indigenous community to enjoy its facilities and services. It will also provide a permanent home for the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) in the northern region of Melbourne, which is the region with the largest concentration of Aboriginal people in Victoria.

The Moondani Aboriginal Family Centre combines cultural awareness and education programs with access to family welfare services. By building resilience in Aboriginal people from an early age and encouraging positive parenting practices, Moondani will make families stronger. As a place where anyone can visit and experience Aboriginal culture, it will foster a deeper understanding of historical and contemporary Aboriginal life in the wider community.

Moondani will create positive, tangible change in Aboriginal communities through its programs and services aimed at children, families and child welfare professionals.

In the last year we have continued to spread the word about VACCA and our work. We have also been discussing our fundraising target of \$10 million for Moondani with corporations, philanthropic organisations and government. Capital funds are not easy to come by in the current economic climate and we are pleased to have gained the support of the Indigenous Land Corporation for Moondani. We have also won the support of a number of Ambassadors including Deborah Mailman, Alexis Wright, Tobie Puttock, Madeleine Madden, Dave Arden and Tracey Mack. We are excited to have their support and look forward to working with them over the coming campaign. Our Project Advisory Committee has also been supporting our campaign and we very much appreciate their input and advice. Apart from our CEO, senior managers and staff, the Committee includes: Ric Zen of Zen Architects, Roland Paterson of Nelson Alexander Real Estate, Professor Linda Briskman of Swinburne University, Elspeth Arnold of Ashurst Lawyers, Coleen Clare CEO of VANISH, Rodney Monohan (VACCA Board Member) and James Atkinson (VACCA Board Member).

Nigel D'Souza
Manager, Major Strategic Projects

Executive Director Strategy and Services

I commenced in my new role of Executive Director Strategy and Services in the newly restructured VACCA about twelve months ago. The restructure has already driven a stronger focus on our clients through improved cross program coordination. We now have streamlined systems in place to establish and measure accountabilities to meet our ever increasing legal and other compliance requirements.

A restructure of senior management positions has resulted in the creation of four new/upgraded Director positions: the Director of Corporate Services, Director of Client Services, Director of Strategic Development and Research and the Executive Director, Strategy and Services. This enables both a stronger focus and alignment of strategic development and research with client services. Furthermore, it brings together all child and family client services under one management structure and corporate services under a separate management structure. New lines of communication are in place, which permit a strategic focus at the senior

leadership level and a concentrated capacity to focus on client services through the establishment of the client services executive.

VACCA has taken a further step in developing its planning cycle, aligning operational plans and reporting frameworks in line with our new strategic plan.

Formal reviews of our Adolescent Community Placement program in the North and West region and the statewide Permanent Care Program have occurred as part of our commitment to quality improvement. Both program reviews indicated strong program performance but significant concerns have emerged in relation to children's experience of family and community disconnection once placed in permanent care. The implications of the review are far reaching and indicate the need for a redesign of the current approach, which is being discussed with the Department of Human Services (DHS).

In line with self-determination and legislative intent, VACCA is embarking on a journey towards the transfer of

Aboriginal children on Children's Court Protective Orders to the guardianship of an Aboriginal Agency. A pilot program is being established, the first in Australia, that offers real promise of a culturally embedded child protection approach.

The establishment of VACCA's Healing Unit brings together cultural knowledge and trauma informed practice approaches that will enhance the quality of our service delivery. Over the coming year this program will be available to all our client services programs.

This year has seen a significant investment by VACCA into our regional offices and the establishment of effective relationships with DHS and stakeholders in Gippsland, Southern and Eastern regions. This investment provides a good basis for growing our service offerings. For the first time we have been able to undertake a range of community activities in the Southern and Eastern regions made possible by a stronger senior management presence both regionally and centrally.

Prior to the commencement of the Director of Client Services in October this year, I as Executive Director of Strategy and Services undertook this role. As a result I have a clear appreciation of the significant demands placed on our senior client services managers and realise the importance of providing them with high level support.

VACCA attracted funds to provide leaving care in the South, East and Morwell areas and to extend the North West service. We also attracted funding for Out of Home Care therapeutic care and capacity building funding enabling us to review our leaving care program

and develop a more consistent VACCA approach across all our service sites. The capacity building funds have supported strengthening staff knowledge in trauma informed practice and continued to build the capacity of our program managers. These topics are part of a series of seminars aimed at our senior staff.

VACCA is in the process of establishing 'round table forums' with Southern, Eastern and Gippsland DHS. This process already occurs in the North and West and is seen as a highly effective way of enabling senior staff from both DHS and VACCA to meet to discuss agency performance and progress strategic priorities.

Significant challenges lie ahead, namely realising Moondani, and procuring accommodation in the North and West region to accommodate VACCA's growth, development of client-outcome measures, enhancing our workforce capacity and ensuring compliance with registration requirements.

The past year has been an important milestone in our development. Our achievements and investments in systems, policies and procedures in the past twelve months will hold us in good stead for the next five to ten years.

Significant Achievements

- Establishment of a Healing Unit
- Program reviews of Adolescent Community Placement (ACP) program and Permanent Care

Connie Salamone

Executive Director Strategy and Services

Corporate Services

Corporate Services at VACCA supports and enables the organisation and staff to deliver quality services and to develop and grow. Our functions largely consist of Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Property, Records and Asset Management. The challenge for Corporate Services is to meet the existing needs of the organisation today as well as planning and preparing for growth and future challenges over the next 5 – 10 years.

Rapid growth over the last few years has meant that VACCA has needed to strengthen its administration and support infrastructure to help deliver services across the state as well as build for the future. This includes investment in:

- An HR system that supports over 200 staff.
- A Finance system that efficiently accounts for and reports on over 50 different programs.
- Increased IT network capacity and reliability for 17 VACCA sites around Victoria to cope with greater online staff activity.

- Increased car fleet numbers to meet program needs.
- New facilities to accommodate growing staff & client numbers.
- Developing policies, procedures and systems to ensure best practice.
- Additional specialist resources to improve the capacity of the Corporate team to respond in a timely manner to the demands of a growing organisation operating in an ever increasing complex and regulatory environment.

The last twelve months have seen a strong investment and commitment by the organisation to strengthen the capacity and capability of VACCA's Corporate Services program. This is evidenced by the implementation of VACCA's new management structure including three new director positions; Executive Director Strategy and Services, Director Corporate Services and Director Strategic Development and Research.

Additional appointments to the Corporate team have included a Facilities and Contract Manager,

HR Advisor and a Project Team to assist in the implementation of new software systems.

Program Highlights

Continued progress of the Business Systems Implementation Project

VACCA carried out a thorough tendering and selection process of nine solution providers for a new Finance system and Human Resources & Payroll system. The Board endorsed the decision to appoint the recommended solution providers, Fenwick Software and Frontier Software, to help deliver and implement the new systems. Staff training in using the systems is currently underway.

The systems will be fully implemented in the New Year.

The new Finance System will enable more timely and improved financial reporting. The Human Resources system will further assist and support staff development, supervision and HR work processes. Information Document systems and Client Record Management systems will be addressed next.

Adoption of VACCA's 2012-2014 Workforce Strategy

VACCA's workforce needs were independently evaluated for 2012-2014, taking into account the developments and achievements following the 2009 Workforce Strategy. The 2012-2014



Corporate Services - continued

Workforce Strategy will help direct and prioritise workforce issues in the Agency.

A Workforce Coordination Group was established during the year with the prime responsibility of ensuring that VACCA's nominated workforce priorities are addressed and implemented.

The main priority areas are:

- Create targeted programs for skills development and mentoring for Aboriginal employees.
- Develop and implement leadership support and development programs for team leaders and program managers.
- Build an integrated approach to supervision across VACCA to support Aboriginal leadership and staff retention.
- Develop marketing and strategic recruitment initiatives to actively promote benefits of working at VACCA.

VACCA's Workforce Capability Framework continues to be rolled out into the organisation by way of development of case worker profiles, standardised position descriptions, and benchmarking remuneration practises. The Human Resources team support approximately 210 staff around Victoria.

Implementation of VACCA's Budget Process

The Finance team developed and implemented a detailed annual budget process in March that involved consultation and analysis with all senior managers for preparation of the

organisation's Operational and Capital Expenditure Budgets. This process was well received and the discussions with managers were seen as an effective way for further developing managers' financial literacy and budget management skills. Other improvements have been the introduction of a debit card policy and debit cards for a more efficient and effective method of accessing funds for the immediate needs of clients.

IT Improvements

All 16 remote offices were successfully connected to the new server under the Server Infrastructure Project. A network infrastructure upgrade was also completed during the financial year. Staff feedback has been very positive due to the increased speed and reliability of the network systems in which they work.

Asset Management

The Asset Management team manages a vehicle fleet of 88 cars and 17 properties throughout Victoria. With the appointment of a new Facilities and Contract Manager, VACCA's Property needs over the next 10 years will be analysed and developed into a Property Management Plan for the organisation. A Fleet Management Strategy will also be developed to improve and guide our practices.

Louise Jonas

Director of Corporate Services

Strategic Development and Research

The Strategic Development and Research Unit (SD&R) replaces the New Programs and Initiatives Unit with a renewed focus on the planned development of VACCA and championing VACCA's vision, strategic directions and goals.

Strategic Development and Research includes Social Policy and Research, Community Development and Resources, Child and Family Welfare Projects, Continuous Quality Improvement and Training and Development.

SD&R provides support and resources to VACCA to contribute to the provision of the best possible service to vulnerable children, individuals and families. We also contribute to policy and program development and advocacy. The Cultural Activities Program is also based within SD&R.

During the Year We Have:

- Conducted a comprehensive internal review of the whole of VACCA in preparation for our next external DHS Standards Registration review in March 2013.
- Explored feedback systems to gauge the views of clients about the effectiveness and responsiveness of our services in order to improve them. We also aim to measure our successes as well as harnessing client services information to create innovative program responses.
- Reviewed our training and development work, which has experienced increased demand on our training team from within VACCA and externally from mainstream organisations. External demand is growing as other agencies take on the responsibility of developing their own cultural competence and seek to build respectful partnerships with VACCA. We are continuing to examine the best option for becoming a Registered Training Organisation.



A key priority for SD&R during the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan period is the defining of VACCA's Aboriginal model of service that is holistic, culturally-based, trauma-informed and addresses the wellbeing of clients, community and staff. This will be a whole of agency task that SD&R is working on especially through the Social Policy and Research, Training and Development, Continuous Quality Improvement and Child and Family Welfare Projects teams.

The Social Policy and Research team's next major project is to be on linking issues of cultural safety, community trauma and lateral violence in 2012 made possible through the ANZ Bank Trustees. This work will explore how

to strengthen cultural excellence in our service provision and culturally-based, therapeutically-informed staff wellbeing within VACCA.

Key Achievements

- Launch of Koorie Connect Referral Service and Internet Cafe and rapid growth in take up by community of the service.
- Expansion of Koorie FACES family strengthening program including training 11 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to run Koorie FACES around the state.
- Implementation of My Moola financial literacy program.

- Comprehensive submission to the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry.
- Numerous conference papers and submissions to consultations and inquiries.
- Very successful Children's Cultural Festival in October and Children's Art Exhibition at Bunilaka in November 2011 showcasing some fantastic work.
- Two great children's days for NAIDOC Week and National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day have been held in 2012.
- Successful application for a second round of 3 year funding from ANZ Bank Trustees'Victorian Aboriginal Granting Program for exploring the best models for evaluating the success of our work and developing our therapeutically-informed cultural strengthening model.
- Establishment of user-friendly systematic approach to policy and practice manuals.
- Significant growth in provision of training across the organisation.
- Completion of the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan.
- Excellent 2012 VACCA Diary produced and establishing consistent approach to publication design and resources.
- Undertaking an in depth review of VACCA's approach to permanent care.

Building Respectful Partnerships

- A number of research partnerships with Latrobe University, Melbourne University, Berry Street and others.
- Significant growth in interest from mainstream organisations building sustainable respectful partnerships through requests for cultural competence training and ongoing consultancy provision to build agency-wide competence.

This is a period of adjustment for VACCA with the establishment of the new Strategic Development and Research team and focus signalling a shift in emphasis for the organisation. We have a very capable and committed team at SD&R who are putting in place a sound foundation to take on this challenge in the coming year.

Raoul Spackman-Williams
Director Strategic Development and Research

Link-Up Victoria

At Link-Up the major part of our work is helping clients fill in the missing pieces, to help answer their questions about who they are, to connect them to country and culture, to find out what went on when they were adopted or removed, and to help them confirm what their heart always secretly wanted to know – that they were loved and missed by their mother or father, by their family and community.

The highlight of the 2011/2012 year for Link-Up was the premiere of our film “Fractured – Broken Ties: Reclaimed Lives”. The documentary style film about four former Link-Up Victoria clients tells their story through interview and re-enactment. Each of the clients talk about their journey back to family, community and culture. Each of them were separated from their Aboriginal family and culture and sought their way back, and although there are differences in their stories, all tell a remarkable story about their journey.

The film premiered at ACMI at Federation Square on Sorry Day, where it was viewed by 170 people from all walks of life; Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal, clients, former clients and their family, community,

church and various welfare groups. The feedback for the film has been amazing and we express deep appreciation and thanks to the four clients who shared their story with us all.

Reuniting clients with their family is the core business of Link-Up with caseworkers involved in extensive preparation and consultations leading up to a reunion. We organised several reunions in 2011/2012, five of which were interstate, two were graveside reunions and three family reunions.

Link-Up is also keen to offer client group programs that provide a range of benefits to our clients, the best of which is that they have the opportunity to provide mutual support to one another. The Linking In program is held every year and it aims to assist clients and former clients to connect to community and culture. The program runs over nine weeks and includes various cultural activities, healing sessions and community visits. Based on feedback received, participants really enjoy spending time together in a safe and welcoming space that encourages and supports them to learn together about their community and culture.

The Linking In program was completed in December last year and the intention is to run one each year.

A pilot client group program called "Deadly Design" was implemented with the Koorie Heritage Trust and Minajalku Healing Centre and it was based on the Koorie Heritage Trust's Hoodie program. Clients create their own designs that are then converted to silk screens and used to print onto pre-made hoodies. The designs created by clients were beautiful and the hoodies look fantastic. We are hoping to organise printing of the designs onto t-shirts, which will be perfect wear for the summer months.

Link-Up also has a prison visiting service that aims to visit all of the prisons in Victoria with Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people at least once a year.

The demand on our services is becoming greater and this is not likely to change in the near future given the developmental work we have undertaken during the year including:

- Link-Up film completed and premiered on Sorry Day, 2012 at Federation Square
- A number of reunions
- 50 Counselling sessions
- A Linking In client group program
- A pilot client group program
- 100 Referrals
- Work with all Bringing Them Home workers
- Completed archived client files review
- Establish Quality Assurance/Projects Manager position
- A staff wellbeing day
- 100 Information packs distributed
- 2 Presentations held

- MoU/partnership agreement negotiations underway
- Partnered with other organisations to run the 2012 Apology Anniversary event in the city

Link-Up has registered with Quality Improvement and Community Services Accreditation (QICSA) and will be seeking accreditation under the QIC standards. Being auspiced by VACCA means we can benefit from VACCA's compliance with the Agency's overall standards in shared services. VACCA's Quality Assurance/Projects Manager, together with the Link-Up Program Manager assessed Link-Up (and VACCA) against the QIC standards and developed a list of work that will need to be completed by Link-Up before the end of the 2012 year. Completed work includes:

- Staff Workshop on Accreditation
- Review of Link-Up document management
- Feedback arrangements including establishment of Client Advisory Group
- Reviewing OH&S arrangements
- Pro Forma review
- Internal Assessment against the QIC standards
- Addressing staff training and wellbeing needs

The next 12 months will be a time for Link-Up to further review and improve our service to clients based on a stable workforce. Our work in this past twelve months will see Link-Up become more focused on what we can do in the next twelve months and be more realistic about what are not able to do.

Bev Murray
Manager Link-Up

Lakidjeka



To work in the Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice & Support Service (ACSASS) takes a special type of person. Whether it is the caseworkers that are directly involved with significant decision making or the administration workers who input family's stories on the system – all are reminded daily of the trauma, both past and present, for Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

The ACSASS caseworker role is to provide advice and consultation to Child Protection (CP), to ensure its case decision making is culturally inclusive for those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who are in contact with the statutory Child

Protection system. In other words the aim is to make sure that these important decisions are not being made in isolation from Aboriginal people.

This is not always an easy task for workers as they are often in a fragile partnership with CP and they themselves are forced to face and understand their own family history and levels of trauma. Workers also work and live in local communities that don't always appreciate the important role they both have in keeping children safe.

There is no denying that the task is made more difficult by an ongoing lack of resourcing. We are hopeful that the State Government will adopt the recommendations of the Protecting

Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry to increase ACSASS funding.

The proposed structural changes to DHS will put additional pressure on ACSASS to operate on a localised catchment area without additional funding to do so. As a "mirror service" to DHS Child Protection, we will need to consider a realignment of service delivery and office relocations more so than other programs.

Throughout the year ACSASS continued to try and meet the demand for first home visits, case plan meetings and cultural planning in an environment of increased reports.

In 2011-12 there has been an increase in the number of Intake Reports on Aboriginal children and young people made to ACSASS compared to the previous year, from 2711 reports and 53 unborn reports to 3504 reports and 84 unborn reports, being a 30% and 60% increase respectively.

ACSASS manages a number of cases where children are at high risk and this year participated in two Child Death Inquiry's and three case reviews where a child had been severely injured.

The end of the financial year also saw ACSASS being brought in scope for the first time into the DHS Agency Registration and Standards. VACCA has always been keen to have clear and relevant standards for ACSASS.

While coping with increasing reports, ACSASS still managed to restructure our team with the appointment of two Program Managers within the team. The appointments have enabled the Executive Manager of ACSASS to shift case and supervision support

responsibility and prioritise strategic and planning tasks. Both positions were filled by respected Aboriginal workers from within the team.

The program has also worked hard to relocate four offices identified within our risk management and OHS process. For a number of reasons the four office moves happened within a period of six months which put an enormous amount of stress on staff, clients and our IT Support team.

Worker support and wellbeing is always a priority within ACSASS, particularly with workers spread across the state. Throughout the year we held regular unit, team and administration meetings where we shared ideas and information to decrease workers' sense of isolation. Combining these occasions with some social activities also go some way to release some of the stresses associated with the work.

Program Highlights

- Input into the Child Protection policy and training in relation to the Income Management Scheme in Hume.
- Ongoing input into Beginning Practice Training with Child Protection.
- Development of business rules around Information Management and shared ACSASS drive.
- Development of ACSASS Administration manuals.
- Successful input of back log information put on CRISSP.

Suzanne Cleary
Executive Manager Lakidjeka





Placement and Support

The Placement and Support Program supports children and young people who are unable to live with their parents and who are placed in Out of Home Care. Central to our practice is strengthening a child's identity and connections of the children to their Aboriginal family, community, culture and land.

Aboriginal Kinship Care Program

The North West Aboriginal Kinship Care Program provides support to Aboriginal children who are unable to live with their parents and are being cared for by their family members or close friends. The Program is made up of four services including: Information and Advice; Family and Cultural Connections; Placement Establishment; and Contracted Case-management. We aim to achieve 30 Contracted Cases, 15 Placement Establishment Cases, 1170 hours Family Services and Cultural Connections work per year, and 588 hours Information and Advice Service per year.

The team consists of Program Manager, Team Leader and 5.5 Case-managers.

Program Highlights

- Therapeutic practice has been introduced via Reflective Space, consultations and interventions by the VACCA Healing Unit Senior Clinical Practitioner, and we now have a Therapeutic Healing Specialist working solely with Kinship Care families.
- Reconnecting a family of three children with their Aboriginal father and paternal Aboriginal family after several years of no contact has undoubtedly been a highlight for us.
- We have also established our Kinship Care Support Group which meets monthly to provide support and information to Kinship Carers of Aboriginal children. The carers enjoy attending the group; they feel valued and appreciate learning from each other and the team.
- We organised School Holiday Programs for Kinship Care children over the last 12 months which were well attended. The Kinship Care Team also played a major role in preparing and running the 8 day January holiday program for all VACCA children.

We are very proud about a VACCA Kinship Carer, Dottie Bamblett being awarded the Robin Clark Aboriginal Carer of the Year Award 2012 for her amazing contribution as a kinship carer as well as her commitment and work in the Aboriginal community.

Aboriginal Therapeutic Residential Care Program

The Therapeutic Residential Care program has two family group homes which provide placements for four children in each group home. Group Home Staff are all trained in therapeutic ways of working with traumatized children. Children who live in residential care are unable live in home based care due to their level of trauma and the complexity of their situations. We believe that culture is critical to healing and as well as utilizing theories of trauma, attachment and congruence in our work, we focus on helping the children understand who they are, who their mob is, and where they are from, by strengthening their connections to their families, community, land and culture.

The children attend many Aboriginal community events, and have participated in a lot of cultural activities such as dancing, playing the didgeridoo, artwork which included the making of a possum skin cloak. They have been strengthened in their identity and cultural understandings and are now proud to be Aboriginal.

Program Highlights

- Only one group home is funded as a Therapeutic Residential Care Unit, however this year we have had a full time VACCA Therapeutic Specialist

working across both group homes. The Therapeutic Specialist has provided training, reflective space and support to workers.

- A Smoking and Naming Ceremony was held at one group home in November last year when the home was named "Bunjil Burri" meaning that the creator spirit Bunjil the eagle is watching over the children.
- We have also had success, after intensive work by our caseworker, in reuniting a group of four siblings with their mother and Aboriginal family in northern Australia. Contact has now been established and planning is underway to take the mother and the children back to their country and reunite them with family.
- Another significant achievement at the other group home is the successful reunification of three siblings there with their father after five years. Inter-state reunifications are becoming a feature in our work with greater numbers of Indigenous people from other parts of Australia moving to Melbourne.
- This year we have commenced using Skype as a means of access between the children and their families when they live too far apart for regular contact.
- In a field where it is all too easy for children to be separated from family, reunifying children with their families is especially gratifying although unfortunately not as common as we would like it to be.

Gwen Rogers

Executive Manager Placement and Support

Out of Home Care



Out of Home Care/Community Care Programs support children and young people aged 0 – 21 years by providing respite, short and long term care for children and young people who are unable to live with their parents. The Koorie Cultural Support Program provides intensive cultural support to mainstream agencies that are providing care to Aboriginal children and young people.

Maintaining children's cultural connections and ensuring a strong cultural identity underpins all aspects of our work. Cultural identity is seen to be as equally important as providing a safe, stable and healing environment.

The Department of Human Services funds all of our program areas and this year have provided a significant increase in funding for Therapeutic Care and Leaving Care.

Leaving Care Program

The Leaving Care Program is about transitioning young people from out of home care. We have also worked very hard at getting better access to housing and have been able to settle some young people, including a young mum, into their "own place". Having recently reviewed this Program, we are learning what makes a difference to this group of very vulnerable people and must apply this knowledge consistently.

Therapeutic Foster Care

Aboriginal Therapeutic Foster Care is 'the provision of a care environment capable of healing the impact of abuse and neglect and restoring the child to physical, mental, spiritual and cultural wholeness.'

Maintaining our children in placements is a demanding task but there have been many positive outcomes and achievements. A challenge has been in recruiting suitable foster carers even with additional resources for marketing assessment and training. The lack of suitable carers means that Aboriginal children are being placed in mainstream placements, where their cultural connections and rights to a strong cultural identity are less understood.

Over the past year highlights have included convening Carer Groups by encouraging carers to talk, share stories and get access to training and information; regular distribution of a Carer Newsletter that keeps carers informed; development of children's My Cultural Support Plans (CSPs)– Individual children's CSPs that are full of their family history and connections; holding regular Books in Home forums – linking reading and cultural activities.

Healing Unit

The introduction of our Healing Unit has strengthened our workforce by providing professional development, clinical supervision and reflective space. In addition it has provided a very high level of training, education and support to our foster carers and care teams. This will continue as the therapeutic team grows. The Healing Unit will work across VACCA supporting all our client services. The work of the Healing Unit is informed by a Cultural Framework and the work of Dr Bruce Perry, whose work on the impact of neglect and traumatic stress on the biology of the brain has led to the introduction of programs to address this trauma.

Permanent Care Program

The Permanent Care program is a statewide program that assesses carers who want children to be permanently in their care. Whilst this year 16 assessments were undertaken not all carers were approved by the panel, who ultimately decide if such a placement is in the best interests of the child. This year there has been a greater emphasis on ensuring that Child Protection meet community expectations in regards to involving parents and extended family more in decision making and that Cultural Support Plans are developed and implemented prior to referrals to permanent care.

The Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Report recommended that this program receive an increase in funding.

Koorie Cultural Support Program

The Koorie Cultural Support Program (KCSP) supports Aboriginal children who are placed with non-Aboriginal carers. This year the program has really made other agencies more accountable and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal children. The outcomes for this program include better quality cultural support plans, family reunifications and returning children home to their extended families in other states.

Adolescent Community Placement House (ACP)

The Adolescent Community Placement has continued to provide three adolescent males with a culturally safe and secure placement. If not for the ACP house, these young men would probably be in Residential Care.

Our ACP carer is a strong Torres Strait Islander Elder who despite the daily challenges of caring for the boys is a committed and passionate advocate. The boys participate in sport and recreation at a high level, are engaged in school and the carer has created a strong network of positive role models. The program has a male support worker who assists the carer. An emphasis on culture, strong connection to family and community, team-work, house meetings and communication are key elements to its success.

DHS has indicated a desire to replicate this model, however, one of the key challenges will be identifying a carer or carers with the same level of commitment and passion.

Feedback is a key to shaping successful programs. The Out of Home Care/Community Care Programs are committed to hearing the voice of the children, carers, families and community

Julie Toohey

Executive Manager Out of Home Care

Early Intervention & Family Services

The Early Intervention and Family Services (EI&FS) Team delivers ten dynamic programs targeted for families with children aged 0-17 years.

The team operates an integrated model of service delivery including; Supported Playgroups, Family Services, Aboriginal Restorations, Aboriginal Stronger Families, Aboriginal Family Decision Making and Family Violence, providing families with the opportunity to be involved with services designed to meet targeted and identified needs.

EI&FS has strong partnerships with the Child FIRST Alliances (North East, Hume/ Moreland, Western and Brimbank/ Melton) and core partners such as Department of Human Services. EI&FS has redeveloped the Integrated Family Services (IFS) allocation system resulting in a faster and smoother transition for Aboriginal Families seeking a VACCA IFS service. VACCA continues to advocate for EI&FS to deliver Aboriginal Child FIRST with this supported by the Executive Alliance across the NWMR.

Referrals across the four catchments have increased by up to 50 per cent

across the three types Self, Agency and Child FIRST referrals, demonstrating increased confidence in the services we are providing for our community. Our new way of doing business in the Child FIRST environment works effectively and efficiently for our families minimising waiting times for an assessment. We do not go into 'contingency', our families will receive a service from us.

Aboriginal Family Decision Making Program

We are in an exciting phase of reform, redefining Aboriginal Family Decision Making (AFDM) by building on strengths in family and kinship networks to meet the safety and stability needs of children.

We successfully transitioned a four year old Aboriginal boy who had been in foster care since infancy to a kinship placement in Lake Tyers with his siblings.

The young boy is thriving in the care of his extended family, with every opportunity to develop a sense of cultural connection and belonging, an outcome celebrated by everyone involved in the family.

Stronger Families

Stronger Families highlights the importance of taking time to develop relationships of trust:

- Ensuring that families are encouraged and supported to be the drivers in decisions made about their family.
- The use of culture as a strength and protection.
- Close collaboration with other service providers.

The Program organised a Cultural Day Camp demonstrating the centrality of culture in developing resilience, supporting strong engagement and increasing visibility of Aboriginal families.

The Home Reading Program aims to encourage a love of reading, building childrens and parents literacy skills and confidence:

"I need help with educational activities with my children... I want them to have the best education and have a better life, better than what I had when I was a child..." Father

The Guided Shopping program assists families to plan menus and budget to prepare nutritious family meals.

"The shopping pad is helpful to write down what to buy... in the past I didn't take a list... I now know what to buy and plan a menu and my shopping bill is more manageable and food seems to last for the week because of the menu plan..." Mother

Cradle to Kinder

In partnership with Melbourne City Mission (lead agency), Kildonan, ISIS Primary Care and Intensive Case Management Support services, we are delivering Cradle to Kinder in the Western Catchment of the region. It provides an early intervention approach to supporting young mothers from pregnancy at 26 weeks to 6 weeks post-birth. A range of services are offered to provide support for mothers and their children to the age of four years.

Supported Playgroup

The VACCA Supported Playgroup program has a strong focus on early years development and infant health with culture embedded in all activities. Playgroups are held at numerous sites across the North West Region and undertake a range of strategies to engage families.

The Playgroups held their first Cultural Camp in May this year. Eight families attended the day camp with a wide range of cultural activities provided at the You Yangs National Park.

Two new initiatives for Supported Playgroup to be implemented early next year are the Koorie Kids Playgroup Mobile Bus scheme, a community engagement tool with a strong focus on connecting families to playgroup in the Western region. The van will be equipped with portable activities and have the capacity to set up a playgroup at any location. The second initiative is the 'On Your Mark' School Readiness Program. This will assist and support children and families

through the transition from Playgroup to the new setting of primary school by preparing and building confidence in children and parents.

Family Violence

We deliver this well-established program in partnership with Berry Street by co-locating our caseworkers at our respective East Brunswick and Berry Street Eaglemont premises. Our child-focused work with families is based on an understanding of the long term affects of violence on our families and children. We have participated in Bruce Perry forums and continue to remain involved with therapeutic models of healing to better work with traumatised families. Our services to families have increased significantly and we are exceeding our funded targets.

El&FS Innovations

The Team continues to grow and develop with new program initiatives such as the introduction of a Youth Worker operating within the Integrated Family Services Team.

Our Youth Worker engages adolescents using cultural activities such as painting and didgeridoo making. He is a keen athlete and encourages and reinforces the message that 'alcohol, drugs and violence are not our culture' offering the boys a positive male role model and a healthy message. Our Youth Worker has already seen many successes such as supporting adolescents to attend school more frequently, engage in counseling, involvement and inclusion in an Aboriginal school holiday program.

"I loved the cultural day camp, especially the dancing and playing the didg; I feel happy learning about my culture and talking about it at school with my friends it makes me feel proud that I'm Aboriginal and get to do things that my friends don't..."

Youth participant at Cultural Day Camp (You Yangs).

We continue to review and revise our tools and resources to maintain and reflect community need and to guide and strengthen case practice, improving case planning and review. Evaluation and feedback tools are also being used as part of our continued commitment to program improvements. Our Principal Practitioner continues to support system improvement within the team, provide training, mentoring and professional development for managers increasing competence and confidence in our team.

El&FS remains committed to a stable, skilled and resilient workforce. We have conducted a range of training programs to assist ongoing professional development in core business areas; casework, Aboriginal Cultural Competence, court skills and assessment. We have also focused on improving the frequency and content of supervision to support workers in delivering a competent and culturally appropriate service for Aboriginal families.

Kerry Crawford

Executive Manager Early Intervention & Family Services

Morwell Youth and Family Violence Services

Morwell VACCA is situated on the lands of the Braiakaulung people of the Kurnai nation. We work in Gippsland, mainly in western part of the region (Baw Baw and Latrobe City Shires), and our Leaving Care Program works across the whole of Gippsland.

Programs Offered

Family Violence Program

This program provides an integrated case management service to women who have experienced family violence. The program is funded to provide intensive case management for 16 women and general case-management for 46 women. Our service is an entry point for Aboriginal Family Violence and we respond to all Family Violence Reports from police (L17s) in relation to Aboriginal women in Baw Baw and Latrobe City. We also provide community development work in relation to the establishment of an Aboriginal Women and Children's Family Violence facility "Orana Gunyah", as well as running a women's group and providing training sessions.

Child Focused Family Violence Service

The Child Focused Family Violence Service increases community awareness in the Aboriginal community on the impact of family violence on children. It aims to assist mothers in understanding impacts of violence on their children, and to help children understand and heal from their experience of family violence.

Kurnai Youth Homelessness Program

The Kurnai Youth Homelessness Program provides a culturally appropriate support service for Aboriginal young people and their families in the Latrobe Valley. It uses a case-management approach to young people (aged 15-25) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with the focus on securing long term, affordable accommodation. Our service is an entry point for all Aboriginal homeless youth in the Latrobe Valley. The target is 96 contacts per year.

Leaving Care Program

The Leaving Care Program supports young people age 15-18 years who are leaving the care of the Department of Human Services. It also provides Post Care Support for young people aged 18-21 who were on Custody or Guardianship Orders when they were 16 years of age. The target for the program is 22 young people with an emphasis on positive outcomes.

The Leaving Care Program was provided with funding to employ another worker due to the extremely positive feedback from young people and other agencies about our work. The focus of the new worker is Post Care work which involves supporting young people aged 18-21 who have left care. Outcomes for some young people have been excellent in that they have been able to grow in confidence and believe in themselves, maintain their accommodation and gain and maintain employment.

Program Highlights

The office relocated in April to larger premises with more workstations, meeting rooms and a conference room. It is a warm and welcoming office and Aboriginal community members and staff from other agencies come and spend time at the office. We are presently exploring the possibility of workers from other Aboriginal agencies co-locating with us. Our profile in the region is increasing and we are now hosting regional meetings.

We are submitting a tender to manage "Orana Gunyah" the new Aboriginal Women and Children's Family Violence Facility being built in Morwell. The

Aboriginal community wants an Aboriginal organisation to run the facility and we believe that we are best placed to provide this service.

Family Violence Team

The Family Violence Team conducts a highly regarded Aboriginal Women's Group. Twenty six women have attended to date, and are all very engaged. Megan Cadd-Van den Berg from VACCA Koorie Connect and Strategic Development and Research Unit worked on a bookmaking project using the women's messages about family violence, and now the women are involved in traditional art activities such as working with possum skins, basket weaving and jewellery. The self-esteem of the women has increased enormously and they have gained strength and support from each other.

Though a small team, the Morwell VACCA staff is a very culturally strong, competent, committed group of professionals who know their community very well, and are providing best practice programs to Aboriginal children, young people and their families.

Gwen Rogers

Executive Manager Placement and Support



Southern VACCA

Southern VACCA was established in 2000 and is located in Dandenong South, on the lands of the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung People of the Kulin Nation. The Southern Region covers a very large area from South Melbourne to Pakenham including the Mornington Peninsula.

Our services provide culturally relevant support to Aboriginal children, young people and their families who are struggling with a range of issues. Often our families are involved with Child Protection Services and have complex needs. The following is an overview of our programs:

Wilka Kwe Family Services

Wilka Kwe means 'turn around friend' and is a family support service which provides families with a case worker for a period of three months. Whilst involved with the Wilka Kwe program, a family is given assistance in developing parenting skills. Workers have the flexibility to assist with morning and evening routines and provide parents with one to one input. Referrals can be made

by Child Protection, the community or individually. The targets for this program are five families at any given time with a total of eight families for the year.

Strengthening Families Program

The Strengthening Families program provides a similar service to Wilka Kwe with more intensive support for up to 12 months if needed. Strengthening Families can only accept referrals from Child Protection. The target for this program is eight families at any given time with a total of eight families per year.

Koorie Connect Program

The Koorie Connect program provides an assessment, support and advisory service to Aboriginal people within the Southern Region. The Koorie Connect worker engages with individuals and links them up with the most relevant Aboriginal or mainstream program. Koorie Connect staff engage with a vast range of services to provide the most relevant options such as housing, health and employment to their clients.

Out of Home Care

The Out of Home Care program is comprised of four levels of care:

The Southern Out of Home Care Program includes Foster care, which provides nine placements for children and young people. This program includes an ongoing recruitment campaign for carers, as well as the regular training and support for existing carers. Although Foster care generally provides care for children who have been removed from their families, it can also offer respite to families who are experiencing difficulties without Child Protection involvement.

The Kinship Care Program provides support to Aboriginal children and young people living with extended family members or friends and aims to keep children within their family and community networks as an alternative to mainstream placements. The program provides long-term support to children involved with Child Protection or short term assistance to those not involved with Child Protection. The Kinship Care program also provides an information and advice and cultural connections service for children and young people.

The Leaving Care Program provides a support service to young people in Out of Home Care transitioning to independent living. The program engages with young people between 15 to 21 years and offers post care support up to 25 years of age.

The Cultural Placement and Support Program is a key component of the Out of Home Care system for children

and young people who are placed in mainstream agencies with non-Aboriginal carers.

Play Group

Southern VACCA Playgroups have Koorie Kids Playgroups with 33 families participating in the southern region in Frankston, Cranbourne, Pakenham and Tootgarook. The Southern VACCA Playgroup Program has partnerships with local councils, health organisations and Aboriginal health teams, and works with speech pathologists, occupational therapists, family specialists and our in-house VACCA staff team. Many playgroup activities involve cultural activities. We also provide family support for families whose children attend playgroup.

Aboriginal Family Decision Making Program (AFDM)

The AFDM Program engages with the family networks of children and young people involved with Child Protection, and helps them to develop a suitable and culturally safe plan of action for the care of the child or young person. The AFDM also has a Cultural Support



component where the worker assists with the completion of the mandated Cultural Support Plans for children and young people on Guardianship and long-term Custody orders. The target for this program is 30 AFDM's.

Aboriginal Liaison Worker Program (ALW)

The ALW provides consultation to community-based intake teams and mainstream family support. The ALW ensures that a culturally informed and relevant service is provided to Aboriginal families referred to mainstream Family Support Programs.

Cradle to Kinder Program (CtoK)

The Cradle to Kinder Program is the most recent addition to Southern VACCA's suite of services. This program has been established in partnership with Southern VACCA and the Queen Elizabeth Centre and provides an early intervention approach to supporting young mothers who require a range of assistance. The service supports young women who are either at 26 weeks gestation or within six weeks post birth. The program will provide support to families until the child reaches four years of age.

Southern VACCA Highlights

The Koorie Connect Family Day event lifted the profile of the program with over 400 people attending from the Southern Metropolitan community. A wide range of agencies attended including Centerlink, Oz Child, Good Shepherd, IFV Action Group, Dandenong

& Districts Aboriginal Cooperative, Department of Human Services, Melbourne Rebels, Tennis Victoria and AFL. The theme for the event was about promotion and awareness of Koori Connect services.

In celebrating a significant national event, Southern and Eastern VACCA combined to celebrate National Aboriginal & Islander Children's Day (NAICD) with 150 families attending. It promoted our commitment to the community and showcased partnership development between two VACCA regions. Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place and Baluk Art attended the event to provide activities for the children.

Little Fellas Children's Day was a joint project between service agencies in the Casey/Dandenong regions; Best Start, Dandenong City Council, Southern VACCA, Close the Gap's Youth transition worker. The major theme was to profile early intervention programs within those regions. The event's role was to provide a culturally friendly environment for families to engage with providers, and enable them to participate in activities such as Netball, Rugby, AFL (Marngrook), Life Be In It & Tennis.

Lucy Romano

Executive Manager Southern VACCA

Eastern VACCA

The Eastern VACCA office, located in Ringwood is accessible by public transport and close to the Eastern Freeway. It was officially opened on the 3rd August 2012 by the Honourable Mary Wooldridge, Minister for Mental Health, Women's Affairs and Community Services alongside VACCA CEO, Muriel Bamblett.

It has been a journey to establish the office, recruit staff and work with the Aboriginal community of the East to inform them of VACCA's role and services. The region was previously serviced by the Southern and East Brunswick branches of VACCA. Thank you to VACCA staff, Angela Forbes from Connections and staff at DHS Eastern Region for their support in the establishment of the office.

Services Offered

Child FIRST - Aboriginal Liaison Position provides cultural consultation for referrals of Aboriginal families to regional family services. The worker provides advice to other workers regarding Aboriginal services in the region and ensures

cultural needs of families are met within mainstream organisations. The program provides a referral pathway to the Cradle to Kinder program.

Dhum Djirri – Aboriginal Family Decision Making Program (AFDM) is for Aboriginal children and young people involved in the Child Protection system. The program strongly encourages Aboriginal values and decision-making is fully addressed throughout planning and encourages family members, Elders and other significant people in the child's life to meet and make decisions about their safety and wellbeing.

Family Support Program aims to prevent future harm and disadvantage to the most at risk Aboriginal children and young people. The program provides an outreach service to strengthen parents and primary caregiver's capacity to safely care for their children, and deals with underlying issues that may lead to placement in the Out-of-Home Care system. Areas such as child behaviour management, developing new parenting skills, routines and household management are addressed.

Cultural Support Program develops, implements and monitors Cultural Support Plans for Aboriginal children and young people who are in Out-of-Home Care and are subject to Guardianship Orders. The Program engages and educates Aboriginal families and communities about the purpose of the Cultural Support Plans, encourages active participation by extended family, kinship groups and community and maintains a child's cultural connection and self-identity.

Koorie Placement and Cultural Support offers cultural support to Aboriginal children and youth in mainstream Out-of-Home Care placements; support and strengthen the child's cultural

identity and connection to their Aboriginal family and broader community, and engage and educate non-Aboriginal caregivers and agency workers regarding the importance of culture and community connectedness.

Kinship Care provides care by relatives or friends to an Aboriginal child who cannot live with their parents, where Aboriginal family and community and Aboriginal culture are valued as central to the child's safety, stability and development. This program provides support to kinship families caring for children and young people who may be on Children's Court Orders or are need of support but to necessarily involved with Child Protection.

Program Highlights

- Eastern VACCA staff joined with Southern VACCA staff to hold a Children's Day at Chesterfield Park in August 2012.
- Memoranda of Understanding are being developed with regional Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

2011-2012 has been a momentous year in VACCA's growth, highlighted by the opening of our Eastern regional service. The next twelve months promises to be bigger still with all the experience and expertise of VACCA's 36 year history being brought to bear in servicing the Aboriginal community in this region of Melbourne.

Violet Harrison

Program Manager Eastern VACCA



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- Department of Health
- Australia Council for the Arts

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- Ashurst Lawyers
- Zen Architects
- Fenton Communications
- Nelson Alexander Real Estate

- Anglicare
- Stralliance
- Kine Graffiti

Partners

- Berry Street including Take Two
- Mackillop Family Services
- Anglicare
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Aborigines Advancement League
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Uniting Care
 - Kildonan
 - Gippsland
 - Connections
- La Trobe University
- Queen Elizabeth Centre
- Jesuit Social Services
- Child First Partners
- Westcare

Supporting VACCA

VACCA is largely dependent on government funding, however our most innovative programs are supported through independent sources of funding including philanthropy. Money is not the only way you can help.

Here's how you can support our activities which brighten up the lives of the children we work with.

Become a foster-carer

Foster carers come from all types of backgrounds and families. What is important is that foster carers can provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and young people who need care and can go on a journey that is both difficult and rewarding and believe that they can make a positive difference in a child's life.

Volunteer at VACCA

VACCA is always looking for volunteers to help with activities and projects. We run various community events and programs

throughout the year and are always looking for people to donate their time to support us.

Corporate Giving

Corporations and businesses can help us through:

- Workplace Giving
- Volunteering
- Partnerships
- Gifts in Kind
- Pro Bono Services

Donate Funds or Goods

All donations are tax deductible as VACCA has DGR status.

Leave a Gift in Your Will

For more information about how you can support VACCA in these or other ways contact us through:

Web: www.vacca.org

e-mail: vacca@vacca.org

Phone: 03 8388 1855 and ask for Deon or Nigel.

Financial Summary

Summarised Statement of Income and Expenditure for the Year Ended 30 June 2012

	2012 \$	2011 \$
Total Income	15,943,078	14,368,489
Total Expenses	15,761,190	12,650,193
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of VACCA	181,888	1,718,296

Summarised Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) as at the Year Ended 30 June 2012

	2012 \$	2011 \$
Total Current Assets	8,970,210	8,590,174
Total Non-Current Assets	1,001,855	708,848
Total Assets	9,972,065	9,299,023
Total Current Liabilities	3,361,372	2,972,185
Total Non- Current Liabilities	864,481	762,606
Total Liabilities	4,225,853	3,734,791
Net Assets (Liabilities)	5,746,212	5,564,232
Total Equity	5,746,212	5,564,232

The above statements only provide a summary of the financial performance and position for the financial year ended 30 June 2012. For more detailed statements see the Annual Financial Report for the Year Ended 30th June 2012, please contact VACCA on vacca@vacca.org.









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Serving Aboriginal Children in the Community