



# Response to Victims of Crime Commissioner's Reporting on Compliance with the Victims Charter Discussion Paper

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

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VACCA

PO Box 494, Northcote Plaza

Northcote

Victoria, 3070

Email: [vacca@vacca.org](mailto:vacca@vacca.org)



## **Introduction**

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is the lead Aboriginal child welfare organisation and the largest provider of Aboriginal family violence services in Victoria. We work holistically with women, men, young people and children affected by family violence, providing support in prevention, early intervention, intervention and crisis family violence programs.

VACCA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on Victims of Crime Commissioner's Reporting on Compliance with the Victims Charter Discussion Paper.

VACCA's feedback is based on our unique position as a Victorian ACCO providing a suite of services across the state supporting children, young people, families and community members. We have protected and promoted the rights of Aboriginal children and families for over 40 years. VACCA believes that all children have a right to feel and be safe and live in an environment that is free from abuse, neglect and violence. We are committed to promoting and upholding the rights of Aboriginal children to maintain and celebrate their identity and culture, recognising that connection to culture is critical for children's emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing. VACCA is the largest provider of family violence programs in Victoria, and it is within this service provision where we understand our compliance requirements will sit for the Victim's Charter. VACCA already complies with the QIC Health and Community Services Standards, the Human Services Standards (DFFH) and the Rainbow Tick Inclusive Standards.

## **Feedback**

Given the Commissioners commitment to "a regulatory framework that prioritises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples...who have been adversely affected by crime" we wish make the following statements:

1. VACCA is committed to supporting children, young people, families and community members affected by crime. This Charter needs to enshrine in its objectives the commitment to Aboriginal self-determination, and protecting, promoting and learning from the voices of Aboriginal peoples.
2. VACCA is still determining what the reporting requirements will be for each of our Family Violence programs. While we understand that the Office of the Commissioner is still undertaking work to determine which agencies fit into the different categories of agencies in the VOCC regulations, we believe there needs to be greater consultation now so that agencies can prepare, plan and inform our staff of these new reporting and compliance requirements and the role of the Charter itself.
3. Where possible the use of existing reporting obligations would help to manage the resource requirements to meet our compliance and regulatory requirements.
4. In relation to non-compliance at this early stage of the introduction of this new Charter we would encourage their Commissioner to consider a transparent and accountable model where support is provided to services who are found to be non-compliant rather than penalising them.
5. VACCA contends that the language of the Charter needs to be reviewed. In our work supporting children, young people and adults affected by, or using violence in the home we have moved away from the restrictive binary of the terms victim and perpetrator. As the largest provider of family violence programs in the state, we appreciate the complexity and nuance in this sector and strongly believe that needs to be appropriately reflected in the



Charter itself. Those affected by family violence, particularly children and young people may not only be a victim of but also use violence in the home.

- a. VACCA strongly believes that adolescents who are using violence in the home should be considered differently to adults. Young people who are violent are quite often treated/labelled as perpetrators, yet they are still children. These young people are not only behaving violently but also themselves have history of experiencing family violence, so they are victims too. Current approaches are not culturally appropriate.
  - b. We know that the majority of Aboriginal young people involved in youth justice have experienced family violence, and a high percentage used violence and but there was limited to no family violence lens used when working with them and the focus was always on recidivism rather than addressing trauma. We have developed culturally safe and trauma informed services that work within a healing model to support children, young people and families.
6. VACCA is establishing a systems integration system with dedicated resources at each office, with a central coordination and reporting function that will streamline our compliance and reporting requirements. To adequately plan and fund this function effectively we seek that the Commissioner provide as much information on the compliance and reporting requirements as soon as possible so that we can factor that into the systems integration system and our budget projections.
  7. VACCA's Quality Management Team oversees our quality assurance compliance, organisational policies as well as [feedback and complaints](#).
    - a. VACCA's Quality Management Team is making enquiries about what this new Charter means from a quality perspective, we would welcome further discussion and engagement.
  8. VACCA notes the recent announcement of the Yoo-rrook Truth and Justice Commission, we encourage the Victims of Crime Commissioner to follow the work of this Commission, and incorporate any key learnings. This Charter must recognise the impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, Stolen Generations and experiences of family violence on both victims of family violence as well as on those who use violence.

## Recommendations

VACCA makes the following recommendations for the commissioner to consider in relation to the Victims of Crime Charter:

1. That the principle of Aboriginal self-determination is included in the Charter's objectives.
2. That adequate resources are provided to ACCOs to ensure that we can meet these new compliance requirements effectively and efficiently.
3. That the use of language in the Charter is reviewed and further consultation is undertaken, particularly with the Aboriginal community and service providers to ensure this Charter is culturally safe and relevant for Aboriginal people affected by crime.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations and work together to ensure that this adherence to, compliance with and promotion of the Victims of Crime Charter is a success.

For more information, please get in touch with Sarah Gafforini, Director, Office of the CEO on [sarahg@vacca.org](mailto:sarahg@vacca.org).