



Information for Professionals

Aboriginal communities know best how to keep Aboriginal children safe and looked after. This is why the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA) has the 'Aboriginal children in Aboriginal care' (ACAC) program, known as Nugel at VACCA.

Nugel uses Aboriginal-led approaches to supporting Aboriginal children and young people on Children's Court protection orders. We strengthen families and work towards reunification where possible, while promoting cultural safety and support for the whole family.

What is Nugel?

Nugel is a Woiwurrung word that means "belong". VACCA believes that Aboriginal children "belong" and have a sacred place at the centre of Aboriginal communities – they have a right to be seen; to be heard; to be nurtured; and to be safe. They have the right to know who they are, where they come from and where they belong.

Nugel implements Section 18 of the Child Youth and Families Act (CYFA) which transfers responsibility for decision making and direct work with Aboriginal children and their families from Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection to VACCA.

For the children that come into the Nugel program, the Children's Court protection order will continue but DFFH Child Protection will no longer be involved.

Where is Nugel delivered?

Nugel is being delivered by VACCA in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne, Inner Gippsland, Western Metropolitan Melbourne, and Ovens Murray.

The ACAC program is also being delivered by other authorised Aboriginal organisations in other parts of Victoria including Bendigo, Echuca, Ballarat, and Shepparton regions.



VACCA
Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY

What is different about Nugel?

Nugel will bring families together to identify the best possible supports to keep their children safe and to enable children to stay living with their family where possible. For children who are unable to live with their immediate families, Nugel will support Aboriginal family connections, connections to Community and culture.

Importantly, Nugel believes in the principle of change and will support families to strengthen safety and where possible, reunify children with their families.

Transferring responsibility for Aboriginal children to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations like VACCA has been a significant and positive step towards self-determination, and in addressing over-representation of Aboriginal children and families in the statutory system.

Nugel has already demonstrated improved results in reunification, parental involvement in decision making and keeping children connected to their culture and Community.

Section 18 authorisation

Section 18 of the Child Youth and Families Act allows the Secretary of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to authorise the principal officer of an Aboriginal agency to perform functions and exercise powers under the CYFA. This means that for Aboriginal children and their siblings who are authorised to VACCA's CEO, the Nugel program takes over the role of Child Protection, including making all decisions, undertaking case planning and legal functions prescribed under the CYFA.

So, if a child is authorised to VACCA, organisations and services will work with the Nugel program as they would with Child Protection, including:

- Receiving referrals
- Sharing of information and providing reports as required
- Seeking consent for parental decisions such as medical and education (depending on the legal status of the child)
- Participating in Nugel Case Planning meetings

Contacts

If you have concerns for an Aboriginal child and are unsure if the child is authorised to VACCA, you should contact Child Protection as you normally would. If the child is authorised to VACCA, Child Protection will inform you and ask you to contact us at VACCA's Nugel program.

If you have any questions and would like to discuss this program further, please feel free to contact:

Northern Metropolitan Melbourne VACCA

p. (03) 9287 8800 e. northnugelteam@vacca.org

a. 340 Bell St Preston VIC 3072

Inner Gippsland VACCA

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a. 21 Hazelwood Road Morwell VIC 3840

Western Metropolitan Melbourne VACCA

p. (03) 9742 8300 e. westnugelteam@vacca.org

a. Level 2/75-79 Watton Street Werribee VIC 3030

Ovens Murray VACCA

p. (03) 5756 9000 e. omnugelteam@vacca.org

a. Suite 3, 27/29 Faithfull Street Wangaratta VIC 3677

Or for more information, go to www.vacca.org