Despite colonisation and dispossession, Aboriginal communities and families in Victoria are culturally strong and connected and committed to reviving Aboriginal culture through language, art and other forms. The right to practice culture with family and community is about being connected by culture and strengthening bonds across generations. This is essential in healing and keeping communities strong.
Welcome

VACCA is the lead Aboriginal child and family welfare organisation in Victoria, protecting and promoting the rights of Aboriginal children, young people, families and the community.

We provide programs and services to strengthen Aboriginal culture, encourage best parenting practices and advise government on strategies to strengthen vulnerable Aboriginal children and families.

If we are to truly understand and support Aboriginal children and young people’s journey through trauma we must listen to their hopes for the future and nurture their talents. Whether these talents are used to contribute to the local community or to have a hand in shaping our physical and social landscape, the right to justice and equality is essential to realising ambitions.
VACCA’s 2012/13 annual report explores the subject of children’s rights. Many of us might immediately think of basic human rights, such as the right to be free from harm or the right to food and shelter. While these will remain essential to VACCA’s purpose, the civil, political, economic, and cultural rights set out in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People tell a much bigger story.

In 1989, world leaders passed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child underlining a global move towards viewing children as human beings with rights.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People declares the minimum requirements to meet the basic needs of survival, dignity and wellbeing; the freedoms and access to resources and facilities that Indigenous people seek to have recognised as legislated rights by the Australian government.

We believe that recognising and acting to uphold Indigenous people’s rights is key to healing Aboriginal children and families who have suffered neglect, separation and cultural disconnection.

In our 37 years of caring for Aboriginal young people and families, we have seen how connection to family, community and culture is the foundation of a deep, durable wellbeing and an internal strength that helps children get through trauma and cope with and the challenges of life as they grow. Seen in this light, rights are integral to a more holistic concept of a child’s safety.

Echoing an increased global awareness of children’s rights, VACCA has grown from an organisation focused on meeting Aboriginal children’s core needs of safety and security to adopt broader terms of reference: that Aboriginal children should be able to reach their potential with the security of knowing who they are and where they come from, and that they should enjoy the pride that comes from practising their culture and having it respected by those around them.

It’s not surprising that many of the key principles behind children’s rights in the UN Conventions and Declarations chime so clearly with VACCA’s vision of safety, self determination and cultural respect.

Twenty-six years on from the day the UN first passed the Convention, our annual report reaffirms the importance of recognising the broad spectrum of children’s needs, including their culture, as rights.

In the portraits of VACCA kids that punctuate the pages of this report, we visualize children’s rights – something that can be invisible or unknown – as handwritten banners; a tangible and personal message. The children appear in different public places because their rights apply in a range of contexts, and because rights need public support and local legislation to be upheld.

CONTENTS

Our rights matter 7
Our purpose 8
Our vision 9
Locations 12
Care and support 13
Chairperson’s report 14
CEO’s message 15
The Board 16
Our structure 18
Our programs and services 19
Corporate services 24
Early intervention and Family services 25
Eastern VACCA 27
Morwell VACCA 30
Southern VACCA 31
Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice Support service 32
Link-up 33
Community Development and Training Unit 35
Community Care 36
VACCA Cultural Programs 40
Kinship Care 41
Acknowledgements 42
Supporting VACCA 43
Financial summary 45

Design
Fenton Communications
www.fenton.com.au

Photography
Deon Van Den Berg
deonvphoto@gmail.com

We believe that, recognising and acting to uphold Indigenous people’s rights is key to healing Aboriginal children and families who have suffered neglect, separation and cultural disconnection...
Our purpose

We are a statewide Aboriginal community controlled organisation whose purpose is to strengthen the safety, wellbeing and cultural connectedness of Aboriginal children, individuals and families in their community.

Our vision

Our children, young people, families and communities are thriving culturally strong, empowered and safe.
Land and Native Title rights provide a tangible connection to land and are the inheritance of all Aboriginal children. All Aboriginal children have the right to enjoy the benefits of land and native title rights and to have these acknowledged and recognised by those around them.
We offer a growing range of programs and services to meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal children, individuals and families in Victoria. Healing Aboriginal children and members of the Stolen Generations who have experienced trauma takes special, culturally attuned care. We protect and support children as they grow, helping them flourish and become tomorrow’s strong, culturally connected families.
improving outcomes for individuals, children, young people and families.

We provide a broad range of services to Aboriginal people and our work touches many people, from children in our care to the elders and adults connected to them. VACCA’s objectives include the preservation, strengthening and protection of the cultural and spiritual identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We aim to provide culturally appropriate and quality services that are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We provide a broad range of services to Aboriginal people and the community based on our right to self-determination, addressing inequality and poverty, and systemic justice for Aboriginal children, young people and families. Services and programs include interventions to address child, parent and family related factors to protect the child and prevent child abuse. We also promote child wellbeing by addressing broader societal, systemic and community factors that cause harm to Aboriginal children and young people or affect their ability to function equitably within their capabilities. Therefore we are concerned with the rights and needs of Aboriginal children, their safety, wellbeing, health, education and future. We also work with families on those areas and issues that contribute to their over-representation in areas such as family violence, juvenile justice, homelessness and mental health.

Apart from VACCAs mix of family support services, child protection and out of home care services, we strongly support cultural activities, community development and capacity building. Cultural activities are embedded in all our programs and are highly successful in engaging children and young people.

We observe community cultural protocols that pay due respect to the different nations and tribes of Victoria and Australia. This recognition of identity is important for the development of the children we work with and in the way we deliver services. We run cultural and policy work is also a key part of our role and we commemorate Sorry Day to mark the launch of the new Commissioner, the Commonwealth and State governments, the sector and partners.

We acknowledge all our staff, volunteers and stakeholders for their contributions to the success of VACCA; to our Board who give so freely of their time and their families; and of our commitment to achieving the best outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people and their families; and of our contribution to high level policy and practice reform in the Child and Family Welfare sector; our capacity to partner to achieve best outcomes for Aboriginal children, young people, and their families; and of our commitment to working with and in the way we deliver services. We run cultural activities to celebrate key events in Victoria including National Aboriginal Islander Children’s Day, NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week, and have a role in advancing the community’s interests through offering employment and training. Every year we also celebrate the National Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we commemorate Sorry Day to mark the launch of the new Commissioner. Our Child and Family Policy and work is also a key part of our role and has contributed significantly to improvements in governance and non-discrimination services to Aboriginal children and families.

In March this year VACCA had an accreditation review against the Quality Improvement Council Standards and Community Services Accreditation’s Department Standards. This review was very important role across the Victorian community.

For those who know us, VACCA can mean many different things. It largely depends on why you have interacted with us. Even among our friends, clients or funders, few have a comprehensive view of what we are as we are one of the largest not for profit Aboriginal organisations delivering child and family welfare services in Victoria, and we are a Stolen Generations re-unification service provider. Our work touches many people, from the children in our care to the elders and adults connected to them.
James Atkinson (Yorta Yorta/Bangerang) Chairperson
Currently employed as Manager, Koorie Education with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Has worked across the education sector and served on boards at a state and national level. Was a founding member of the first Victorian Aboriginal Youth Advisory Committee and a participant in the Koori Leadership Program.

Margaret Atkinson (Yorta Yorta/Taungurung/Wurundjeri) Vice Chairperson
Currently employed as Administration/Receptionist at the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-op in Morwell. Was employed at VACCA for nine and a half years. Has commenced governance training.

Jason Kanoa (Gunditjmara/Bunitj) Treasurer
Currently employed with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited’s Aboriginal Centre for Males as Manager. Was previously employed with Victorian Aboriginal Youth, Sport, and Recreation for seven years. Has completed governance training and the Indigenous Leadership Network Victoria course. Plays with the Fitzroy Stars Football Club.

Jenny Kirby (Wanki/Ngambaa) Secretary
Currently employed at Bert Williams Aboriginal Youth Service in the Koori Youth Justice area. Was previously employed at Yapperra Children’s Service for many years. Has completed a Social Work Degree.

Daniel Kelly (Muttiti Muth/Wamba Wamba) Director
Currently retired but was employed as Manager of the Balranald Aboriginal Health Service. Was previously employed at Muttiti Muth Family Preservation and worked at VACCA.

Deidre King (Gunditjmara) Director
A board member of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. Employed as a CEO of the Victorian Community Elders Services. Previously employed at the Aboriginal Advancement League for 17 years and worked at VACCA. Completed governance training and holds an Advanced Diploma in Business Management.

Rod Monohan (Taungurung) Director
Currently employed as the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer with the Northcote Police Complex. Was previously employed at ACES and worked at VACCA for 12 years.

Apart from VACCA’s mix of family support services, child protection and out of home care services, we strongly emphasise cultural activities, community development and capacity building.

Muriel Bamblett, CEO
Our structure

Our programs and services

Client services

Recruitment, training and natural safety for carers
Extended Care
Permanent care and stability planning
Adolescents Community House
Residential Care program
Leasing Care
Kinship Care
Cultural Placement and Supports
Reconnection to country cultural supports
Aboriginal Children’s Healing Unit
Section 18 Guardianship Project

Community development and support

Koorie Connect
Community development programs
Cultural programs
Cultural activities
Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Corporate and internal services

Strategic, Social, Improvement
Child and Family Welfare
Human Resources
Finance
Facilities and contracts
Information Technology
Information Management
Organisational Development
Communication and Marketing
'Being part of this project has helped me grow as a person actually. I've learnt more about my culture.' Sharna, 16

'Making the possum-skin cloaks has helped me explain my feelings. It has made me feel proud!' Ruby, 12
Aboriginal children have the right to enjoy a childhood without worry or fear. A stable home life and loving adults are vital for cultivating a child's sense of play. With consistent adult care and support, and regular contact with children their own age, they can explore the world around them and develop relationships, free from the stress of danger or neglect.
Our overall financial results were a net operating deficit of $315,197. This result fell within our budgeted deficit of $399,501 after a depreciation expense of 14.81 percent to an actual income of $18.3 million. Total income for the 2012/2013 year increased by 1.64 percent to $24.5 million. Influenza vaccinations and health checks for all staff continued as part of our staff wellbeing practice.

The Early Intervention and Family Services (EI&FS) team work with Family DNA to promote family wellbeing, participation in the broader community and to offer support in accessing other services. Through its programs, EI&FS provides families with a range of options for culturally responsive support in times of need, with a focus on positive parenting and family interaction to promote children’s development.

### Early Years

The Early Years program provides four parent-supported playgroups in the north and west. This year, playgroups in Darebin, Hume and Whittlesea local council areas were joined by a new playgroup in Melton. The program has given us greater levels of access to the local Aboriginal community, making it one of our most successful ventures to date.

We are also creating a curriculum-based program that will engage other agencies and, in conjunction with families, provide a strong base for further engagement. Specialist program facilitators will provide services such as maternal and child health, school readiness, medical and dental, art, language and literacy, and educational programs to support parents with children in their early years while providing a strong cultural base.

### Koorie Youth Leadership in Action

The Koorie Youth Leadership in Action (KYLA) Program is focused on the strengths of each young person and their capacity to make positive choices. The program promotes culture and an intrinsic understanding of each person’s place in the community as essential elements in building a secure self-image. This self-image is the foundation for mature and positive choices in life.

The program was developed for young Kooriies aged between 15-17 residing or attending school in the north-west and north-east Melbourne. A range of Aboriginal children, young people and families living in Melbourne who are experiencing personal challenges and a disconnect from education, employment and community.

### Koorie Family Leadership in Action

In the past year, EI&FS have partnered with Berry Street, Child FIRST, and the L17 Triage Project to deliver the L17 Triage Pilot Project. The project concerns L17 reports received by police relating to family violence incidents and the Child Protection that do not meet its threshold for investigation.

VACCAs presence at triage meetings provided Aboriginal families with cultural consultation, advocacy services and a seamless pathway to appropriate programs within EI&FS. Through early intervention and an individually targeted service response, it is anticipated that families will have less need to involve Child Protection.

### Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making

The Early Intervention and Family Services (EI&FS) team work with Family DNA to promote family wellbeing, participation in the broader community and to offer support in accessing other services. Through its programs, EI&FS provides families with a range of options for culturally responsive support in times of need, with a focus on positive parenting and family interaction to promote children’s development.

### Integrated Family Services

The Early Years program provides four parent-supported playgroups in the north and west. This year, playgroups in Darebin, Hume and Whittlesea local council areas were joined by a new playgroup in Melton. The program has given us greater levels of access to the local Aboriginal community, making it one of our most successful ventures to date.

We are also creating a curriculum-based program that will engage other agencies and, in conjunction with families, provide a strong base for further engagement. Specialist program facilitators will provide services such as maternal and child health, school readiness, medical and dental, art, language and literacy, and educational programs to support parents with children in their early years while providing a strong cultural base.

### Cultural Connectedness

Our vision for cultural connectedness, wellbeing and safety for our people is at the heart of all that we do. Our workforce are key to realising this vision, and VACCAs HR strategy focuses on enhancing skills, resilience, and employment opportunities, increasing representation of Aboriginal Leadership within the organisation, and improving Aboriginal staff retention and recruitment.

### Financial position

Total income for the 2012/2013 year increased by 14.81 percent to an actual income of $18.3 million. Our overall financial results were a net operating deficit of $315,197. Our workforce are key to realising this vision, and VACCAs HR strategy focuses on enhancing skills, resilience, and employment opportunities, increasing representation of Aboriginal Leadership within the organisation, and improving Aboriginal staff retention and recruitment.

VACCAs reputation for the work it does with Aboriginal children, young people and families remains strong, and its partnerships within the Aboriginal community continue to flourish.

### Workforce and infrastructure initiatives

- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Fleet Coordinator, Melinda Brown was nominated for the Australasian Fleet Management Association Fleet Manager of the Year Award.
- Fleet Coordinator, Melinda Brown was nominated for the Year Award.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
- Strengthened VACCAs governance with a Risk Management Audit Sub Committee as well as a Policy Committee.
- Strengthened our supervision practice with a new Supervision Framework and guidelines.
- Delivered Information Management training to all staff and completed an IT Directory restructure.
Located in Ringwood, Eastern VACCA have been instrumental in developing VACCA’s presence in Melbourne’s inner east. Following a period of rapid growth, all programs are operating and we are already seeing the positive results achieved by families working with Eastern VACCA staff. Our focus this year was on strengthening links with other agencies in the region and with the Aboriginal families we support through our range of services. Our partnerships with mainstream agencies also allow us to reach more Aboriginal families and provide training for non-indigenous staff caring for Aboriginal children.

As well as advocating for Aboriginal children in out of home care and empowering families, uniting family members is an important part of our work, and it is for healing children and young people who have experienced trauma of separation.

Highlights and achievements

- The opening of our new office marked the start of a busy and successful year.
- As part of Child Protection Week, the Eastern VACCA office hosted an afternoon attended by senior regional DHS staff and the director – a great way to celebrate our work.
- We obtained funding to run the Koori FaCES Program, a five-week intensive parenting program for the eastern community.
- Eastern VACCA’s Integrated Family Support (IFS) program increased its business by over 65 percent, with 16 Family Support workers who provide support and advocacy to families. This is proof of the community’s increasing confidence in IFS services and a remarkable achievement.
- Many of the improvements that we have seen in the past year can be attributed to the recruitment of a new worker in the Aboriginal Liaison Worker (ALW) role, referrals into our IFS program have increased to an average of one new referral a fortnight. The presence of our ALW at eastern Child FIRST sites, Connections UnitingCare, and Anglicare has enhanced awareness of resources and services available to the eastern Aboriginal Community.
- The ALW developed relationships with Cradle to Kinder, working closely with young mothers expecting or with young children.
- Our Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making (AFLDM) program remains pivotal for creating referral pathways into the Eastern VACCA programs. Through AFLDM, Eastern VACCA recently supported the reconnection of three children with their paternal family in Cairns, with the support of our IFS program.
- Eastern VACCA’s Cultural Support Program has undertaken cultural support plans for all the children in the eastern region on Guardianship Orders.
- The Koori Cultural Support and Placement Program (KCSPP) has established sound links with Anglicare to support their non-Indigenous workers caring for Aboriginal children, and access to the VACCA training unit ensures Anglicare workers have the opportunity to undertake appropriate foster care training.
- People said to me VACCA could help me and I thought no way. Now you guys are the only people I trust.

Participants in VACCA’s Koori Faces program delivered by John Wayne Parsons and Namatjira Morgan at the Wangaratta Justice Centre.

"I learned to be a role model to my son, be confident in who I am, and how to talk to my boy about his culture."
Aboriginal children are entitled to social services and resources that are the foundation for healthy growth and positive choices in later life. These include access to education and healthcare, the development of social and emotional wellbeing, and access to high quality, culturally responsive and competent community services (mainstream and Aboriginal).
Highlights and achievements

• Winning the contract to manage Oraana Gunyah, a new statewide Aboriginal/Women’s and Children’s Crisis Accommodation and Support Service being built in Morwell. Construction is well underway, as is the program development work, including recruitment and training of staff. The refuge is expected to be operational in early January 2014.

• A new partnership with Latrobe Community Health Service to co-deliver the Targeted Community Care (Mental Health) Program. The program provides a targeted approach to supporting Aboriginal children and young people who have a mental illness or are at risk of mental illness, while supporting their family.

• Conducting a very successful two-day camp for young people leaving care. The focus was on adventure activities, personal development and creating links with a range of local service providers who can assist young people in their pathways to good health, education, housing, and wellbeing.

• Initiating the inaugural staff retreat at Wattle Point, which enabled staff to get away together for the first time for a mix of work, cultural and wellbeing activities. Staff said that they felt refreshed and were able to recharge their batteries.

Bianca, 11 years old

Bianca is progressing really well at school after starting the year with intensive in-school support from the MarrakaiTherapy Program, and has now transitioned to having an integration aid. Bianca started the year alone-one worker with her at recess and lunch times to help with her social interactions, and now she has a small group of school friends that she can play with independently. She is now doing five full days at school and the principal and teachers are really proud of her achievements since starting primary school.

Bianca recently nominated herself for student council, giving a wonderful speech about why she should be elected, noting her strengths as ‘being able to help you with anything at any time’ and having a great sense of humour. ‘Being able to help you with anything at any time’ and having a great sense of humour.

• The Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making program has taught us much about assisting our families to navigate systems and negotiate in the best interests of our children. It also presents opportunities to enhance other professionals’ understanding of culture and alternate ways of living.

• Co-hosting an event for the National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day in partnership with the Dandarung and District Aboriginal Co-op. It was a first step in cementing a meaningful partnership between our local co-op and Out of Home Care.

• Out of Home Care provided the Books in Home program to 33 children to date. This has proven to be a favourite for families, with 33 children on the list for the next run.

• Recruitment of foster carers continues to challenge us and affects the number of placements we can provide. We are assessing and training five new carers and have seen an increase in our kinship carers, where children remain in the care of their families.

• Two Southern VACCA team leaders were trained in Gardening and audition, successful partnerships, and official recognition of our work drove us to provide better care and continue responding to family needs with innovative programs and services.

• Southern VACCA were proud recipients of the Regional Koorie Community Justice Children and Youth Award 2013 and a statewide certificate of appreciation for their work in the area of Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day in partnership with Family Life’s SHINE program.

In memory of Uncle Reg

Our planning day in November 2012 was to be the last time we would see our much loved and respected Elder, Uncle Reg Blow. Although we knew he had been unwell we hadn’t realised that Uncle Reg had discharged himself from hospital to fulfill his endless commitment to our community. We were transfixed by his wisdom and knowledge and enjoyed everything he passed on to us. Sadly, he passed away six weeks later and his loss was felt throughout Southern VACCA.

Southern VACCA

Southern VACCA provides a range of child and family services to the Aboriginal community in Melbourne’s inner south. ‘Connected by Culture’, VACCA’s brand tagline, has become something to live and work by, and this year’s achievements and celebrations are testament to the importance of culture in engaging children and young people and forging a strong link between VACCA and the Aboriginal community.

Postmodern Families is a model thatled to changes in the family planning methods. The service is now doing five full days at school and the principal and teachers are really proud of her achievements since starting primary school.

Bianca recently nominated herself for student council, giving a wonderful speech about why she should be elected, noting her strengths as ‘being able to help you with anything at any time’ and having a great sense of humour. ‘Being able to help you with anything at any time’ and having a great sense of humour.

• We continue to develop key partnerships. Aside from those already mentioned, Southern VACCA also secured a full-time position based in Dandenong with Family Life’s SHINE program.

• Northern VACCA were proud recipients of the Regional Koorie Community Justice Children and Youth Award 2013 and a statewide certificate of appreciation for their work in the area of Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day in partnership with Family Life’s SHINE program.

MORWELL VACCA

MORWELL VACCA provides child and family services to the Aboriginal community in the Gippsland region. This year was marked by an expansion of our services, with a new facility in Morwell for women and children fleeing family violence, a new contract to manage a statewide crisis accommodation and support service, and involvement in a new area of work through a partnership with Latrobe Community Health Service.

Providing a culturally appropriate service response with Aboriginal staff remains central to what we do, whether we are combating violence against women, involving in a new area of work through a partnership with Latrobe Community Health Service.

...and...
Celebrating 10 years

VACCA Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice Support Service (ACASS) became a reality. and further lobbying ensured that the report’s recommendations became a reality.

The need for a new and resourced protocol, known as The Continued Journey, which confirmed the funding to deliver what was known then as the Protocol through its Intake, after hours and regional services across the state.

One of our highlights this year was Lakidjeka’s 10-year anniversary. The partnership between VACCA and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) was acknowledged and appropriately funded by state government. A joint review process between VACCA and the state government began in 1978, 10 years later.

VACCA and the Department of Human Services (DHS) Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice Support Service (LAKiDJeKA ABORiGINAL ChiLD speCiAList ADViCe) was developed in 2002, which alongside the Mildura Aboriginal Cooperative finally saw the funding of the protocol we now know as Lakidjeka ACASS.

Throughout its 10 years ACASS has provided ongoing advice and case consultation directly to Child Protection on culturally appropriate intervention in respect of all significant decisions.

Children’s rights

Despite the challenges encountered in the last 10 years, Lakidjeka maintains that all Aboriginal children and young people’s rights should be preserved and that they are entitled to have specialist Aboriginal workers advise Child Protection on how to best meet their needs and keep them safe.

A service recognised for its best practice by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (ACOSS), and the Australian Human Rights Commission, Lakidjeka will continue to advocate for Aboriginal workers advise Child Protection on how to best meet their needs and keep them safe.

We work with the Stolen Generations – any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who was removed, adopted, fostered or placed in an institution. In our work we are continually amazed by the resilience of our people, and the strong bonds between families who were kept apart but always longed to be with those that share their bloodline.

Other highlights for the year

Given the particularly challenging nature of their work, the wellbeing of Lakidjeka workers is a priority. Throughout the year, various well-being activities and meetings (a memorable example being a trip away to the snow to run our own version of ‘The Amazing Race’)

Some workers attended the SNACC Conference in Cairns, while others demonstrated the work of Lakidjeka through presentations at other local and interstate conferences.

While some would not describe being involved in decision making titled ‘Whose voice counts?’ echoes the Torres Strait Islander participation in child protection.

A recent SNAICC report looking at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in child protection and the realisation of Aboriginal Guardianship.

Commission, Lakidjeka will continue to advocate for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who was removed, adopted, fostered or placed in an institution. In our work we are continually amazed by the resilience of our people, and the strong bonds between families who were kept apart but always longed to be with those that share their bloodline.

Highlights and achievements

There were nine reunions held during the year, including a total of 13 clients who met family or friends. One of our highlights this year was a successful reunion with a found relative. In February our book ‘Where Were You?’ was launched at Federation Square at an event marking the 50th anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations. In the book Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across Victoria reveal where they were and what they felt when the then Prime Minister of Australia, Hon. Kevin Rudd made the National Apology.

In March we held a healing camp for clients at Queenscliff that included cultural and recreational activities. Based on feedback it was a very successful event that created many happy memories.

In April a pilot Culture and Art Healing program was held in Shepparton. A first for Lakidjeka, it taught us much about engaging with the Bringing Them Home worker and the local Aboriginal community to produce a program for the Stolen Generations in country areas.

In May we marked Sorry Day with morning tea at the Link-Up office followed by a major event co-organised with Connecting Home at the Melbourne Museum where speakers included a former client who told her poignant story about finding her family.

Client reunions are the focus of our work. No client reunion is the same, just as no client’s story is the same. But there are the common themes of loss, trauma, frustration, anger and hopelessness.

As a program, Link-Up is keen to improve what we do and how we do it especially because it means we can provide a better service to the Stolen Generations. We will use Lakidjeka’s experiences and the feedback we have received to improve our service so we can provide a better service to the Stolen Generations.

We work with the Stolen Generations – any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who was removed, adopted, fostered or placed in an institution. In our work we are continually amazed by the resilience of our people, and the strong bonds between families who were kept apart but always longed to be with those that share their bloodline.

With the demonstrated commitment to ensuring that children and young people remained connected to family, friends and communities in situations where they could not live at home.

We work with the Stolen Generations – any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who was removed, adopted, fostered or placed in an institution. In our work we are continually amazed by the resilience of our people, and the strong bonds between families who were kept apart but always longed to be with those that share their bloodline.

We work with the Stolen Generations – any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander who was removed, adopted, fostered or placed in an institution. In our work we are continually amazed by the resilience of our people, and the strong bonds between families who were kept apart but always longed to be with those that share their bloodline.

‘For a first review against the QIC and DHS standards VACCA did extremely well with particular strengths in collaboration, strategic positioning, contributing to good practice and building the capacity of its community. The team also noted its strength in understanding and supporting, not only Aboriginal people, but the wider welfare community involved in supporting its client group. Of particular note was the demonstrated commitment to ensuring that children and young people remained connected to family, friends and community in situations where they could not live at home.’

Quality Improvement & Community Services Accreditation (QIC) Final Department of Human Services; Accreditation Report Review Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency. 12-15 March 2013
Family networks are key to creating resilient strong communities. The culture and identity for Aboriginal children and young people is part of a deep spiritual connection to Country and their ancestors. Knowing who they are and where they come from, knowing about their culture, their Elders and our strong Aboriginal leaders; this knowledge and connection to culture gives them the strength and support to look to the future with confidence.

VACCA’s Training Unit provides staff with a variety of training programs from induction to casework. Externally, the unit supports mainstream agencies to develop their own cultural competency and work towards respectful and culturally safe engagement.

The Community Development Unit provides a consistent service to families that need emergency relief, and referrals to a range of mainstream and Aboriginal services through the Koorie Connect service. As well as the Koorie FaCES family-strengthening program, the unit now offers a new financial literacy program called My Moola. Funding to develop an energy efficiency program has also been secured.

Highlights and achievements

• Delivering 38 training programs for staff, including inductions, a workshop for non-Aboriginal staff starting at VACCA, an introduction to casework for Aboriginal staff, understanding childhood development training, first aid and mental health first aid.
• Providing two staff in-services to bring over 200 VACCA staff together and provide a space to connect, celebrate achievements and share a unified vision.
• 11 VACCA staff completed certificates in Advanced Office Administration and a Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family through Kangan TAFE.
• Delivering foster carer training to non-Aboriginal VACCA and external foster carers.
• Delivering 12 workshops to Anglicare, MacKillop, Oz Child, Vincent Care, The Smith Family and the Queen Elizabeth Centre, including the rollout of four programs to Family LIFE.
• Delivering two DHS-funded Train the Trainer programs in foster care recruitment and assessment.
• Delivering board training and Leading a culturally competent organisation training to MacKillop Family Services, Anglicare and Oz Child.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING UNIT

• Delivering four financial literacy programs for Aboriginal community members and secured funding for four more programs over the coming financial year.
• Delivering four Koorie FaCES family strengthening programs within five Victorian Correctional centres.
• Delivering Koorie FaCES Train the trainer programs to four Victorian accredited childcare organisations wishing to deliver the program in their own region.
• Securing funding for the Koorie Energy Efficiency Project in partnership with Kildonan UnitingCare, which will employ two community development workers to provide energy efficiency community information workshops and conduct home energy audits until 2016.
• Koorie Connect provided a service to over 1150 community members through referrals to mainstream and Aboriginal services, emergency relief, phone and internet access, and a range of support options.
Community Care is an amalgam of programs including the Aboriginal Children’s Healing Team, Foster Care, Permanent Care and Stability Planning, Leaving Care, Residential Care and Cultural Support programs. The Aboriginal children’s healing team are a central point for developing an integrated, culturally appropriate and trauma-informed approach to working with Aboriginal children and families across VACCA, combining theories of trauma, neurobiology, attachment, and resilience to help understand and respond to Aboriginal children’s trauma.

Children who have experienced significant trauma have different needs and we must combine good strong cultural practices with theory to make a lasting difference.

Highlights and achievements

• In February VACCA relocated Community Care staff to an office in Preston with improved amenities and a closer link to community.

• At the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care conference in June, Janalla Finette and Kulum Jackson presented VACCA’s model of cultural support planning to an overwhelmingly positive response. Organisations across the country have since contacted program staff for advice on how they can implement the model.

• Receiving funding to develop a Connection to Country pilot program, which will organise trips for out of home care children to reconnect to family, community and traditional lands.

• Embedding cultural support planning across all programs, particularly for children in out of home care. As well as creating a meaningful cultural journey for children, the cultural support plan becomes a document that they live and breathe everyday – and a tool for empowering them in the process.

• Organising the first reconnection trip for two out of home care children to Far North Queensland as part of the Connection to Country pilot program. The program organises trips across Australia to reconnect children to family, community, culture and their traditional lands.

• As part of VACCA’s continuous quality improvement, the Residential Care program was subject to review, which recommended ways of enhancing the operation of the program. We have implemented many of the recommendations and will be ensuring residential care is a key focus for the next year.

• Funding of residential services is a significant issue across Victoria. As part of a coalition of residential services seeking more appropriate funding, VACCA has been involved in a costing exercise that shows significant additional funding is required to sustain good quality care in the future.

• Entering a partnership with Berry Street which will enable VACCA to continue to case manage a sibling group of one whom is in Berry Street’s care. Both agencies see this partnership as a means of enhancing expertise and sharing resources in working with very vulnerable children.

• Preventing this year’s all-staff in-service residential care staff demonstrated the complexity of their work and their commitment to improved outcomes for the children in residential care.


Connecting to Sea Country project

What I learnt is to respect the land and the baang (water); to think about the barerreng (Country) warreeny (ocean); to look after our bubup (children).

Maria, 15

I learned the importance of sharing stories. If they aren’t shared they’ll be lost forever!

Latisha, 12

What I learnt is to respect the land and the baang (water); to think about the barerreng (Country) warreeny (ocean); to look after our bubup (children).

Maria, 15

I learned the importance of sharing stories. If they aren’t shared they’ll be lost forever!

Latisha, 12

COMMUNITY CARE
Aboriginal children and young people belong to one of the oldest living cultures in the world. They have the right to their Aboriginal identity and to be valued and respected. Aboriginal children and young people have the right to participate in their culture, express their identity and feel proud.
The Kinship Care program is based on our strong belief that keeping Aboriginal children connected to their Aboriginal family and culture is critical to their health and wellbeing.

Our greatest achievement this year has been reuniting children and sibling groups with their Aboriginal families and community: a 12 year old having increased access with her mother and siblings; six children having regular sibling and parental access; another six children having established sibling access; five children having reconnected and access with their mum and siblings; four children being permanently placed with their Aboriginal family members. The commitment of Kinship Care staff to achieving these outcomes is outstanding.

Highlights and achievements

• Supporting the reunification of children back to their parents as part of a process of family healing.

• Four of our young people proudly represented their views to the National Children’s Commissioner.

• One kinship child attended an overseas trip with his carer – an amazing experience and a success for the child. Kinship staff later nominated the carer for an Aboriginal Kinship Carer’s award.

• Kinship kids attended cultural events, such as AFL Dreamtime and NAIDOC week events, and one particular child will participate in a traditional dance performance at VACCA’s upcoming Wominjeka festival.

• Participating in a statewide evaluation of the Aboriginal Kinship Care model to obtain evidence to support our request to extend funding for key service components beyond June 2014.

• The Kinship Care team leader and program manager’s strong role in the ongoing development of the Guardianship Project, with some kinship children now being case-managed by the Guardianship Team.

• Hosting a recent Aboriginal carers gathering where a new online resource called ‘Supporting Carers’ was launched to great response from Kinship Care- and mainstream kinship carers.

• The wonderful, creative work to strengthen the relationship between six siblings in four different placements will be recognised in upcoming DHS publication ‘Good Practice: a statewide snapshot’. The article will also acknowledge the good collaborative work between the Kinship Care and the NW Community Care programs.

• Lastly, we congratulate Kinship Team Leader Lace Corpyhey who we sponsored on her walk from Sydney to Melbourne to raise funds for cancer research – ‘A Million Steps for a Cure’.

At VACCA we believe the key for young people to have a strong future is to have a strong culture, to know where they come from, who they are and to be proud to say that they are Aboriginal.

Our cultural programs provide opportunities for Aboriginal children and young people to connect with Elders, musicians and artists from the community so they can learn about and actively contribute to their own culture in ways that are relevant and meaningful to them.

Our cultural programs aim to:

• Strengthen young people’s experience, understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal culture.

• Build respectful relationships with local Aboriginal Elders and artists who become positive role models, and mentors to the young participants.

• Support young Aboriginal people to participate in, and contribute to the maintenance and revival of, Victorian Aboriginal cultural practices and arts.

At VACCA we believe the key for young people to have a strong future is to have a strong culture, to know where they come from, who they are and to be proud to say that they are Aboriginal.

Our cultural programs provide opportunities for Aboriginal children and young people to connect with Elders, musicians and artists from the community so they can learn about and actively contribute to their own culture in ways that are relevant and meaningful to them.

Our cultural programs aim to:

• Strengthen young people’s experience, understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal culture.

• Build respectful relationships with local Aboriginal Elders and artists who become positive role models, and mentors to the young participants.

• Support young Aboriginal people to participate in, and contribute to the maintenance and revival of, Victorian Aboriginal cultural practices and arts.

Teachers at Victorian College for the Deaf consistently praise Tegan for her eagerness to learn, and to understand new ideas – she loves to read. Recently Tegan led her class through a lesson about the Dreamtime, recounting her experiences participating in the possum-skin cloak workshop run by VACCA and a cultural dance at Eastland shopping centre with the Mullum Mullum Centre. She was nominated to attend an interstate deaf athletics competition, and is entering an AusLAN competition where she is signing a dreamtime story. Tegan is a real inspiration and a kind-hearted, proud young Aboriginal woman who always gives new challenges a red-hot go.

At VACCA we believe the key for young people to have a strong future is to have a strong culture, to know where they come from, who they are and to be proud to say that they are Aboriginal.

Our cultural programs provide opportunities for Aboriginal children and young people to connect with Elders, musicians and artists from the community so they can learn about and actively contribute to their own culture in ways that are relevant and meaningful to them.

Our cultural programs aim to:

• Strengthen young people’s experience, understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal culture.

• Build respectful relationships with local Aboriginal Elders and artists who become positive role models, and mentors to the young participants.

• Support young Aboriginal people to participate in, and contribute to the maintenance and revival of, Victorian Aboriginal cultural practices and arts.

Teachers at Victorian College for the Deaf consistently praise Tegan for her eagerness to learn, and to understand new ideas – she loves to read. Recently Tegan led her class through a lesson about the Dreamtime, recounting her experiences participating in the possum-skin cloak workshop run by VACCA and a cultural dance at Eastland shopping centre with the Mullum Mullum Centre. She was nominated to attend an interstate deaf athletics competition, and is entering an AusLAN competition where she is signing a dreamtime story. Tegan is a real inspiration and a kind-hearted, proud young Aboriginal woman who always gives new challenges a red-hot go.

Teachers at Victorian College for the Deaf consistently praise Tegan for her eagerness to learn, and to understand new ideas – she loves to read. Recently Tegan led her class through a lesson about the Dreamtime, recounting her experiences participating in the possum-skin cloak workshop run by VACCA and a cultural dance at Eastland shopping centre with the Mullum Mullum Centre. She was nominated to attend an interstate deaf athletics competition, and is entering an AusLAN competition where she is signing a dreamtime story. Tegan is a real inspiration and a kind-hearted, proud young Aboriginal woman who always gives new challenges a red-hot go.

Teachers at Victorian College for the Deaf consistently praise Tegan for her eagerness to learn, and to understand new ideas – she loves to read. Recently Tegan led her class through a lesson about the Dreamtime, recounting her experiences participating in the possum-skin cloak workshop run by VACCA and a cultural dance at Eastland shopping centre with the Mullum Mullum Centre. She was nominated to attend an interstate deaf athletics competition, and is entering an AusLAN competition where she is signing a dreamtime story. Tegan is a real inspiration and a kind-hearted, proud young Aboriginal woman who always gives new challenges a red-hot go.
We are grateful for the assistance and support of the following:

Funders

Philanthropic
- ANZ Trustees
- Flora and Frank Leith Trust
- Inner North Community Foundation
- John T Reid Charitable Trusts
- Kimberley Foundation
- Kmart, Traralgon
- Lions Club, Traralgon
- Rotary Club, Drouin
- Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation
- Neighbourhood Foundation
- Philip Connor Memorial Trust
- R. E. Ross Trust
- Soroptimists International (Gippsland)
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation

Government
- Victorian Department of Human Services
- Victorian Department of Justice through the Koori Justice Unit

Corporate
- Victorian Department of Health through Closing the Health Gap
- Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing
- Australian Government through its Indigenous Cultural Support Program
- Australian Government through the Australian Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body
- Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations
- Melbourne City Council

We are also grateful to our corporate funders and supporters through corporate giving:

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

Partners
- Aborigines Advancement League
- Anglicare
- Berry Street including Take Two
- Berunjalu Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum
- Child FIRST partners
- Jesuit Social Services
- La Trobe University
- Mackillop Family Services
- Queen Elizabeth Centre
- Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
- Songlines Aboriginal Music
- Uniting Care - Kildomain - Gippsland - Connections
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Service - Association Limited
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Westcare

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 help make a positive difference to the lives of the Aboriginal children, young people and families 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: supportus@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 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Income</td>
<td>$18,304,851</td>
<td>$15,943,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>$18,704,352</td>
<td>$15,761,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of VACCA</td>
<td>$(399,501)</td>
<td>$(181,888)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above statements only provide a summary of the financial performance and position for the financial year ended 30 June 2013. For more detailed statements see the Annual Financial Report for the Year Ended 30th June 2012, please contact VACCA on vacca@vacca.org.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Current Assets</td>
<td>$8,243,452</td>
<td>$8,970,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-Current Assets</td>
<td>$1,165,527</td>
<td>$1,001,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Assets</td>
<td>$9,408,979</td>
<td>$9,972,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Current Liabilities</td>
<td>$3,456,399</td>
<td>$3,361,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Non-Current Liabilities</td>
<td>$605,854</td>
<td>$864,481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Liabilities</td>
<td>$4,062,253</td>
<td>$4,225,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Equity</td>
<td>$5,346,726</td>
<td>$5,746,212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aboriginal children and young people have the right to the best possible education, which means going to a school that meets their needs and helps them to reach their full potential. They should have every opportunity to achieve their dreams and grow up strong, smart and deadly.
Aboriginal children have the right to be heard, to be nurtured and safe, and be free from violence, abuse and neglect. As a right, safety is not restricted to being free from physical or environmental harm. Our children also have a right to cultural safety: to freely practice their culture, to have it respected, and to live without racism or discrimination.