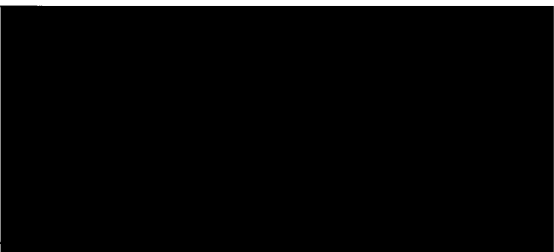


**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION
INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

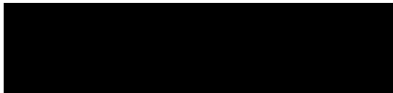
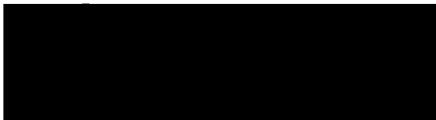
ATTACHMENT AS-2 TO STATEMENT OF ANGELA MAREE SINGH

Date of document: 16 July 2015
Filed on behalf of: State of Victoria
Prepared by:
Victorian Government Solicitor's Office
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This is the attachment marked '**AS-2**' produced and shown to **ANGELA MAREE SINGH** at the time of signing her Statement on 16 July 2015.

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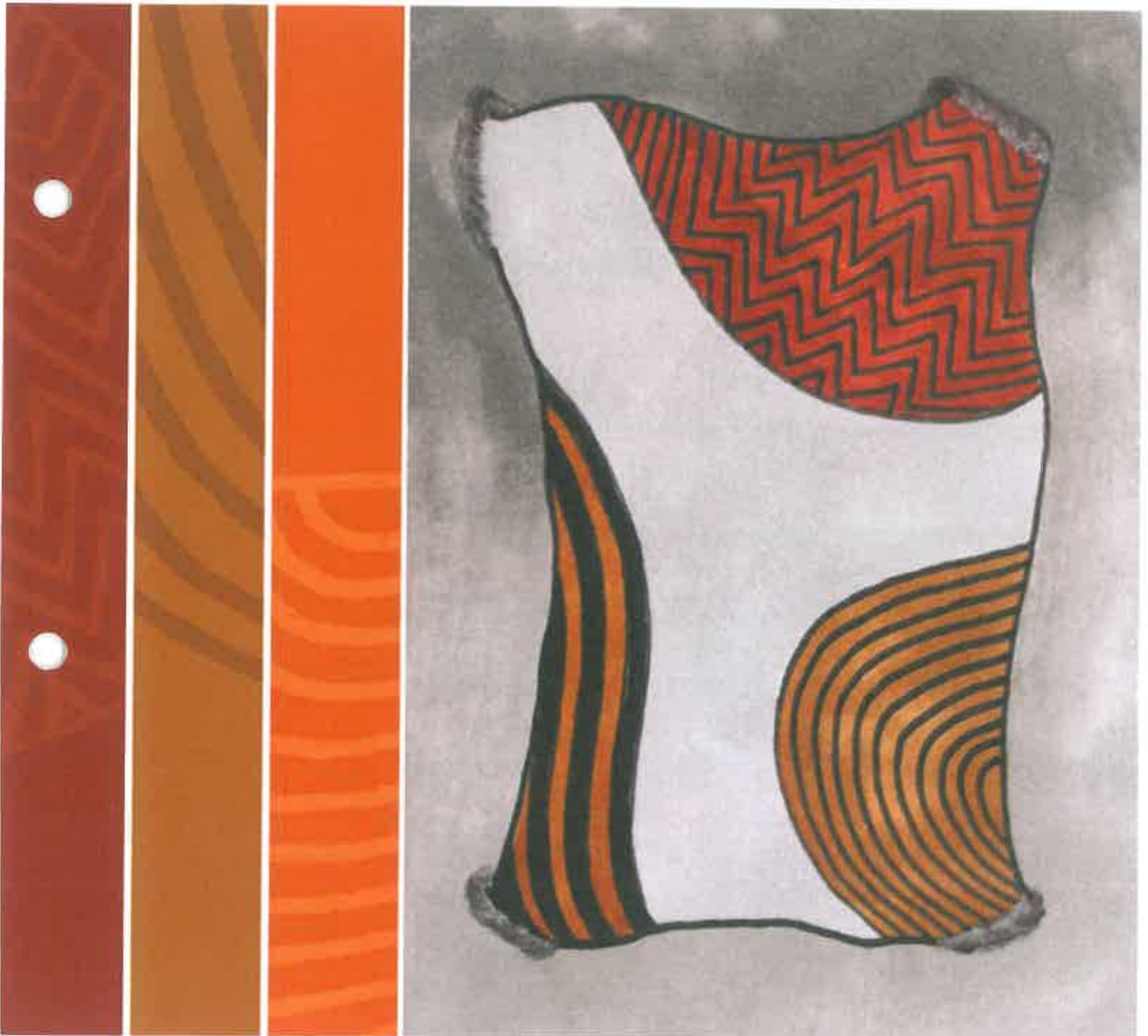


**An Australian Legal Practitioner within
the meaning of the Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria)**

Attachment AS-2

Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2013-2018

Building for the future: a plan for 'Closing the Gap' in Victoria by 2031



Acknowledgements

Many Aboriginal people have contributed to discussions in the development of this Framework and its directions and priorities. The engagement provided input and an opportunity to discuss ideas and share information, while building a stronger appreciation of Government's role and Aboriginal community aspiration to strengthen outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

Artwork by Mick Harding

The artwork in this Framework is part of a larger piece by Mick Harding depicting Aboriginal participation and development in the Victorian economy.



Dhumba-dji-ngan bada-k munga-na

"We must talk together.
We should write something.
And then we should work towards mending and making our presence in
this economy that has cultural integrity.
We are responsible."

"We have always lived in this environment that is called Victoria today.
The greens of our forests, the browns of the dryer areas in the north,
and the blues to represent all the inland and coastal waterways.
The stone tools, possum skin, the netting, and the traditional designs
are evidence of our past economy."

Throughout this document the term "Aboriginal" is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Use of the terms "Koori", "Koorie" and "Indigenous" are retained in the names of programs and initiatives, and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Message from the Premier



I am very pleased to introduce the Victorian Government's revised *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework* (VAAF).

The VAAF acknowledges the strength and resilience of Aboriginal Victorians and provides the foundation to help realise their social, cultural and economic aspirations.

The VAAF is the result of extensive consultation with Aboriginal Victorians and represents a clear framework for working together to close the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage. The Victorian Government recognises that closing the gap requires a long-term commitment to achieve generational change and that Victoria is well placed to significantly improve the living standards and life expectations of Aboriginal Victorians. Building on the strengths of Aboriginal Victorians will help develop strong social, cultural and economic foundations for current and future generations.

The Victorian Government is committed to providing Aboriginal children with a sound basis for achieving economic prosperity, including through early childhood services and education, as well as responsive health services and support for strengthening Aboriginal culture.

The VAAF builds on the four guiding principles for Aboriginal Affairs I announced in March 2011 when signing the bipartisan recommitment to closing the gap, with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon Jeanette Powell MP, the Deputy Premier the Hon Peter Ryan MP, and our Opposition counterparts.

These four principles – aspirations, accountability, engagement and inclusiveness, and a whole of community approach – are embodied in this revised and strengthened framework.

The VAAF provides the basis for our annual report card, the *Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report*, which will be tabled in Parliament early each year.

Embracing transparency and accountability, this report will demonstrate the Government's progress towards the published targets in the six Strategic Action Areas identified in the VAAF.

The VAAF sets out our commitment to engage with Aboriginal Victorians. It also provides the overarching framework for inclusion plans, which document how we will improve access for Aboriginal people across all areas of government.

Government, Aboriginal people and organisations, service providers, and the private, philanthropic and community sectors all have a role to play in closing the gap. By working together, our resources and expertise can be harnessed most effectively in the best interests of all Aboriginal Victorians.

Ted Baillieu
Premier of Victoria

Message from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



I am proud to present the Victorian Government's newly strengthened *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework* (VAAF). This framework provides the platform and opportunity to bring together the efforts and commitment of all sectors of the Victorian community to create a better future for Victoria's young and growing Aboriginal population.

This VAAF has been guided by the strengths and aspirations of Victoria's diverse, vibrant, strong and proud Aboriginal community. I am grateful to the many people and organisations who have contributed to the development of this VAAF.

As a result, it gives clear direction to delivering Victoria's bipartisan commitment to closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians.

The VAAF has some key differences from the previous framework (formerly known as VIAF). Through consultation and consensus – and consistent with the national approach taken by COAG – we have streamlined the number of indicators and targets to focus on the key outcomes required to close the gap.

Commitments to improve education, economic and health outcomes continue, while for the first time Victoria will have close the gap targets in key justice areas. New measures include access to housing and disability services.

Our targets in the six Strategic Action Areas are measurable and achievable. We intend to report annually on progress against these targets by tabling the *Victorian Government Aboriginal Affairs Report* in Parliament.

Significantly, this VAAF recognises and values Aboriginal culture, provides refreshed engagement arrangements and commits to stronger governance, performance and reporting arrangements. It also identifies clear priorities for improved effort and reform in economic development, protecting and supporting vulnerable children and families and ensuring that our service systems are accessible and inclusive.

Aboriginal economic participation and development is central to this new approach because every Victorian should have the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations and reach their full potential. Having a job and a place in the economy builds self esteem, economic independence, positive role models and contributes to Victoria's overall competitive advantage.

While closing the gap is a long term commitment, I am confident that partnerships and investments in early childhood, education and training, and jobs and businesses will have long term benefits for all Aboriginal Victorians.

Jeanette Powell MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



1. A new approach to the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework

The *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF) 2013-2018* has been developed following a commitment by the Premier Ted Baillieu, on Close the Gap Day on 24 March 2011, to strengthen the former *Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework* and give greater focus to those areas where Government performance can be improved.

An overarching Framework for Aboriginal affairs has been in place in Victoria since 2006, to drive a strategic reform agenda. The VAAF builds on previous bipartisan approaches and reinforces the commitment to sustained and strategic effort to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal Victorians.

VAAF 2013-2018:

- Builds on the strengths of Aboriginal people and the role of Aboriginal culture in building resilience and prosperity
- Takes a holistic life course approach that recognises that positive experiences early in life lead to more economically independent and resilient people in their adult years
- Commits to stronger outcomes through focussed and integrated Strategic Action Areas, with headline indicators, achievable targets and measures of progress
- Gives focus to reform priorities for improved Government effort, particularly to support the strengthening of Aboriginal culture, building economic participation and prosperity, and improving service systems to deliver, including services that support and protect vulnerable children and families
- Outlines new engagement arrangements between Government and Aboriginal Victorians through Ministerial roundtables and sub-regional forums

- Establishes clear governance and accountability for whole of government outcomes, supported by a rigorous performance management and reporting architecture for Aboriginal affairs.

The Government's approach to Aboriginal affairs will be guided by four principles outlined by the Premier in his speech in Parliament in March 2011 (refer to Box 1).

As the framework for driving policy, service system and programmatic responses across government, the VAAF:

- enables existing and future government investment to be directed to those areas where there are significant positive benefits to a person, communities and more broadly to the economy
- drives change so that services provided or funded by governments meet the needs of users
- provides for disadvantage to be addressed, without losing sight of the ultimate goal of realising strong cultural, social and economic outcomes for all Aboriginal Victorians
- provides the mechanism for integrated action across government.



Box 1: The guiding principles for Aboriginal Affairs

Aspirations

All Victorians should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. The Government is committed to closing the gap in health, education and housing outcomes, which underpin the ability and capacity of Aboriginal Victorians to build a better future.

Accountability

Both the Government and funded organisations must be accountable for delivering services that meet the needs of communities. Good policy and program delivery must be based on evidence, and outcomes must be reported.

Engagement and Inclusiveness

Closing the gap can only be achieved through a partnership built on genuine engagement with Aboriginal people and organisations across Victoria. The Government recognises that it is important to listen to both local community voices and the views of Aboriginal organisations and their representative bodies.

Partnership building and a whole of community approach

A renewed commitment for all sectors – government, community, business and philanthropic – to work together in partnership, so that resources and expertise can be most effectively harnessed.

2. Acknowledging the past and the journey ahead



Aboriginal people have a deep and continuous connection to the place now called Victoria. It is estimated that when Europeans first arrived some 200 years ago, Aboriginal nations across Victoria sustained more than 60,000 people. These societies were characterised by a complex array of laws, languages, traditions, spiritual beliefs and cultural ties.

Aboriginal people have remained strong and resilient despite the impacts of past practices and policies, including the removal of traditional groups from country, relocation to missions, and being prevented from speaking their languages and passing on their spiritual and cultural beliefs. A higher proportion of Aboriginal people in Victoria have been directly affected by the Stolen Generations than any other state or territory.

Aboriginal people, communities and organisations continue to address the intergenerational impacts of this history, and many also play an active role in maintaining and strengthening their culture and ensuring their issues are heard and acknowledged.

On 17 September 1997, the then Premier of Victoria, the Hon Jeff Kennett, moved a Parliamentary motion that included:

"That this House apologises to the Aboriginal people on behalf of all Victorians for the past policies under which Aboriginal children were removed from their families and expresses deep regret at the hurt and distress this has caused and reaffirms its support for reconciliation between all Australians."

Further, in his address the then Premier stated: *"The Victorian Government is committed to working with Aboriginal communities to deliver programs to address their undoubted disadvantage but, more importantly, this government is committed to assisting Aboriginal communities to become economically sustainable and reach a point where they are no longer overwhelmingly dependent on government support. To achieve this Aboriginal people need to feel confident that their unique place in this society is both understood and appreciated."*

The Apology in the Victorian Parliament in 1997 was the beginning of a process that has been built upon by successive governments.

This Framework recognises that the key to improving the lives of Victorian Aboriginal people is to build partnerships, trust, mutual respect and focus on areas that will foster strong cultural, social and economic outcomes. It builds upon the efforts of Aboriginal Victorians and of former Governments.

It looks to achieving tangible results in the key areas of health, justice, education, employment, business and cultural acknowledgement and recognition. Importantly, this Framework represents a firm commitment that the Victorian Government will work with Aboriginal communities to improve the quality of life of all Aboriginal Victorians and bring about a shared and economically independent future.

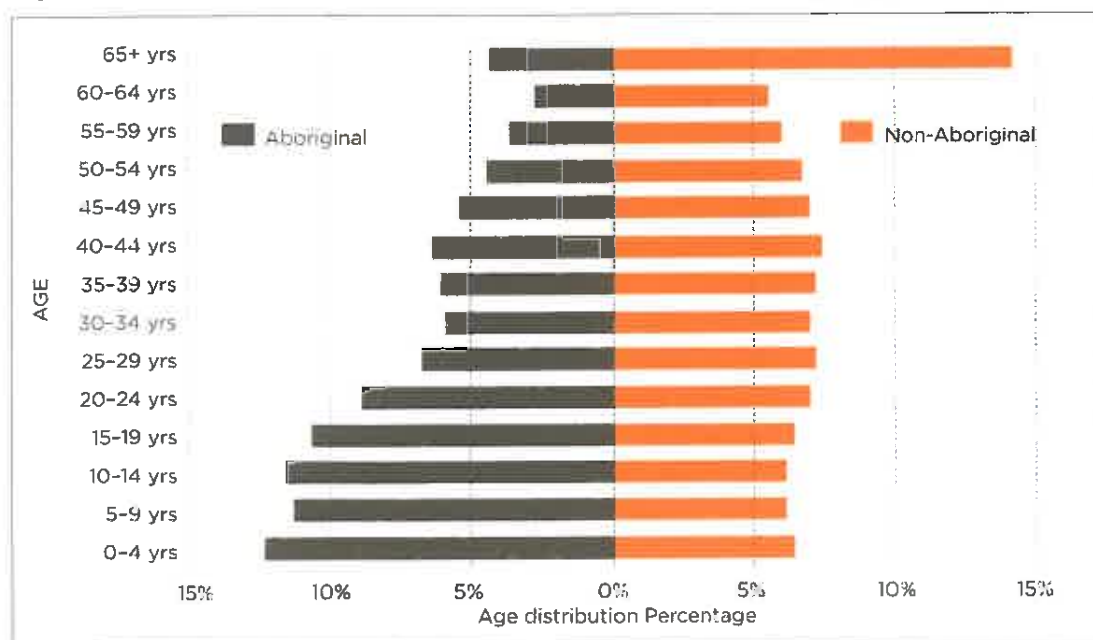
The journey ahead is a long one. Nationally all Governments recognise it will take a generation to close the gap in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. The next six years is a crucial leg of that journey in Victoria.

The outlook for change is positive. Victoria's Aboriginal population is young, growing and has many vibrant leaders and strong Aboriginal organisations and service delivery bodies. The recent Census reported that in 2011, there were 47,327 Aboriginal people living in Victoria (or 0.9 per cent of the total population). This is an increase of over 13,800 people from the 2006 Census and can be explained by high birth rates, migration to Victoria and higher rates of identification. The increase translates to an annual growth in population of 5.8 per cent. In contrast, annual growth by Victoria's non-Aboriginal population was 1.4 per cent over the same period. If these levels of growth continue, the Aboriginal population in Victoria is projected to rise to over 80,000 people by 2021.

As of 2011 the median ages for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians were 22 and 37 respectively. According to the 2011 Census, 55 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians were under the age of 25 years, compared to 32 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population. Just 4.35 per cent of Aboriginal Victorians are 65 years and over compared to 14.2 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.

The difference in age profiles can be seen in Figure 1. This highlights the need for policies and priorities to include a focus on the significant youth demographic and the opportunities and challenges this brings.

Figure 1: Proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people by age group, Victoria, 2011



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing 2011

3. Holistic life course approach for Aboriginal affairs



VAAF 2013-2018 is founded on a holistic life course approach that:

- recognises the important role that supporting foundations play in influencing a person's life, including family, community, opportunities, place (home and connection to country), as well as access to all services
- links government services to points of 'success' in people's lives at key stages, so investments are properly framed, pressure points in the system can be identified and specific goals set that, if achieved, can positively influence a person's life outcomes
- acknowledges the empowerment and pride that comes with Aboriginal culture, knowledge and respect, and the important role these play on a person's outlook, resilience and aspirations.

This holistic life course approach appears in Figure 2.

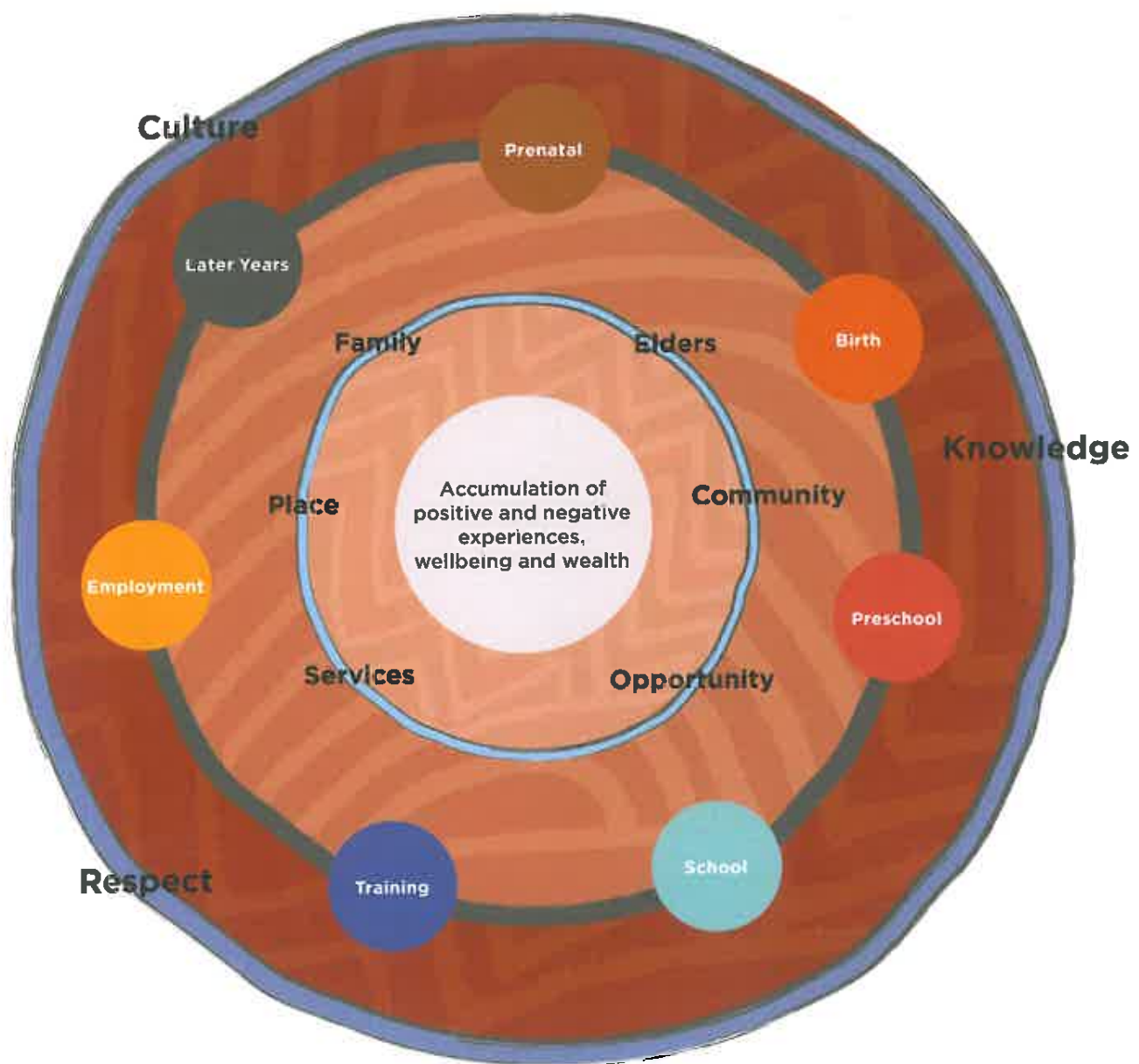
Effective Investments

The life course approach has been developed drawing on evidence which shows that the more positive experiences and opportunities that a young person has in the early years of their life and through schooling, the more resilient and successful they will be in the adult years, and the more they will achieve their potential and be able to fully participate in society.

Evidence also shows that effective investments in the early years and on preventative actions can be less expensive and have a lifelong positive impact; whereas expenditure treating symptoms can cost much more and have a lower rate of success in improving a person's life outcomes.



Figure 2: The Life Course Approach to the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework



4. Stronger outcomes and focussed Strategic Action Areas

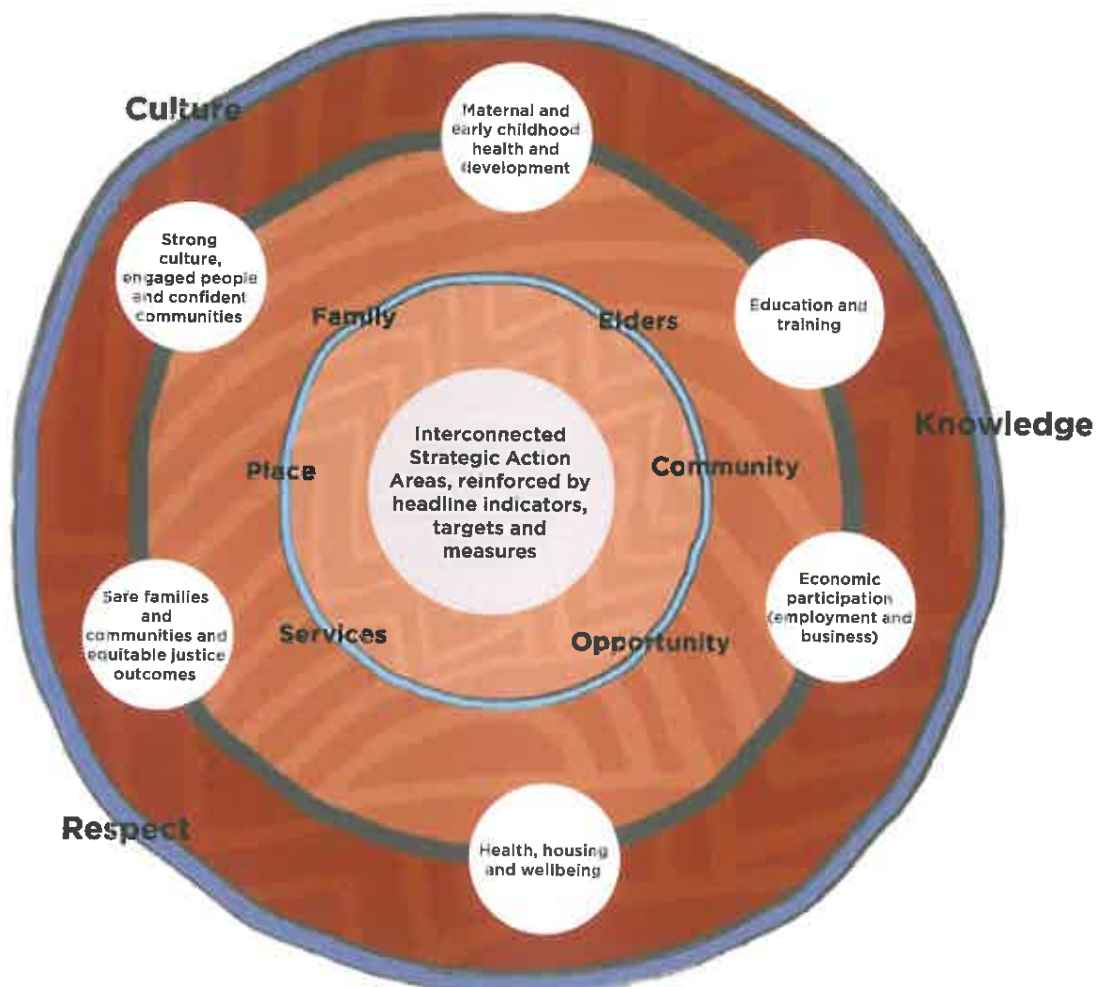


VAAF 2013-2018 is focussed on improving the life expectancy, wellbeing, economic prosperity and quality of life of Aboriginal Victorians. It gives focus to six Strategic Action Areas that:

- are interconnected and directly link to the VAAF's holistic life course approach
- are fundamental to closing the gap and creating the right environments for Aboriginal people to feel valued and safe and to build prosperity for themselves, their families and community
- focus Government effort and guide reform directions and future investment
- set new platforms in Aboriginal affairs and enable joined up responses.

The Strategic Action Areas are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: The VAAF - A commitment to integrated action and outcomes



The Government will focus on six Strategic Action Areas (SAAs) to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians:

SAA 1: Maternal and early childhood health and development

The health of mothers and babies during pregnancy and in early childhood can have a significant and far reaching effect on children's survival, development and wellbeing well into adult years.

SAA 2: Education and training

Successful education and training outcomes enable more Aboriginal Victorians to have increased choice, economic opportunity and healthier and more prosperous lives.

SAA 3: Economic participation

More opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians to secure jobs or operate business enterprises builds self esteem, economic wealth, positive role models and contributes to Victoria's economy.

SAA 4: Health, housing and wellbeing

A healthy start to life, with access to stable housing and accessible health services, are important for improving a person's health outcomes and overall quality of life in later years.

SAA 5: Safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes

Reducing Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and providing for safer families and communities are essential platforms for enabling all Aboriginal Victorians to achieve their cultural, economic and social aspirations.

SAA 6: Strong culture, engaged people and confident communities

Stronger appreciation and awareness of Aboriginal culture can foster confidence and resilience, as well as connections and respect across the Victorian community.

For each Strategic Action Area the Government is committing to headline indicators. Wherever possible, indicators focus on achievable outcomes, as it is important that resources and effort are well directed and accountable.

Through *VAAF 2013-2013* the Government is committing to 12 headline indicators. This represents a move away from having dozens of indicators, which was the approach in previous Aboriginal affairs frameworks. This shift enables more attention to be given to priority outcomes, rather than programmatic inputs. It also enables a focus on ensuring service systems and investments are working.

The *VAAF* also commits to stronger and achievable targets for each headline indicator. While year to year fluctuations may occur, sustained and targeted effort will focus on achieving improvements over a generation (20-25 years). New measures for housing, disability, employment, health, youth justice and cultural strengthening, ensure consistency with a holistic life course approach.

The Appendix to this Framework provides details on the headline indicators, targets and other measures within each Strategic Action Area. Oversight and reporting arrangements are described in Section 7 on Stronger Accountability.

5. Valuing and supporting the cultural strengths of Aboriginal Victorians

For Aboriginal people, culture is seen as a foundation upon which everything else is built. Culture underpins all aspects of life, and can be thought of as connections to family, extended family and community, connection to country, expression of values, practices and belief, and the many traditional and contemporary forms of cultural expression including language and storytelling, dance, music and art.

Strong cultural identity and connection is increasingly being linked to better outcomes in education, justice, health and wellbeing, and employment, as well as being a positive point of difference for economic activity. Being strong in culture builds the resilience, skills, participation and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, and is especially vital to young people, who make up a significant and growing part of the Aboriginal community.

Elders, Aboriginal families, communities and organisations play central roles in building the awareness, understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture throughout the community and in the protection and management of Aboriginal cultural material.

During consultations on strengthening this Framework, Aboriginal people and organisations expressed ways that the Government could support the efforts of Aboriginal communities to strengthen Aboriginal culture as part of VAAF 2013–2018. Three main themes were identified, which the Government will focus on:

1. An agenda of respect and recognition of Aboriginal culture

Whole of Government guiding principles have been adopted to inform the Government's approach to supporting respect for and recognition of culture (see Box 2).

Box 2: Guiding Principles for Government in Strengthening Aboriginal Culture

The Victorian Government

- acknowledges, respects and values Aboriginal cultures – Aboriginal culture enriches the whole community
- acknowledges the right of Aboriginal people to maintain their identity and culture
- recognises that strong cultural identity is fundamental to the well being of Aboriginal people and has lifetime impacts – supporting Aboriginal culture is an investment in the future of all Victorians
- recognises that while imparting culture is fundamentally the responsibilities of families and communities, Government also has a role in enabling and supporting communities in the continuance and strengthening of their cultures.

2. Promoting an awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture to the broader community

A strong and healthy Aboriginal culture is something all Victorians can enjoy and be enriched by. There is beauty and complexity in the histories, stories, connection to land and creative forms of cultural expression, both traditional and contemporary.

The Government is committed to strong leadership around a message of valuing and respecting Victorian Aboriginal culture. It is also committed to working with Aboriginal people to build a better understanding and appreciation of Victoria's rich Aboriginal heritage.

A deeper understanding of Aboriginal culture is also an important way of reducing and mitigating against the impact of racism that may be experienced by Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people who are valued and feel included will be more likely to access opportunities, achieve their potential and be able to fully participate in society.

The Government is committed to recognising and supporting the achievements of Aboriginal people and their ongoing contributions. Approaches for this include:

- recognition through the Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll, as well as state-wide and locally based awards and scholarships, such as the Ricci Marks Award for young Aboriginal achievers
- supporting the delivery of cultural strengthening activities as part of the work of bodies such as Reconciliation Victoria, Local Indigenous Networks, the Koorie Heritage Trust and other Aboriginal organisations
- recognising Aboriginal connection to places, including through naming, interpretive material and architectural design of buildings and landscapes, with the Office of the Victorian Government Architect able to play an important leadership role in this area
- enhancing economic activities that are connected to Aboriginal culture, such as Aboriginal tourism, heritage management, land management practices and creative cultural activities such as music, film, theatre and art.

3. Supporting the community to hold cultural gatherings

Cultural gatherings offer an opportunity for people to participate in the continuance of their cultural practices, the revival of old traditions and development of new, vibrant activities. They also provide for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to come together and develop stronger connections. When people connect with one another, across the generations, it enhances wellbeing and social inclusion, and transfers cultural knowledge.

The Government will continue to support Local Indigenous Networks (LINs), local gathering places and local and statewide cultural events and activities that celebrate Victoria's Aboriginal culture. For example, NAIDOC week and the Indigenous Remembrance Service at the Shrine. Other opportunities will also be explored.

6. Priorities for improved effort and reform



Building Prosperity through Economic Participation

Aboriginal economic participation and development is central to the Victorian Government's approach because every Victorian should have the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations and reach their full potential. Having a job and a place in the economy builds self esteem, economic independence, positive role models and contributes to Victoria's overall competitive advantage.

Central to *VAAF 2013-2018* is building aspirations and growing economic participation.

Many Aboriginal people and organisations make a valuable contribution to the economy as employees, business owners and managers, and volunteers across a broad range of industries such as media, sport, law and health.

In 2011, 12,000 Aboriginal people were employed in a range of sectors across the State. More Aboriginal young people are completing Year 12 and participating in vocational education and training, as well as higher education. Current data also shows that the rate of participation in the labour force by Aboriginal women is as strong as for non-Aboriginal women. Likewise the increasing number of Aboriginal people in the public service is positive. Further, there are more than 700 Aboriginal owner-managers of enterprises in Victoria.

Victoria is well placed to boost economic outcomes for Aboriginal people within a generation because we have a strong economy, an Aboriginal population that is relatively young and growing, and a strong commitment and drive by the Aboriginal community, Government and the private and philanthropic sectors.

Building on existing strengths, a Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy will be developed that will focus on:

- Building stronger foundations through education and aspirations for success in jobs and business throughout life
- Fostering a climate that builds job opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people across the economy
- Supporting existing employees to move into higher level jobs
- Growing the number and scale of sustainable Aboriginal businesses
- Partnerships with the business, investment and philanthropic sectors, while better aligning the efforts of the Commonwealth and local governments.

The Strategy will build on work to date including *Moonda Wurrin Gree*, the 2010 report of the Victorian Aboriginal Economic Development Group and outcomes of the Victorian Aboriginal Economic Development Summit hosted jointly by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments in July 2012.

The Victorian Government will actively seek to partner with the Commonwealth Government in delivering this priority. This includes better access to employment services, financial assistance to purchase housing and land, and invest in business opportunities. Our approach will build on National Partnership Agreements in this area and the Commonwealth's *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2011-2018*.

Protecting and Supporting Vulnerable Children and Families

The final *Report of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry*, released in February 2012, found that "outcomes for vulnerable Aboriginal children and their families are generally poor and significant improvement is required in the performance of systems intended to support vulnerable Aboriginal children and families". The Report signalled the important role that the VAAF could play in responding to the needs of vulnerable Aboriginal children and their families.

In May 2012 the Victorian Government released *Victoria's Vulnerable Children: Our Shared Responsibility* Direction Paper 2012. This identified three key policy principles to guide reform:

- shared responsibility across government, the sector and the community for protecting vulnerable children and their families
- connected services that cut across silos and better meet the needs of children and families
- working in local areas to provide better services in areas with high concentrations of vulnerability.

The Directions Paper also outlined the Government's first-year initiatives, longer-term commitments and areas requiring further consideration as a result of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry. It recognised the significant over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child protection system and the unique place that Aboriginal services have in providing specific service responses.

Important actions in the Directions Paper include:

- a commitment to develop a five-year plan for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care
- increased use of Aboriginal Family Decision Making conferences
- increasing the capacity of the Aboriginal permanent care program
- increased funding for Aboriginal-specific services to provide support for young Aboriginal people transitioning from state care
- a commitment to appoint a Commission for Children and Young People which will include a Commissioner with special responsibility for vulnerable Aboriginal children and young people.

VAAF 2013-2018 commits to stronger targets so the gap in child protection substantiations will be reduced by 75 per cent by 2023.

The Victorian Government will also work with the Commonwealth to strengthen the alignment of their efforts in this area.

Better Services, Better Outcomes

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have the right to access quality services that meet their needs, regardless of whether the services are delivered by government or non-government providers. A key focus for Government will be ensuring that services are effective in meeting the needs of people at those stages in their lives that will have the greatest impact on their future.

Every department is required to have an Aboriginal Inclusion Action Plan consistent with the *Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework*, released in 2011. These plans demonstrate how each department will improve access and inclusion for Aboriginal people across all their service areas. Through deliberate and progressive improvements to service system design and a more integrated approach, services are expected to deliver better outcomes across Victoria.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) provide a range of services for Aboriginal Victorians. The sector is large, diverse and enduring. A significant number of Aboriginal people rely on ACCO delivered services which form an important part of service systems in areas such as health, child and family services, housing and justice. ACCOs will continue to play an important role in meeting the needs of Aboriginal Victorians.

VAAF 2013-2018 has a strong focus on making our service systems work. Fundamental to this is:

- designing and delivering services that are accessible by Aboriginal people across the State
- ensuring 'whole of system' service effectiveness and accountability.

Whole of System Approach

The Victorian Government's approach is founded on the need for 'whole of system' effectiveness, which acknowledges the respective roles of governments, ACCOs, the community sector, the private sector, philanthropic organisations, individuals, families and communities.

Given the mix of Commonwealth, State and local government funded programs, cooperative action is essential to minimise service gaps and improve accessibility and hence outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

A 10 year evaluation framework to be finalised in 2013-14 will give focus and set priorities for a future agenda on reviewing service effectiveness, as part of Section 7 on Stronger Accountability.

Accessible Services

To encourage the highest level of service effectiveness, people first need to use the service. Participation in a service is not an automatic decision. People exercise this choice on a range of factors. The challenge for all service providers, when developing a program of services designed to achieve an outcome, is to encourage or ensure that those targeted by the service actually use it.

Seven key access criteria are identified in Figure 4. These will guide evaluations of service effectiveness and future system reforms, so as to provide for more effective access by Aboriginal Victorians and improve outcomes consistent with VAAF priorities.

Accountable Services

Ensuring that all organisations are held to account when they commit to providing services to the broader community as well as Aboriginal people is essential to any good service system. Strong accountability, especially for Government provided and funded services is essential to preventing service gaps and ensuring investments are well placed.

The Victorian Government has developed a Whole of Victorian Government Common Funding Agreement for all not for profit community organisations. This is designed for use by all departments that fund such organisations to deliver services and projects. It will simplify arrangements and ensure consistency. The Agreement will replace the myriad of arrangements currently in place, including the Victorian Indigenous Funding Agreement.

Figure 4: Key access criteria for effective service design

Cultural Safety	The service provider understands clients needs, including cultural needs
Affordability	Clients can afford to use required services
Convenience	Clients can get to the service easily
Awareness	Current and potential clients are informed about the availability of the service and its value
Empowerment	Current and potential clients know which services they are entitled to seek
Availability	Services that a client needs are accessible
Respect	The service provider treats the client with respect



Place Based Approach

Experience has demonstrated that where sufficient local level flexibility is provided within large systems, greater innovation results. This can in itself deliver improved outcomes and influence broader systemic change. Flexibility in program delivery and program design at the local level encourages better tailoring of solutions to meet unique local community needs.

Some Victorian localities experience greater disadvantage, and many of these locations are also where greater numbers of Aboriginal people live. These areas need priority attention to:

- create stronger opportunities for individuals and communities to set the agenda for change to define local problems, initiate local solutions and harness government and other investments to drive real change
- develop links between governments, the community and private sectors to join up efforts and enter into partnerships to build opportunities for Aboriginal people.

During the term of *VAAF 2013-2018* a priority is to establish or work with communities in locations with large Aboriginal populations for which reliable data can be collected and reported, where the community has sought joined up action, or where there is considered to be significant disadvantage.

Figures 5 and 6 identify the centres and towns in regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne with more than 100 Aboriginal people.

Priority locations identified from the outset of the *VAAF* include, in alphabetical order: **Casey-Dandenong, Lakes Entrance, Mildura, Morwell, Robinvale, Shepparton, Swan Hill and Warrnambool.**

For each priority location, data profiles will be prepared to share with local communities. The profiles will provide information that supports a community conversation where local experience is shared and insights provided on what will work best. This approach will assist local communities, local service providers, local governments and other key stakeholders to support and adopt innovative solutions to improve outcomes in their local area. Importantly, experiences gained at the local level can often inform regional and system wide change.

Partnerships with Local Government

Local government holds significant levers to drive positive outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. In particular, councils deliver critical services across the life course and there is potential for stronger partnerships to realise stronger local and hence statewide outcomes.

In the early years local services such as maternal and child health, preschool services and child care facilities are critical to early life outcomes. Local governments are also important for providing and facilitating local employment and economic opportunities, fostering reconciliation and engagement with Aboriginal communities, building access to land and protecting cultural heritage.

The *VAAF* gives greater recognition of the role of local government as a partner in delivering strategic outcomes and priority directions.



Figure 5: Aboriginal populations in key towns in regional Victoria, 2011



Figure 6: Aboriginal populations in key centres in Greater Melbourne Metropolitan area, 2011



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing 2011

Improved National Action

Central to the achievement of VAAF priorities is coordinated and joined up effort by all levels of government with the Aboriginal community. Commonwealth Government action is vital – from supporting native title settlements through to partnerships and investments in education, employment, business development and health care.

VAAF 2013-2018 builds on the Victorian Government's partnerships with the Commonwealth Government and commitments through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

In February 2011, COAG agreed that Aboriginal reform and 'Closing the Gap' was one of five national priorities for governments. Through the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA)*, the six key targets (based on 2008) are to:

- Close the life expectancy gap within a generation
- Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
- Ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years
- Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade
- Halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20-24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020
- Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

Dedicated funding is not provided via the NIRA, instead, various COAG National Agreements and Partnerships signed by the

Commonwealth and Victorian Governments provide for joined up action, particularly for Aboriginal health, early childhood development, education, youth transitions, housing and homelessness and economic development. It also applies to existing functions and programs in both governments. Coordination of Commonwealth and State effort is given focus in Victoria through an Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan (OBIP). It incorporates Victorian Government policy and actions, including Victoria's Aboriginal Affairs Framework.

With a strengthened Victorian Framework, there is an opportunity to revisit joint Victorian and Commonwealth effort and deliver priority outcomes for Victorian Aboriginal people.

This includes better effort on investments that reach urban and regional Aboriginal people – which in Victoria means the 46 per cent of the Aboriginal population living in metropolitan Melbourne and the 54 per cent living in regional locations.



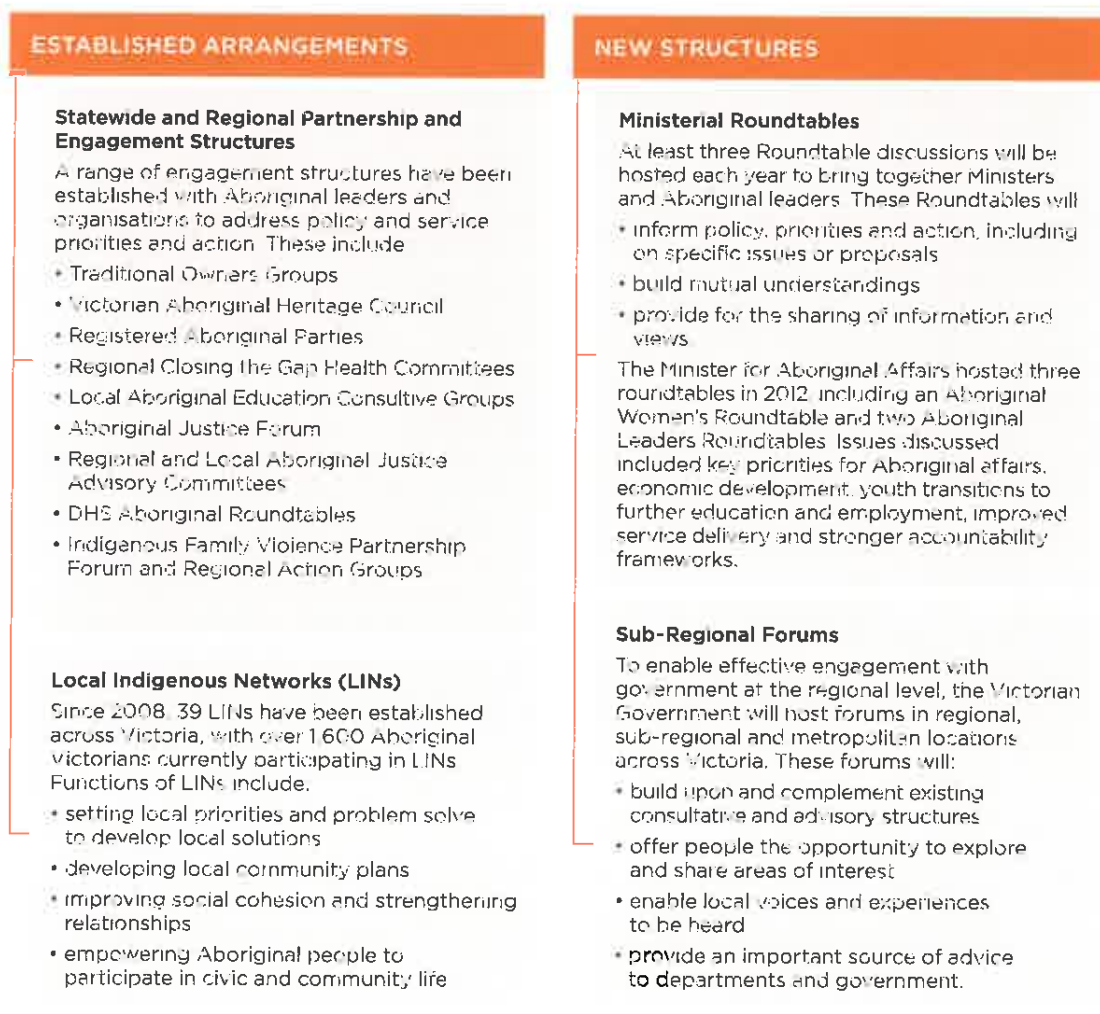
7. Stronger Accountability

Working with Aboriginal people to build better futures

At the heart of the VAAF is the partnership between the Government and the Aboriginal community and organisations. There are a number of important elements that will be the focus for further strengthening over the next few years.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring Aboriginal voices are heard. An important part of this is the relationship between Government and Aboriginal organisations and communities. These relationships will be fostered and maintained through established engagement arrangements that are working, as well as new structures, as outlined in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Aboriginal Affairs Engagement Structures



Essential to the success of structural arrangements is the way that engagement occurs. Nine principles of engagement have been identified by Aboriginal Victorians, which the Government respectfully acknowledges and will use in future engagement arrangements. These are detailed in Box 3.

Box 3: Principles of Engagement with Aboriginal People

Engagement with Aboriginal people will be founded on nine principles:

Strength-based approach

Engagement to build upon community strengths and self reliance, capability, foster positive change and promote and celebrate achievement.

Partnership between community and government

Trusting relationships are central to successful partnerships between Aboriginal people and Government and shared responsibility for identifying solutions and improve outcomes.

Recognition of diversity in Aboriginal communities

Engagement to include diverse groups of Aboriginal people and communities in Victoria and recognise, embrace and respect difference.

Respect

Respect the skills and ability of Aboriginal people, communities and organisations to provide information to enable good decision making. Ensure adequate time for genuine engagement has been provided.

Cultural understanding

Engage in a way that demonstrates cultural awareness, respect and recognition and utilises culturally appropriate methodologies and accessible forms of communication.

Recognised Aboriginal leaders

Engage in a way that respects recognised leaders and Elders as acknowledged by the Aboriginal community.

Focus on youth

In recognition that Aboriginal young people represent more than half of the Victorian Aboriginal population, actively seek to engage youth in consultation, seeking input and developing their leadership and other capacities, while appreciating their relationships with the Aboriginal community.

Clear and consistent flow of information

Provide information in a range of accessible and appropriate communication styles to strengthen understanding between Aboriginal people and government.

Accountability

Value engagement with Aboriginal people and communities. Be clear on the intended outcomes of engagement arrangements and ensure feedback is provided on how input has been utilised or informed policy in a spirit of mutual respect. All parts of government and organisations funded by governments to deliver services for Aboriginal Victorians need to be accountable to the Aboriginal community.

Ministerial oversight and the Secretaries Leadership Group

VAAF 2013–2018 recognises the key roles that Ministers across Government can have as part of a whole of government approach to Aboriginal affairs.

Clear governance, better coordination and strong cooperation are critical to delivering effective and measurable improvements in outcomes. Key Ministers engaged in the delivery of the VAAF include the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Deputy Premier, Ministers for Health; Mental Health, Women's Affairs and Community Services; Education; Attorney-General; Employment and Industrial Relations; Higher Education and Skills; Housing, Children and Early Childhood Development; Tourism and Small Business; and Corrections and Community Safety.

Ministers will provide strategic direction, leadership and priorities for effort across government and in their portfolios. In addition, the Government will ensure that strategies to improve outcomes reflect a joined up government approach and provide clear direction for achieving agreed outcomes.

Secretaries Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs

The Secretaries Leadership Group comprises membership from all Secretaries of Victorian Government Departments. It is charged with whole of government delivery of government initiatives in Aboriginal affairs. Bringing this group together acknowledges the role that Secretaries have in leadership, resource management and service delivery. The Secretaries Leadership Group will continue to drive the change necessary at the service and administrative level to deliver improved outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians.

From the outset of the VAAF, the Secretaries Leadership Group has been charged with a

significant forward program for Aboriginal affairs including:

- providing leadership for the development and implementation of a Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy
- reinforcing and supporting Government's partnership and engagement arrangements with Aboriginal communities and organisations, other governments, private sector and philanthropic organisations
- driving the development and implementation of Departmental Action/Inclusion Plans to ensure services are accessible and inclusive for Aboriginal Victorians
- identifying opportunities and approaches for location specific joined up responses.

Working together

There are many ways for the Aboriginal community voice to be heard in Government. Figure 8 provides a snapshot for community links with Government structures.

Figure 8: Community links with Government structures



Monitoring, Evaluating and Reporting on our progress

The VAAF establishes a more rigorous performance management and reporting architecture than previous approaches. Figure 9 outlines the architecture to improve and integrate monitoring, evaluation and reporting linked to outcomes.

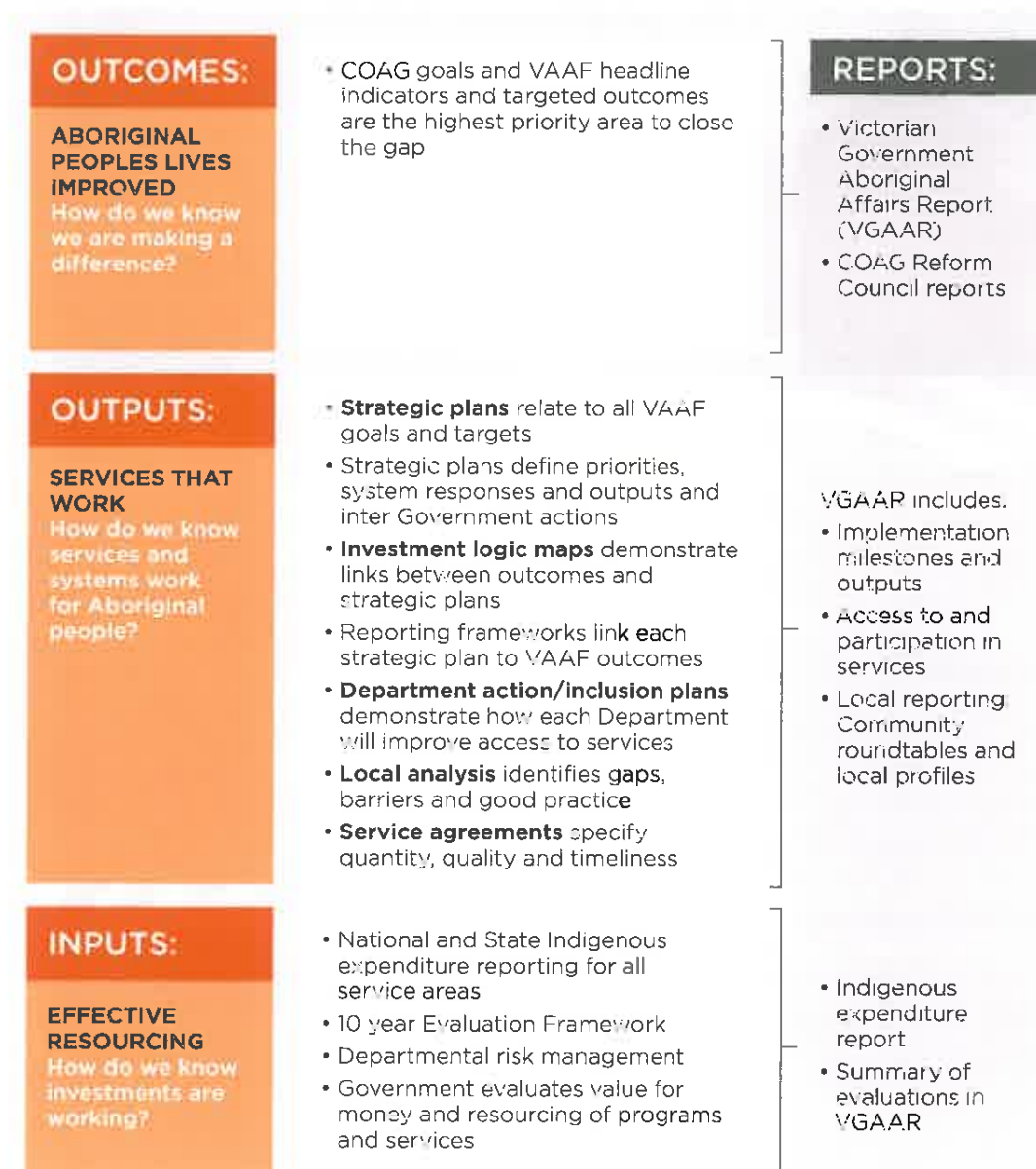
Oversight of progress will be led by the Secretaries Leadership Group.

Reporting at a whole of government level will continue through an annual Aboriginal Affairs Report which will be tabled in Parliament by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Progress will be shown against targets by trajectories. This reporting will continue to be supplemented by COAG generated reports and other national reports on service participation, Indigenous expenditure, and progress towards national targets.

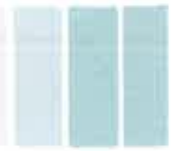
The headline national COAG close the gap target is to close the gap in life expectancy within a generation. As at 2012, the gap is calculated for Australia as a whole and is 12 years for men and 10 years for women. Life expectancy is also calculated for those states and territories with sufficiently large Aboriginal populations.


As at 2012, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has no estimate of the gap in life expectancy for Victoria. The Victorian Government will work with the Commonwealth Government and its agencies to develop an estimate for Victoria that is statistically reliable, robust, comparable with other jurisdictions, and which can be measured over time.

Figure 9: Performance Management and Reporting Framework for Aboriginal Affairs in Victoria



Appendix: Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework Headline Indicators, Targets and other measures



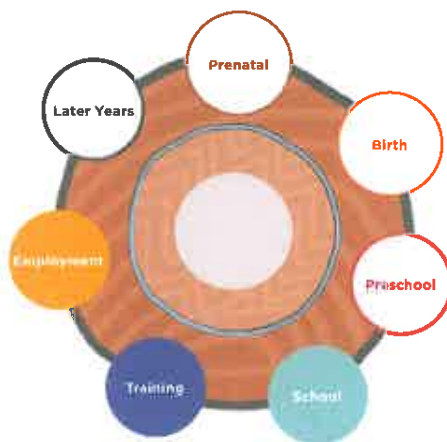
Strategic Action Area	Headline Indicators	Targets	Other measures to be reported
Maternal and early childhood health and development 	H1. Improve Aboriginal infant survival and health	<p>By 2023, close the gap in the perinatal mortality rate</p> <p>By 2023, close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal babies with a birth weight below 2500 grams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rate of reported smoking use in pregnancy by mothers of Aboriginal babies the proportion of Aboriginal children attending Maternal and Child Health services at key age milestones
	H2. Increase Aboriginal kindergarten participation	By 2014, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 4 year old children having access to a high quality kindergarten program will be closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the number of Aboriginal 3 year old children participating in a kindergarten program
	H3. Reduce the rate of Aboriginal child protection substantiations	By 2023, the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal child protection substantiations will be reduced by 75%	

KEY STRATEGIES

- The health of mothers is identified as one of the six priorities under *Koolin Balit - Victorian Government strategic directions for Health 2012-2018*
- Best Start program
- Cradle to Kinder program
- Victoria's Vulnerable Children - Our Shared Responsibility* will guide effort across Government
- Human Services Aboriginal Strategic Framework*

KEY PARTNERS INCLUDE

- Aboriginal organisations including: Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL), Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), locally based Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI), Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)
- Service delivery partners including the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), local councils, the Commonwealth Government and community service organisations

Strategic Action Area**Headline Indicators****Targets****Other measures to be reported****Education and training**

H4. Improve literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for Aboriginal students

By 2018, halve the gap for Aboriginal students in reading, writing and numeracy

- retention of Aboriginal students to Year 10
- school attendance rates for Aboriginal students

H5. Increase the proportion of Aboriginal young people aged 20-24 who have completed at least Year 12 or equivalent

By 2020, halve the gap between the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 20-24 year olds

- the rate of transition of Aboriginal young people aged 18-24 years to employment and/or further education
- the number of Aboriginal people aged 20-65 with or working towards post school qualifications in Certificate III or above

KEY STRATEGIES

- An integrated cross portfolio education strategy for Aboriginal students will be released in 2013 to improve Aboriginal outcomes from early childhood to adulthood and bring together approaches across early childhood, schools and higher education and skills
- Wannik Strategy for school education
- Wurreeker Strategy for higher education and Vocational Education and Training (VET)

KEY PARTNERS INCLUDE

- Aboriginal families and communities and organisations, such as VAEAI and local ACCOs
- The Commonwealth Government, local councils, the VET sector, Adult Community Education providers, Universities, TAFEs, Clontarf Foundation and employment agencies

Strategic Action Area**Headline Indicators****Targets****Other measures to be reported****Economic participation**

H6. Increase Aboriginal labour force participation

By 2018, halve the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians, as measured by:

- Employment to population ratio, for 15 to 64 years old
- Unemployment rate
- Labour force participation rate

- the proportion of Aboriginal people in various income bands

- the representation of Aboriginal people on boards and committees

H7. Increase workforce participation by Aboriginal people in the public sector


By 2018, employment of Aboriginal people in the Victorian public service will increase to 1% of total employees

KEY STRATEGIES

- A comprehensive Victorian Aboriginal Economic Strategy will be developed
- *Karreeta Yirramboi* continues to be the principle strategy for improving public sector employment of Aboriginal people

KEY PARTNERS INCLUDE

- Private sector, including businesses, business organisations, investors, financiers and philanthropic organisations
- The Commonwealth Government, local councils, the VET sector and VAEAI

Strategic Action Area	Headline Indicators	Targets	Other measures to be reported
<p data-bbox="350 778 756 813">Health, housing and wellbeing</p> 	<p data-bbox="756 778 987 859">H8. Improve the health status of Aboriginal Victorians</p>	<p data-bbox="987 778 1219 1010">By 2031, close the gap in the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians that report their health status as 'excellent or very good'</p> <p data-bbox="987 1022 1219 1243">By 2031, close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults reporting 'high or very high' levels of psychological distress</p> <p data-bbox="987 1254 1219 1401">By 2023, the proportion of Aboriginal adults who are current smokers will reduce to 21%</p>	<ul data-bbox="1219 778 1435 1313" style="list-style-type: none"> • the proportion of Aboriginal adults who are obese • the rate of self-harm among Aboriginal people • the rate of harmful alcohol consumption among Aboriginal Victorians • the proportion of Aboriginal people with a disability receiving disability services • the proportion of Aboriginal Victorians who are homeless

KEY STRATEGIES

- *Koolin Balit – the Victorian Government strategic directions for Health 2012–2018*, released on 25 May 2012 provides priorities
- *Koori Alcohol Action Plan*
- *Victorian Homelessness Action Plan*
- *Victorian State Disability Plan*

KEY PARTNERS INCLUDE

- Aboriginal families and community, ACCHOs, VACCHO, Commonwealth Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Quit Victoria
- Community housing organisations, AHV and other ACCOs involved with housing provision and management
- Victorian Aboriginal Disability Network (VADN), disability services sector
- The Commonwealth Government and local councils

Strategic Action Area**Headline Indicators****Targets****Other measures to be reported:****Safe families and communities and equitable justice outcomes**

H9. Reduce the incidence of Aboriginal family violence

Further work is required to develop an appropriate target

- the rate of reporting (Family Incidence Reporting) of Aboriginal family violence to police

H10. Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people under justice supervision

By 2031, close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under youth justice supervision

By 2031, close the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people under adult justice supervision

- the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal young people (10-17 years) processed by police
- the proportion of Aboriginal young people (aged 10-17 years) cautioned when processed by police

H11. Reduce the proportion of Aboriginal people who return to prison within two years of release

By 2031, close the gap in the proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who are convicted within two years of their previous conviction

- the proportion of Aboriginal adults receiving a prison sentence compared with those receiving a community corrections order


KEY STRATEGIES

- Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA), which aims to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal Victorians in the criminal justice system. AJA3 is being developed to build on the successes of AJA2, strengthen partnerships with the Aboriginal community, address key risk points for Aboriginal people in the justice system, improve consistency of service access across and within geographic areas and continue to focus on improving justice outcomes
- Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities*, Victoria's 10 year plan to address family violence

KEY PARTNERS INCLUDE

- Aboriginal community, including the Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF) and associated network of RAJACs and LAJACs
- Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum and Regional Action Groups
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (AFPLSV)
- The Commonwealth Government, Victoria Police, the Courts and Corrections



Strategic Action Area	Headline Indicators	Targets	Other measures to be reported:
<p>Strong culture, engaged people and confident communities</p> 	<p>H12 Strengthen Aboriginal culture and support Aboriginal people's engagement with community and society</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rate of access by Aboriginal Victorians to their traditional lands participation by Aboriginal people in community related arrangements and events (ie. LINS, RAPs, NAIDOC activities, Youth Forums) the proportion of Aboriginal people who felt that there are opportunities for them to have a real say on issues which are important to them options for all Victorians to be engaged with Aboriginal culture

KEY STRATEGIES

- Supporting a range of engagement arrangements including Local Indigenous Networks (LINS), the Victorian Indigenous Youth Advisory Council (VIYAC) / Koorie Youth Council (KYC) and a range of events

KEY PARTNERS INCLUDE

- Aboriginal people, organisations and communities and the broader Victorian population
- Traditional Owner Groups
- Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (VAHC) and Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs)
- Reconciliation Victoria
- The Commonwealth Government and local councils

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