



VACCA

Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY

Annual Report

2015 - 2016

Self determination.
For us. By us.





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Wominjeka and Welcome

As we reach the end of VACCA's 39th year, we reflect on what we have achieved, which has strengthened the connection between our driving principal of self-determination and our efforts.

Self-determination means we, who never ceded our sovereignty, have always maintained our belief that we think and act as a People with a distinct culture, protocols and lores.

Over the last year we have worked with the State Government—who believe in and support our right to self-determination—to make some key reforms in the field of child and family welfare based on self-determination. The implementation of Section 18 or Aboriginal Guardianship, is a prime example of this. At a broader level, this principle has also driven renewed talks to formalise a Treaty between Aboriginal people and the State Government.

Our approach to our services is based on our cultural protocols and customs. There is no single answer to the complex issues we face in our sector in attempting to address the many problems our children and families face. However self-determination does empower us, as a People and Culture, with an inherent right and capacity to use different approaches to these complex issues.

We hope you enjoy reading about our various programs, services and activities.

Chairperson's Statement

Over the last year we have faced many challenges. I believe this is inevitable as we continue to grow as an organisation.

These challenges have meant reviewing our current systems and programs and modifying them where needed to support the growing demand on our organisation and workforce.

I am pleased to say that as a Board and organisation we have come through this period with a deeper understanding and commitment that will ensure our services are stronger in supporting our children and families.

We also learnt much through our Section 18 trial, or "Aboriginal Guardianship" project, which has laid the groundwork for the full implementation of Aboriginal Guardianship or S18.

S18 is ground-breaking because the State, which is regarded as the "parent of last resort", is sharing this responsibility with us as representatives of the Aboriginal community. This is unprecedented in Australia, and really extends the boundaries of Aboriginal decision-making and responsibility in child welfare. As a community we have always wanted to reassert our rights to growing up our children. Section 18 or Aboriginal Guardianship connects us to VACCA's cornerstone principle demonstrated by the commitment of Aunty Mollie Dyer and VACCA's founding members.

As a Board we support the implementation of S18 changes and we look forward to embracing this responsibility on behalf of our community. The standard of accountability that we will be expected to deliver to both community and government will be raised much higher as a result, and I am confident that we will meet this new benchmark.

Our services at VACCA have been growing around our core business of supporting children in care and we now have a range and variety of programs which address the stresses and issues that lead to children entering care as well as cultural activities for children. Our aim is to offer more accessible services which our people need where our people need them.

The management of our finances, systems and facilities has once again been of the highest standards and continues to underpin our growth. All funding received is accounted for and spent according to the terms of our contract with both State and Federal Government. Our not-for-profit business model relies on successfully securing government grants and tenders to ensure service delivery. With 90 per cent of current funding from these sources, we will be boosting efforts to raise non-grant funds to better support our cultural activities, innovation, research and advocacy.

The Board is proud of our staff, who daily demonstrate their commitment to our children and families. This is an especially demanding arena for our Aboriginal staff to be working in given the sensitivities involved in child protection and its changing landscape. While our CEO, Muriel Bamblett continues to lift the profile of our area of work through her tireless advocacy for our children and families, I know that our staff play an important role across all levels of our organisation. I want to thank the CEO and all our staff for their contributions.

In my connection to VACCA and my experience as a board member and now Chairman, I have been part of many discussions that have helped shape the platform of our governance going forward. It is through this experience I have seen the unwavering commitment of previous and current board members in the strategic development and governance of VACCA.

The Board has shown great resilience, and although these boardroom roles are not highly publicised, we pride ourselves in being an all-Koorie board with strong ties to our communities.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my thanks to our CEO and staff for their dedication and commitment in the work we as an organisation have been involved in. These efforts have led to significant and successful achievements. To my fellow board members, thank you for your engagement, leadership and commitment to myself as we navigate into new directions for the organisation.

James Atkinson
Chairperson

CEO's Statement



Looking back on the year, it is clear we have achieved a lot while continuing to grow.

One of the key drivers this year has undoubtedly been the State Government's agenda for change, especially based on its policy of supporting the right of Aboriginal people to self-determination, the Roadmap for Reform process and the outcomes of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

To have a government not only acknowledging our right to self-determination, but implementing it in practice, is a welcome and long-overdue approach to Aboriginal affairs. In practical terms it has meant a lot more work for us, but to have a government with this attitude towards reform is a once-in-a-generation event which we grasp with both hands.

The discussion about self-determination has led to Treaty talk, and even though this will not be an easy process, it is moving our relationship with government into a different sphere and policy space.

In the area of child welfare, our work in moving towards full implementation of the Section 18 provisions of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 has been a momentous achievement. Aboriginal Guardianship, as it is known, has the potential to change child welfare practice in Australia. We aim to deliver this service in 2017, and we will continue to demonstrate that at VACCA we innovate and deliver change based on Aboriginal ways of doing things.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence and its final report and recommendations delivered a comprehensive examination of this area. The directions it has set in train will need to be worked on for some years to come. The recommendation to support the Indigenous Family Violence Plan and provide additional resources was very welcome. We are all acutely aware of the part that family violence plays in the subsequent intervention of child protection authorities in the lives of Aboriginal children and other community members. Having a strategic focus on family violence in our responses will hopefully reduce the number of Aboriginal children coming into care.

The Roadmap for Reform is another process leading to change in our sector and to the child welfare system. It recognises that early intervention and prevention is important in keeping children and families at risk away from child protection intervention. We contributed to this process and will continue to support it through to implementation, as we believe it will strengthen our families care of our children.

We also made advances with Beyond Good Intentions, the statement of intent outlining how mainstream child and family welfare services will support Aboriginal community control over the care and protection of Aboriginal children. In October 2015, the statement was formally endorsed by the Victorian Aboriginal Children's Forum, including the Hon Jenny Mikakos MP, Minister for Families and Children. The statement, which acknowledges the right of Aboriginal people to self-determination, is now leading to the transfer of responsibility for Aboriginal children in care to the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.

Self-determination is an inalienable right and not one which anyone bestows on a people. We have, as a people, been exercising it since we were first colonised. Our actions and words as people have always been consistent with this principle, whether or not it was recognised by other authorities. Nevertheless, to have this right recognised by Government gives it the potential to be implemented in reality and supported through additional measures. Equally, the community sector's acknowledgement and recognition is also important, given their role in working with our children.

2015-2016 is the beginning of significant change, underpinned by mechanisms created to realise self-determination.

Last year also had its fair share of sadness and loss for many in our community.

For VACCA we lost a dear colleague and my sister, Violet Harrison. Violet was a bright light for all who knew her and someone who kept us focused on our purpose. Her humour and wisdom are not part of our lives any longer, but she will stay in our memories. Violet made a significant contribution to VACCA.

I also want to remember Elvie Kelly, another one of our former staff members who worked at VACCA in the late eighties who passed away recently. Elvie was a calm and strong presence in the organisation, who was a key part of the VACCA team in those days and is fondly remembered by those who worked with her at the time.

We are also saddened to have lost Esme Thompson this year. Esme was instrumental in setting up the Aboriginal women and children's refuge Orana Gunyah. Esme showed that despite their challenges Aboriginal women and children face we have the ability and the right to become achievers of great things and she will be remembered fondly.

The Board of Directors had a challenging year also and rose to the demands. They are a dedicated and passionate group of people who keep VACCA grounded and connected to our tasks and our community. I want to thank them for their support and their contribution to VACCA's advancement.

Lastly, to our staff, without whom we could not have achieved what we did, I want to pay tribute to their hard work throughout the year.

Muriel Bamblett
Adjunct Professor AM
CEO

Our Board

VACCA's Board represents our community, provides leadership, ensures our financial status is sound and meets all our legal obligations. Our Board also keep us connected to community by being true to our culture, history, aspirations and values.



James Atkinson Chairperson (Yorta Yorta/ Bangerang)

Employed as Manager, Inclusive Education Practice Unit, Professional Practice and Leadership Division with the Department of Education and Training. James has worked across the Education sector from early childhood, schools, TAFE and higher education in the fields of policy development, stakeholder and project management. James also has a long track record of working for and with Aboriginal community organisations such as VACCA, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) and as a board member of others.



Helen Kennedy Vice Chairperson (Trawlwoolway/ Plairmairrener)

Employed as a Principal Policy Adviser, Aboriginal Social Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health with DHHS. Helen was Manager of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) Family Counselling Service and has worked in Aboriginal Affairs for the last 16 years in a range of capacities in Aboriginal health, education and training.



Deidre King Treasurer (Gunditjmara)

Employed as CEO of the Aboriginal Community Elders Service (ACES). Deidre was previously employed at the Aborigines Advancement League (AAL) for 17 years and worked at VACCA. Deidre is a Board Member of Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL) and holds an Advanced Diploma in Business Management.



Jason King Secretary (Gunditjmara)

Previously employed as CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS). Jason was on the Board of Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Incorporated (VACCHO) and National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and was previously employed at VACCA. Jason has also completed a Diploma in Business Management.



Margaret Atkinson Director (Yorta Yorta/ Taungurung/Wurundjeri)

Employed as a Wurreker Broker with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) Margaret was previously employed at the Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-op and was employed at VACCA for over 9 years. Margaret has also completed governance training.



Jason Kanoa Director (Gunditjmara/Bunitj)

Employed as a Senior Project Officer, Indigenous Family Violence at DHHS. Jason was employed with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) as the Koori Caucus Executive Officer. He has completed governance training and the Indigenous Leadership Network Victoria course.



Michael Graham Director (Dja Dja Wrung/ Wurundjeri)

Employed at Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Incorporated (VACCHO) and was previously employed as a Koorie Education Co-ordinator with the Department of Education and Training. Michael has over 20 years of employment in Aboriginal community controlled organisations.
(Resigned July 1, 2016)

Vision

Our children, young people, families and communities are thriving – culturally strong, empowered and safe.

Purpose

To work towards the healing of the Aboriginal community through strengthening the safety, wellbeing and cultural connectedness of vulnerable community members particularly children.

Our Principles and Values

We believe in the principles of the right of Aboriginal people to self-determination and the rights of the child and we commit to uphold Victorian Aboriginal cultural protocols.



Our People

As an Aboriginal community controlled organisation, VACCA is a strong advocate for the Victorian Aboriginal community, responding to the needs of Aboriginal children and families and other vulnerable members in the community. Our strength lies within our people. Our strength is in their commitment to the organisation's vision and values; advocacy for our children and other vulnerable community members; and respect for, observance of and compliance with Aboriginal cultural protocols, practice and ceremony. Our Aboriginality is what distinguishes us from mainstream services and what enables us to deliver the positive outcomes we achieve for our people.



Staying Strong and Staying Out of Trouble

The Staying Strong and Staying Out of Trouble program, developed by VACCA Gippsland and funded by the Department of Justice and Regulation, aims to build resilience in young people who are identified as 'at risk' of further contact with the juvenile justice system.

The program delivers a series of camps over a three-year period where young people aged between 14 to 24 have the opportunity to explore their Aboriginal identity and history, establish links to Elders, participate in challenges and form new friendships, with each camp building on this new knowledge and skills.

The first of the Staying Strong cultural camps was held in March at Stratford Knob Reserve in the Gippsland Region, with a group of 10 young people participating. The program was diverse, rich in culture and offered opportunities for creative expression and yarns about future cultural and skill-building activities.

One of the activities was a cultural walk led by Grattan Mullett Junior, a Gunai Kurnai man from GLAWAC (Gunai Kurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation). Grattan yarned to the young people about the significance of the Knob Reserve as a traditional meeting place for the five clans of the Gunai Kurnai people to trade and perform ceremony. He also spoke about the scar tree used in the construction of canoes, shields and coolomons (vessel made from bark) and the grinding stones used to sharpen axes, tools and to grind ochre for paint. Grattan also shared his experience in overcoming struggles as a young Aboriginal person and using his passion for his Culture as a pathway to "Staying Strong".

The feedback from the group was overwhelmingly positive. They were excited about the next activity and as a result of the program, were also able to identify areas they required support with – drugs and alcohol abuse (including methamphetamine, or "Ice"); trauma counselling; and support to march together as a group in NAIDOC Week.

Following the success of the first camp in June, a group of 30 young people, supported by 12 VACCA staff and volunteers, went to an overnight camp at the Summit Adventure Park in Trafalgar.

Despite rain and mud, the group enthusiastically participated in a 'Bush Challenge' and cultural activities such as dance, painting and yarning. Again the initiative received incredibly positive feedback.

Staying Strong and Staying Out of Trouble is a definitive example of the work VACCA does – to deliver holistic programs embedded with culturally relevant principles. In bringing together a range of VACCA staff members from a number of different program areas, the young people are encouraged and supported to explore their Aboriginal identity and history, form new friendships, engage in group activities and establish links to local services and Elders, so they are better equipped to meet their challenges.

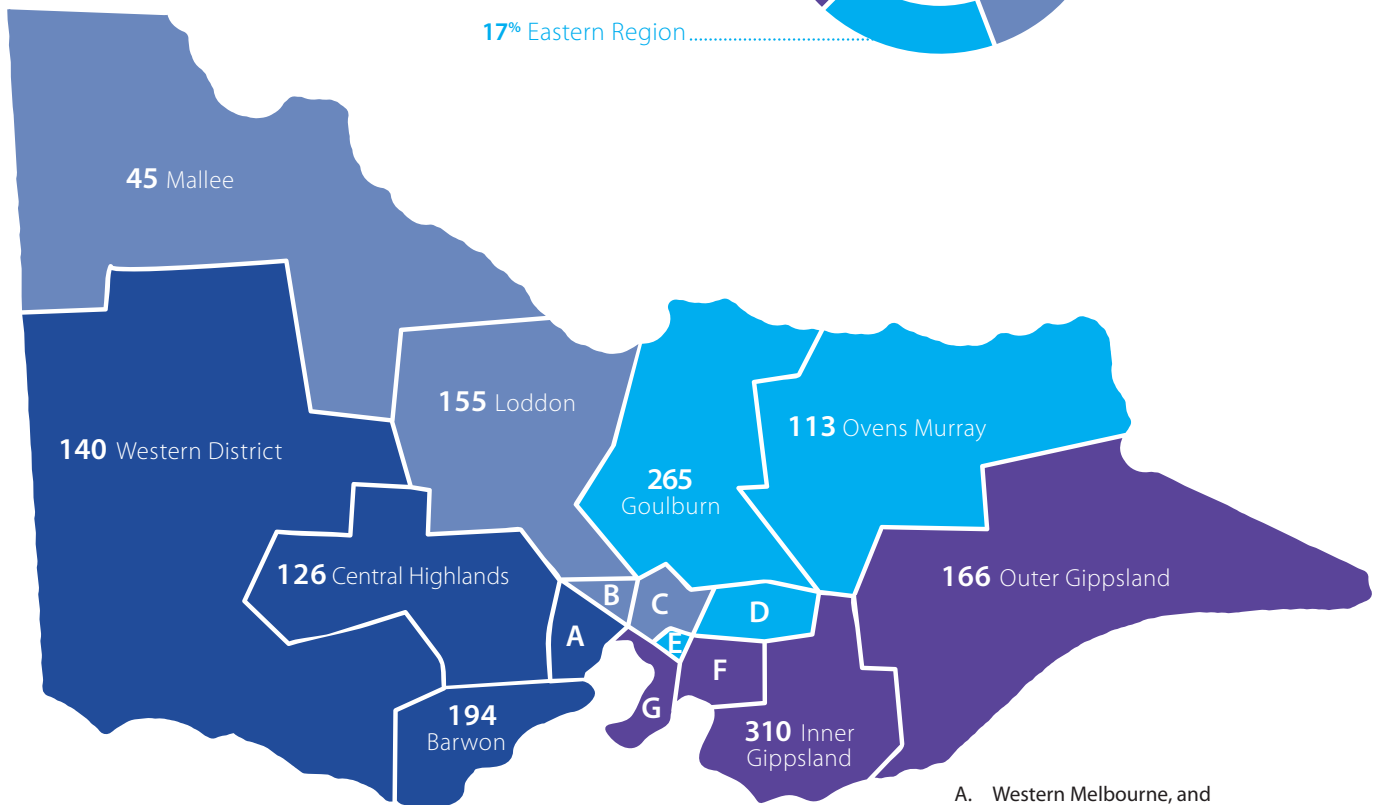


In addition to the new Staying Strong program, VACCA Gippsland has also been successful in securing further funding from the Department of Justice and Regulation for the new Koorie Women's Diversion Project and the new Local Justice Worker program, which commenced in the 2016-17 financial year. The growth of VACCA Gippsland over the past few years has now seen the delivery of a wider suite of services by more than 40 staff across three sites (Rintoull Street office in Morwell, Orana Gunyah in Morwell and the Therapeutic Residential Care home in Traralgon).

Our Clients and Our Staff

Our Clients across Victoria

by DHHS Area as of 30 June 2016 (active clients only)



A. Western Melbourne, and Brimbank/Melton	239
B. Hume Morland	189
C. North Eastern Melbourne	455
D. Outer Eastern Melbourne	134
E. Inner Eastern Melbourne	78
F. Southern Melbourne	178
G. Bayside Peninsula	171
Statewide Program Clients	479*

Last year we served **3447** clients.

During the past year we have achieved significant growth in the reach and breadth of our services that we provide to our clients. During this period of growth VACCA has retained our focus on providing the highest quality of service and values how critical our recruitment, induction, training and further education of staff members is to ensuring the best outcomes for our clients. We are proud to have exceeded our internal training targets with 580 participants in 19 internal training programs undertaking additional training.

As we grow we also place emphasis on ensuring our systems support growth whilst ensuring that all of our models and protocols are adapted to our services, community and cultural needs. We have under taken a significant body of work to continuously improve our client data systems to complement our intimate knowledge of our community.

The introduction of a staff intranet (which is being rolled out in the year to follow) and new internal communication channels will allow team members across regions to stay connected and informed.

As an Aboriginal organisation we also need to ensure that as we grow we continue to employ more Aboriginal people and as such we have implemented an organisational approach to address this and consider succession planning. Supporting career pathways for young Aboriginal people to join VACCA is also a priority and the two Aboriginal Traineeships undertaken this year are a great example of this.

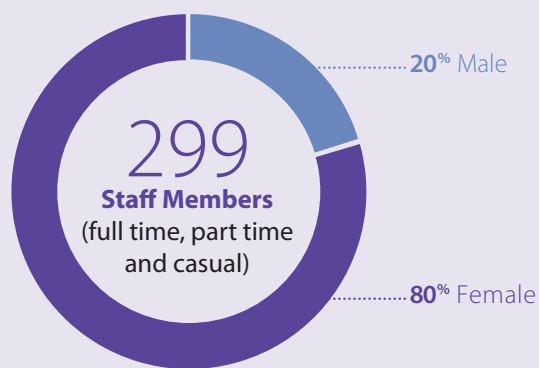
The non-Aboriginal staff in our organisation have a privileged place in the sense that they are trusted to work with community. Advancements in our cultural training programs are benefiting non-Aboriginal staff as they increase their breadth of knowledge and understanding and bring a commitment to social justice.

The diagrams on these pages show the incredible reach of the VACCA services throughout the state with the increase in Lakidjeka funding becoming a key highlight of the year.

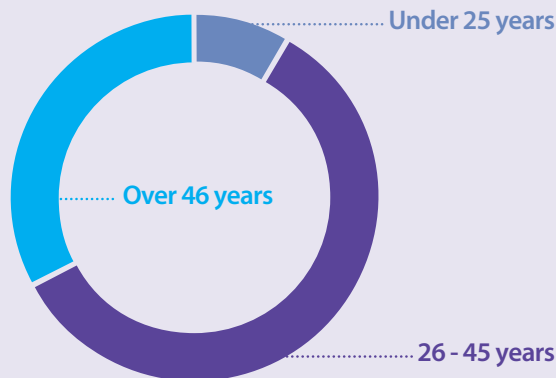
Like many organisations VACCA is continuing to implement plans and initiatives to improve our environmental footprint and as such we continued to partner with Monash University Environmental students to deliver on plans.

As always our Community is a pillar of VACCA and we continue to organise many cultural activities throughout the year to mark NAIDOC week, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day our VACCA Christmas parties and many other activities for the whole community.

Staff Snapshot



Staff by Age (full time, part time and casual)



Our People, Highlights and Initiatives

Northern VACCA

Northern VACCA provides a wide range of programs, working with Aboriginal children, families and community. These programs include early intervention, family support, out-of-home care and family violence.

The Northern VACCA Family Violence team has been continuing as a core partner in the L17 MAT Pilot Project that responds to family violence.

Through the project the Department of Health and Human Services (Child Protection), Berry Street and VACCA work together on a daily basis to respond to police reports of family violence. VACCA's role is to offer a specialist Aboriginal lens to help women and children, and through the application of early intervention strategies, divert families away from the child protection system and into appropriate community supports.

As a core partner in the Northern Child and Family Services Alliances, Northern VACCA has continued to support Taskforce 1000 area action plans.

Since October 2015, VACCA (acting on behalf of Child First) has conducted the majority of Child First assessments for Aboriginal families in the North East Metropolitan area. More recently VACCA has extended assessments to include the Hume Moreland area—the model enables Aboriginal families to have Aboriginal service delivery from the point of referral to deliver a focused, seamless and culturally responsive service.

In February, the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) and the Queensland Government, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services began undertaking trials of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Led Decision Making (AFLDM) in Queensland. The program is implementing an evidence-based model that is being adapted to the local region and Northern VACCA is partnering in the project to provide advice and learnings on the program implementation.

“A four-year-old boy in Kinship Care had serious issues with his eyes and needed eye surgery. The child had been on the waiting list for the Royal Children’s Hospital for over a year. The VACCA case worker was able to effectively advocate for the young boy and he received surgery within a month.”

“Some of our clients in Kinship Care participated in the DRUMBEAT program which was organised through the City of Whittlesea in conjunction with Relationships Australia Victoria. DRUMBEAT ran for 10 weeks during the third term of school, targeting Aboriginal children aged between 10 and 16 years. The program offered students the chance of learning how to play the African Drums. At the end of the program the students were able to perform in front of family and friends. They did an amazing job!”



Southern VACCA

Southern VACCA had great success implementing a virtual model of the Services Connect program. Services Connect allows individuals and families to go to one place and have all or most of their needs met by one key worker, rather than having to attend a number of services. A tremendous amount of work and effort went into developing cultural support plans for young people in care as part of the Cultural Support Plan (CSP). Wilke Kwe and the Stronger Families Programs continue to provide short and long term intensive support to Aboriginal families to prevent their children from being removed and to assist with reunification of children home. In these programs Southern VACCA workers spend up to 15 hours a week with the family, working alongside them to help them to achieve their goals. Both programs have achieved significant success with the families they have supported, as all families have engaged with the workers and have kept their children at home. Southern VACCA has had great success this year in helping children who are in Out of Home Care to return to their families with seven children now with their Aboriginal families all of whom have been in Out of Home Care for a number of years.



Southern VACCA introduced emergency relief for the local community. The need was significant and the region now provides the highest level of delivery across the regions. Emergency relief teams also delivered a 'winter drive' which provided one-off items and emergency financial assistance to over 70 community members, ensuring they were supported during the cold months.

The engagement with the community remains high with successful Elders training and luncheons to engage Elders in Aboriginal Family Lead Decision Making Programs (AFLDM). The Elders also provide valuable feedback about the impact of VACCA services in the community.

"Through the Aboriginal Family Decision Making service, a young fella who had been in a kinship placement for 14 years was able to travel interstate and be reunified with his mother."

"It's heart-warming when Elders come in for a cuppa when they are in the area. This is something that is deeply valued and a testament to how Southern VACCA operates."

Eastern VACCA

Eastern VACCA has experienced a year of growth in programs such as reaching extended targets in both family services and Kinship care. Eastern VACCA has increased staff numbers and foster care targets and overall has a very positive workforce culture. Eastern VACCA's approach and commitment to work for the community is being recognised by other Aboriginal and mainstream services.

All of the Eastern VACCA programs such as Integrated Family Services, Stronger Families, Kinship, Foster Care, Leaving Care, Aboriginal Family Lead Decision Making and Alcohol and Other Drugs have had a successful year. Eastern VACCA has been delivering on The Ice pilot program which is designed to support users of Methamphetamines (Ice) and to help families living in communities with growing concerns through delivering both education and support programs. The program has achieved positive outcomes with complex clients, including the completion of detox with further support to Residential Rehab. Delivery of these programs has been possible because of the commitment and care of the Eastern VACCA team, who regularly go 'above and beyond'.



“An eight-year-old boy living in a non-Aboriginal foster care placement since he was 18 months old had no connection to family or community. A VACCA case worker was able to work with mainstream agencies to advocate for the boy to live with his Aunty and Uncle. Despite a number of challenges, he now lives in the care of his Aunty and Uncle and has a relationship with his Dad and brothers.”

“With VACCA's support, a mother who never identified as being Aboriginal, but also didn't know how to, has just applied for her Confirmation of Aboriginality for both herself and her daughter. The family will be doing a 'Return to Country', building strength in our culture.”

Gippsland VACCA

VACCA Gippsland was proud to present the locally made film, 'Violence is not our culture', at the 6th National SNAICC Conference in Perth, in September 2015. Lorena Thompson (Team Leader – Children Youth and Families) presented along with Eveanne Liddle (from Southern VACCA), a presentation called No More Violence; Exploring Whole of Family and Community Approaches to Preventing and Responding to Family Violence. The presentation included the first showing of the film which was developed by VACCA Gippsland and funded by the Community Initiative Fund, Nambur Regional Action Group and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The film includes Gippsland family violence workers explaining services available and also the personal story shared by a couple Camela and Dylan, about their experiences with family violence and the importance of breaking the cycle of violence. This film was also chosen by DHHS and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria to be presented to the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

In March 2016, the Gippsland Therapeutic Residential Care Program moved into a newly renovated Traralgon property, giving the young people a lot more space and a fresh and welcoming home. The program continues to be staffed by a pool of dedicated workers, including a cultural support worker and therapeutic specialist.

Orana Gunyah provides Family Violence support to women and children fleeing /relocating from their homes, community and family to seek safety for themselves and a safer future for their children. Last year VACCA's Orana Gunyah service assisted 10 women and 18 Children in our residential units and our outreach service helped 29 children 31 women.



The 'Staying Strong and Staying and Staying Out of Trouble' program held two cultural activities in March and June of 2016. This new program, developed by VACCA Gippsland and funded by the Department of Justice and Regulation aims to build protective factors in young people through a series of camps over a three year period, building on skills, relationships and knowledge developed at each camp. A range of VACCA staff members from a number of program areas encouraged and supported the young people to explore their Aboriginal identity and history, form new friendships, engage in group activities, establish links to local services, links Elders and to meet new people and challenges.

In addition to the new 'Staying Strong' program, VACCA Gippsland has also been successful in securing further funding from the Department of Justice and Regulation, for the new Koori Women's Diversion Program and the new Local Justice Worker Program, both are due to commence in the next financial year. The growth of VACCA Gippsland over the last few years has now seen the delivery of a wider suite of services by over 40 staff, across three sites (Rintoull Street office in Morwell, Orana Gunyah in Morwell and the Therapeutic Residential Care home in Traralgon). Programs delivered by VACCA Gippsland include; Lakidjeka ACSASS, Kurnai Youth Homelessness Service, Aboriginal Leaving Care and Post Care, Family Mental Health Support Services (Kids Connect), Integrated Family Violence, Orana Gunyah Crisis Accommodation and Support Service, Gippsland Therapeutic Residential Care, and the new Justice programs - Staying Strong, Koori Women's Diversion and the Local Justice Worker Program.

Western VACCA

Western VACCA has continued to sustain positive growth and engagement with Aboriginal communities of western Melbourne and Brimbank Melton. There have been increases in both staff and services provided, including funding for two new Child FIRST Integrated Family Services team members to work on projects in the city of Wyndham and Melton.

Along with the increases in staff and programs, there has also been a focus on workforce development, including one team member completing a Certificate IV in Community Services.

The highlight of the year for the Western VACCA team has been our community events and the engagement with local communities. The inaugural children's Christmas party at Wyndhamvale saw more than 90 people attend. In March, with the help of the Koorie engagement support officer, Western VACCA hosted a successful community BBQ at the Botanic Gardens in Melton. The Reconciliation morning tea, NAIDOC Children's Day and SNAICC Children's Day were all incredibly successful.

"I was working with a family where a single mother of three children was struggling with depression, stress and was overwhelmed particularly when it came to managing one of her children who had behavioural issues. A report had been issued to child protection because of the

environmental condition of the home that the family were living in.

I asked the mother if this was a tough time for her, and she said yes. Together we were able to seek medical support that included a 'Mental Health Plan' and I was able to secure funding to improve the condition of the house.

The combination of the mental health plan and the improvement of the property meant that each time I met with Mum, I would notice that her depression was starting to lift—she was happier, more confident, less stressed and she was now taking a lot of pride in her home and her appearance.

The children's school also noticed the changes that they are now happier and performing better at school.

The early intervention activities had an incredible impact on this family. And the report that went to child protection was closed."

Workplace Highlights

VACCA's strategic workforce priorities have progressed well throughout the year. The achievements to date have laid the foundations on which VACCA can build upon its workforce capability, now and into the future.

The workforce achievements were:

- Recruitment of an organisational development (OD) manager. This position is dedicated to the development of VACCA's workforce, including the implementation of our Workforce Strategy.
- Development of a learning and development (L&D) framework to assist in creating a learning culture within the organisation.
- Completion of VACCA's Workforce Analysis Report, to develop targeted workforce strategies across the organisation.
- Engaging one-on-one with 120 VACCA staff as part of the in-depth workforce analysis.
- Completion of a staff opinion survey. Themes rated highly by staff included positive relationships with colleagues, flexible working arrangements, job satisfaction and loyalty to VACCA.
- Commencing a tertiary-recognised qualifications program for VACCA residential staff through Berry Street; eight staff started a Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention. The next group intake will start in November.
- Development of a comprehensive Workforce Action Plan.

- Establishing a Workforce Sub-Committee of the Board.
- Development of team charters by all VACCA programs, including the Leadership Group, to build and strengthen organisational behaviour.
- Completion of a remunerations benchmarking exercise across client services, with VACCA salary bands revised to align more closely with mainstream banding to remain competitive.
- Continuing support for an Employee Assistance Program service for staff.
- Continuing to organise regional team-building sessions and retreats for statewide programs for staff development and wellbeing.
- Providing two staff in-services to over 260 staff from around the state.
- VACCA's Koorie Youth Training (KYT) program entering its third round of traineeships, with four new trainees selected to join the program. Employment was provided to two former trainees during the year at VACCA and MacKillop Family Services, our KYT program partner.
- Continuing strong staff wellbeing practices, with influenza vaccinations available to staff, quarterly staff gatherings with presentations on healthy lifestyles, salary packaging, and VAHS yoga lunchtime sessions.

Robin Clark Award

The Hon Jenny Mikakos MP, Minister for Families and Children officially launched Child Protection Week in Victoria at the Robin Clark Protecting Children Awards 2016, held on Tuesday, 6 September.

This year VACCA was pleased to have three staff members and two carers selected as finalists for the awards, which recognise service excellence across the child protection sector throughout Victoria and celebrate the important and varied work undertaken in child, youth and family services.

Wurreker Awards

The VACCA internal and external training units received the Dr Mary Atkinsons – Koorie Organisational Award. The Wurreker Awards celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations in the field of Koorie further education.

Ricci Marks Award

Taneisha Webster, a team leader at VACCA, was a recipient of the prestigious Ricci Marks Award. The Victorian Government initiative encourages and supports young Aboriginal people to pursue their goals and aspirations and continue with their leadership development. The award recognises individual achievements of young Aboriginal people in training, education, arts, sport, culture and community leadership.

Remembering Aunty Violet Harrison

(1963 - 2015)



Aunty Violet Harrison was a loved and highly respected member of the Aboriginal community. She was a strong Aboriginal woman who devoted her life to advocating for the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal affairs.

She was involved in the establishment of many Aboriginal services.

At VACCA, Aunty Violet established the Eastern Region Office and forged strong links with the community, Government, local agencies and Aboriginal services. In her work at VACCA she was always able to both honour the young for the promise of what they will bring to Aboriginal affairs and respect the wise. She brought to VACCA a deep personal commitment to embedding Aboriginal cultural ways into our work and was such a great mentor for young people.

Aunty Violet lead many VACCA programs and projects, mentoring Aboriginal staff and delivering outcomes for the Aboriginal community especially in the East. Aunty Violet played a pivotal role in the first return to country program for a sibling group in care who went to Cape York to be reunited with their extended family.

At VACCA we will remember her for her tireless commitment to Aboriginal business, her dedication to the tasks at hand, her never giving up, her willingness to undertake many tasks and never missing an opportunity to advocate for community members.

Aunty Violet was a very well respected and loved staff member. She was a leader who also had the quality of being able to listen.

She will always be remembered with great affection by the VACCA family for her bubbly personality, commitment and her deep cultural knowledge will be sadly missed.



Leadership in Partnership

How we lead through our work both inside and outside the organisation, including the way we work in partnership.

Leading by Example

The reforms being pursued by the Andrews Government are partly the result of VACCA's advocacy and leadership. While the major effort was taken by our CEO (see list of appointments below), our staff also play a critical part by advocating for each child and family they work with.

Our Research and Policy Team and Client Services and Program Development Team support our CEO's role by contributing to the preparation of papers, presentations and submissions that have extended the reach of our advocacy over the last year.

We are represented on a variety of committees:

- Social Services Taskforce (formed from Royal Commission into Family Violence)
- Roadmap for Reform Implementation Ministerial Advisory Committee
- Roadmap for Reform Expert Advisory Group
- Aboriginal Family Violence Steering Committee
- Aboriginal Children's Forum
- Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework Expert Panel
- Monash Indigenous Advisory Council
- Placement Prevention and Reunification for Aboriginal Children
- Ministerial Advisory Committee for Children in Out of Home Care
- Victorian Children's Council
- Our Watch (resigned 1 August 2016)
- Taskforce 1000 Steering Committee
- Premiers Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee

- Aboriginal Education Strategy Steering Committee
- Coalition of Aboriginal Services Responding to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- Aboriginal Community Elders Service
- Australian Institute of Family Studies Advisory Council
- Ministerial Advisory Group – Addressing Violence Against Women and Children
- Northern Metro Aboriginal Strategic Governance Group
- Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum
- Aboriginal Justice Forum
- DHHS West Division Aboriginal Advisory Group
- Aboriginal Justice Forum; and
- Australian Families and Children Council.
- Prevention of Violence Against Elders

There are also many other regional committees and working groups we attend.

External Training Unit

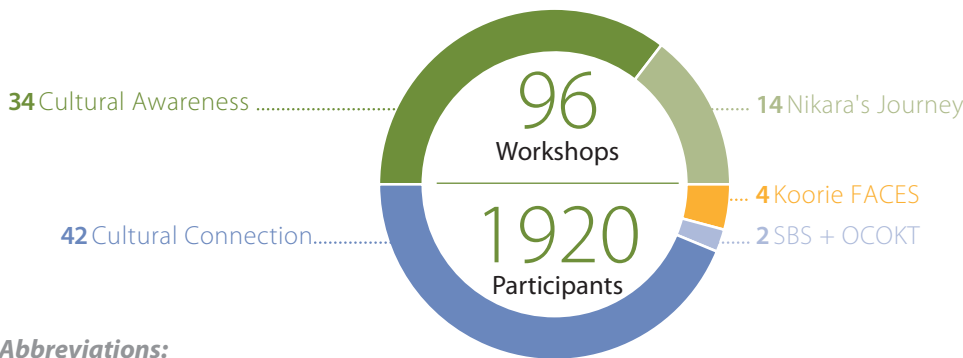
The External Training Unit delivered a total of 135 training days to over 20 organisations across the state addressing cultural awareness, parenting strengthening programs, train the trainer programs (provided to other ACCO's) and other tailored training. We provided training to Anglicare, Oz Child, Centre For Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, City of Darebin, E.W Tipping, Department of Health and Human Services, Berry Street, La Trobe University, Life Without Barriers, MacKillop Family Services, Salvation Army, Early Childhood Intervention Australia, Anchor, Services Connect, Court Services Victoria, Bapcare, Uniting Care Gippsland, Mallee Family Care, Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC), Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) and Gunditjmara.

Since 2014, VACCA has established an ongoing partnership with Berry Street. All new Berry Street staff are required to attend the Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Understanding Program as part as their induction process. A total of eight sessions of 'Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Understanding' were delivered to 137 staff at Berry Street.

VACCA External Training Unit has an international partnership with Ohio State University to deliver a yearly cultural awareness session to their social work students.

The biggest achievement for the unit was the development and delivery of the 'Cultural Connections' training package. VACCA was funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop and deliver 42 sessions across the state within 10 weeks between January-March. The training was very highly regarded by the 1179 staff that participated, with 80% rating the course "very good to excellent", and 18% rating the course "good". DHHS also funded a Koorie FACES Train The Trainer rollout that was delivered to staff from VACCA, BDAC, BADAC and Gunditjmara Co-operatives.

Training Workshops Delivered (Externally July 2015 - June 2016)



Abbreviations:

- OCOCT - Our Carers for Our Kids Training
- SBS - Step By Step Training
- ACCO - Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation

Lakidjeka ACSASS

Lakidjeka Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice Support Service (ACSASS) provides an advice and consultation service to the Department of Health Human Services (Child Protection) on significant decisions for Aboriginal children and young people. This is provided through statewide intake (except Mildura LGA), after-hours phone coverage, regional outreach responses and secondary consultation (where necessary).

The Lakidjeka ACSASS team has participated in sittings and subsequent planning meetings as part of the wide-ranging two-year investigation into Victoria's child protection system (Taskforce 1000). It also adapted to major changes to legislation and ever-increasing numbers of formal reports relating to Aboriginal children and young people. The team responded to over 5893* reports this year, compared to 4958 reports in 2014-15

With the ever-increasing reports and workload, VACCA welcomed an increase in funding to support the Lakidjeka ACSASS team. In April 2016, the State Government announced ACSASS would be expanded, with an additional \$1.6 million in funding in 2016-17. Prior to this, ACSASS funding had not increased since 2005, despite an increased number of reports and responsibilities. It is hoped that this significant investment will bring ACSASS (both VACCA & Mallee District Aboriginal Services) closer to meeting the expectations of both government and community.

Highlights

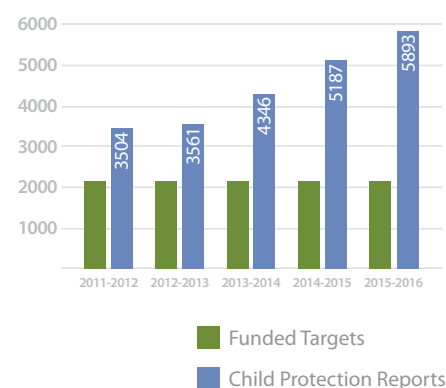
- A formal meeting between Lakidjeka ACSASS's senior team and the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People was held in September 2015 with positive outcomes.
- The strength of partnership arrangements with the Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection (DHHS) is crucial to the Lakidjeka service and relationships vary across the state. One highlight is that the Western Division of the DHHS provided additional funding to Lakidjeka to oversee and review cases of Aboriginal children in care, with a strong focus on those in residential and non-Aboriginal care. This has enabled a more thorough and planned approach to be undertaken by Lakidjeka.
- Lakidjeka has effectively responded to changes to the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, which came into effect in March 2016. In particular, the changes around permanent care timelines has placed additional pressure on Aboriginal children and their families. Lakidjeka has had to re-prioritise work in this space and, as a result, is working closer with the VACCA permanent care team and DHHS permanency workers. The program also received additional one-off funding for 12 months from DHHS for a Lakidjeka permanency specialist worker. This role helps to ensure that permanent arrangements for family and community can be sustained.

- Lakidjeka also participated in VACCA's Training to Children's Court Professionals and, each month, Lakidjeka continues to participate in Child Protection Services' training for new child protection workers.

The Future

It is an exciting time for Lakidjeka, with the future of ACSASS looking bright. New funds are expected to help address some of the past resource challenges. New funding also provides a timely opportunity to explore how Lakidjeka can strengthen its work and relationships.

Lakidjeka Funded Targets vs Child Protection Reports





Our Services

Culturally embedded services premised on self-determination and self-management are critical means of providing positive outcomes for our community, especially our children and members of the Stolen Generations.

Our Koorie Children and Youth Programs

VACCA continues to provide a range of cultural activities that connect Aboriginal children and youth to their culture and strengthen their identity.

Koorie Tiddas Youth Choir

The choir is led by young girls, Aboriginal musicians and Elders. It works to build self-esteem, confidence, resilience and a sense of identity through connection to Aboriginal culture and local community, learning traditional language, acquiring music skills and performing their own songs.

Staying Strong Camps

An initiative that aims to help 'at risk' young Aboriginal people over a three-year period through a series of camps and cultural activities which build on skills, relationships and knowledge developed at each camp. Young people aged 14 to 24 are supported to explore their Aboriginal identity and history, form new friendships, engage in group activities, establish links to local services and to meet new people and new challenges.

Healing Stories

Through a partnership with Kids Own Publishing, families from VACCA playgroups have created two books featuring stories about their connection to culture, community and family.

Possum Skin Cloaks

Aboriginal children are taught the southeast Australian Aboriginal cultural practice of making possum skin cloaks and are given the opportunity to create them through a series of workshops under the guidance of an Aboriginal artist and Elder.

Art Mentoring Program

The Art Mentoring Project connects young Aboriginal aspiring artists with prominent art mentors. The six-month initiative allows young people to strengthen their cultural knowledge and identity through art.

VACCA Koorie Kids Playgroup

VACCA Koorie Kids Playgroup is for Aboriginal families with children under five years of age. It has a strong focus on early years development and infant health, with culture embedded in all activities.

Playgroup School Readiness curriculum-based program has exceeded all expectations and is very popular with community members.

Books in Homes

VACCA has run the Books in Homes program since 2006 to not only inspire a love of reading in the school-age children in our programs, but to also help nurture a connection to community and culture. Three times a year, children receive a catalogue from which they choose three books. A celebration is organised to hand out the books.

Koorie FACES

Koorie FACES is a five-week family strengthening program that aims to build confidence in parents and families of Aboriginal children where drug and alcohol issues are present. It has an emphasis on an increased understanding and knowledge of self, Aboriginal culture and parenting practices and styles to build positive relationships between parents and children.

Koorie Energy Efficiency Program (KEEP)

The KEEP program promoting energy efficiency wrapped up its three years of operation in June 2016. The program recorded the exceptional achievements of attracting 1000 community members to attend community education sessions, and making over 500 home visits.

NAIDOC Activities

NAIDOC activities were held in the north, south, east and west regions and also in Morwell.

KYLA

Koorie Youth Leadership Program (KYLA) is a weekly leadership program for vulnerable Aboriginal youth to strengthen their culture, community and family. Modules on financial literacy, health and leadership are also covered.



Our Programs

Below is a list of service areas available at VACCA. Not all services are available at all locations. Contact your local office for further details of each service and the referral process.

Out of Home Care, Placement and Support

- Kinship Care
- Extended Care (Home Based Care)
- Aboriginal Adolescent Community Placement House
- Therapeutic Residential Care
- Lead Tennant
- Leaving Care
- CIRC Education Support
- Family Finding

Early Intervention and Family Services

- Early Years Support
 - Playgroups
 - Aboriginal Cradle to Kinder
- Family Support
 - Integrated Family Services
 - Family Mental Health Support
 - Wilke Kwe (Family Restoration Program)
 - Aboriginal Stronger Families
 - Family Restorations
- Aboriginal Child FIRST
- Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making
- Cultural Support Planning
- Services Connect

Specialist Programs

- Aboriginal Family Violence
- Orana Gonyah Crisis Accommodation and Support
- Family Violence Case Management/Outreach
- Family Mental Health Support Services
- Homelessness Support Services
- Justice Support Services
- Drug and Alcohol Support Services

Community Development and Training

- External Training
- Cultural Strengthening Programs
- Koorie FACES
- Koorie Kids Stay at School
- Koorie Connect
- Emergency Relief

Client Services Practice and Training

- Aboriginal Children's Healing Team
- Continuous Quality Improvement
- Cultural Support and Development
- Foster Care Assessment and Recruitment
- Koorie Placement and Cultural Support

Lakidjeka ACSASS

Link-Up Victoria

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Support Service

Social Policy and Research

Aboriginal Guardianship

Corporate Services

VACCA Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Support Service

The Royal Commission Support Service was established to provide information and education to the Victorian Aboriginal community about the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The program provides a range of support services to Aboriginal people including:

- Dispensing information about the Royal Commission and how people can tell their story;
- Supporting people to register to tell their story;
- Supporting people to tell their story their own way;
- Assisting people to access their records if they choose;
- Assist people to report the abuse to police if they choose
- Linking with, and making referrals to, other services – particularly legal, counselling and other support services as required;
- Cultural Healing; and
- Providing support to family members of survivors and others impacted by institutional child sexual abuse.

The Support Service is now into its third year of operation and was successful in securing additional funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS) allowing the program to support more clients.

The program has received more than 70 referrals and provided support to 65 clients, with an ongoing client load of nearly 60 clients. This includes 15 men who we supported to tell their story while in prison.

Cultural Healing

From August through September, the program ran an extremely successful Cultural Healing Camp with 14 clients, to provide them with the opportunity to share their experiences with fellow survivors, strengthen connection with culture and further develop leadership qualities of potential benefit to their family and community. The camp included cultural activities such as basket weaving, learning about country, Elder's yarns and ceremonies, fishing, arts and crafts, canoeing, bush walking, yarnning circles and sacred site and cultural centre visits. Additionally, our ongoing women's groups have begun and we are having further discussions with the men to determine how we can best support their cultural healing. VACCA was delighted to successfully earn critical funding through the KaKa Wangity Wangin-Mirre/Aboriginal Cultural Programs 2017-2019 grant to enable us to better support the cultural healing needs of those in prison.

Policy and Research

The Royal Commission, as part of its terms of reference, is examining policies, legislation and practices to determine what changes may be required to keep children safe and respond to the needs of past victims. VACCA has ensured that an Aboriginal perspective is included by providing submissions to 11 Issues and Consultation papers and participating in five private 'round-table' and three public hearings held by the Royal Commission.

Challenges

The majority of the work with our clients arises after they tell their story to the Royal Commission. Following this they are often for the first time interested in accessing their files;

considering their legal options for compensation and wanting to focus on their healing, often with the desire to revisit the place where their abuse occurred. We are very mindful that this project is time-limited and there is a need for the Royal Commission and Government to begin planning for the ongoing needs of those coming forward to tell their story (given the Commission winds up its operations in 2017).

Some of the key challenges the program has encountered include a waitlist of over a year for people to tell their story; clients reporting an increased resurfacing of intrusive thoughts, flashbacks and memories after telling their story; child protection issues for a number of clients; and increased expectation regarding redress/financial payment. Furthermore, working with survivors has its challenges due to the range of ongoing issues faced by the majority of our clients.

"The Support Service program is now into its third year of operation and was successful in securing additional funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS) to increase the capacity of the client work."

"The program has received more than 70 referrals and provided support to 65 clients, with an ongoing client load of 57. Of these, 15 told their story while in custody."

Violence is Not Our Culture



Family Violence Video

VACCA in conjunction with Latrobe Community Health Service, Victoria Police and local Aboriginal community members produced a short film, entitled “*Violence is Not Our Culture*”.

The film, funded by the DHHS Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group Community Initiative Fund, follows the story of Camela and Dylan, two young people from central Gippsland who experienced family violence as both perpetrators and victims. With the support of VACCA and family, Camela and Dylan each reveal their very personal journey towards breaking the cycle of family violence. Their story reinforces that with strong culture, strong people and strong families, those affected by family violence can change behaviours, and everyone in the community shares responsibility for stopping family violence.

The film is an example of a community-led approach to preventing and reducing the prevalence of family violence. It is about creating a dialogue of exchange about the sorts of things that young people can do when they feel they are at risk of being in a family violence situation. It was made in the central Gippsland area, but has relevance to all.

Violence is Not Our Culture was launched as part of Morwell’s NAIDOC event this year and was a huge success through social media channels. More than **10,000** people have seen the post and over 500 people have watched the film online, in addition to a story which aired on WIN Television. The film was also chosen by DHHS and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria to be presented to the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Link-Up Victoria

New beginnings

VACCA's Link-Up Victoria program continues to reunite the Stolen Generation with their families, community, traditional culture and country.

Reunions continue to be the key focus of Link-Up's work and, despite some staff vacancies, 10 reunions were planned in 2015-16, with eight held in Victoria and interstate. The program has received incredible feedback from clients about the healing power of their reunions for both themselves and their families. As always, Link-Up feels very privileged to support these clients on their healing journey to find family, traditional culture and country.

Link-Up has now settled into a new office on High Street, Preston and are now co-located with other VACCA programs and within walking distance from the Bell Street head office. Sharing office space with staff who are engaged in a variety of child and family services work, from preschool to leaving care, provides a great working atmosphere for everyone at Link-Up.

After staff consultation last year, new roles were created to improve service delivery in the Link-Up program and there is now a dedicated team of seven.



Client Gravesite Reunion in the Northern Territory



Client Reunion in New South Wales

Over the past 12 months, other highlights have included:

- A morning tea event, co-organised with the City of Darebin, to mark the anniversary of the National Apology. The February 13 event included a ceremony around the Stolen Generations marker, located just outside the town hall. It is hoped this will become an annual event.
- For National Sorry Day on May 26, there was a screening of our film *"Fractured - Broken Ties Reclaimed Lives"*, an event also blessed with a performance by legendary singer-songwriter Archie Roach, whose song *"Took the Children Away"* is an anthem for the Stolen Generations.
- A Healing Weekend for women down by the St Kilda bay, with both cultural and fun activities.
- A donation of \$5000 from the DHHS, in recognition of our work with the Stolen Generations.
- A new look Link-Up Victoria website, developed in-house by staff responsible for VACCA's website. The new-look website is fabulous and more content-friendly for our many visitors.
- The development of a Family Research Guide, to help people who believe they have Aboriginal heritage to conduct their own

family research. This resource was developed directly in response to numerous requests for assistance.

- Our Family Research Workshops becoming a permanent fixture on the VACCA Staff Professional Development and Learning calendar. The workshops are about passing on our knowledge and expertise to other VACCA staff whose role may involve helping children in Out of Home Care to know who their mob are and make sure they are connected to them.
- Plans for a Stolen Generations marker to be created and installed within the City of Yarra, hopefully in time for the 20th anniversary of the Bringing Them Home Report in 2017. This is seen as an incredible achievement for everyone involved in this project, given that our initial discussions with the City of Yarra were held just over a year ago.

Link-Up Victoria is keen to encourage other local councils to create a Stolen Generations marker once they have established a marker recognising the local Traditional Owners. A Link-Up Victoria 'Honouring the Stolen Generations' award has been developed across three categories: Local Government, Stolen Generations and Community. Recipients of the inaugural 2016 awards are currently being decided.



Sustainability, Growth and Strength

VACCA understands that to be able to do what is needed, we have to increase our level of resources; ensure we keep a close watch on the quality of our services and our operational efficiency; and minimise the impact we have on the land and natural resources.

Section 18 Aboriginal Guardianship

The Past, Present and Future

In June 2016, the Hon Jenny Mikakos MP, Minister for Families and Children, announced key initiatives to support the empowerment of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, to lead the delivery of services and support for Aboriginal children and young people at risk of, or in, out-of-home care.

For most children, their parent is their guardian. Sometimes parents may not be able to take care of their child and the child may be at risk of harm. The responsibility for looking after these children has been held by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

This has at times not been a positive experience for Aboriginal children and their families—some children do not know their family and they do not know their Aboriginal community or their culture.

The initiative includes funding for VACCA to continue the development and implementation of Section 18 services which provides for legal guardianship of Aboriginal children subject to a Children's Court Protection Order. The funding is for a two year period.

VACCA believe this will make an enormous difference in children's lives; Aboriginal children will know who they are and where they belong. They will take pride in their cultural identity and grow up strong and resilient.

VACCA is building on the 2013 -15 'As If' project learnings, to progress a culturally appropriate model of child protection.

The program will have a strong focus on family, cultural and community connection. This is an important and significant step towards self-determination in the child protection arena.

"Section 18 (or S18) is the legal means through which the decision-making over the wellbeing of Aboriginal children in welfare will be given back to the community."

Financial Summary 2015/16

The 2015/16 financial year was a period of strong growth for the organisation, with gross operating income exceeding \$24.3 million, with a net operating surplus of more than \$77,000 for the year.

A number of programs have commenced or expanded during the financial year, including Child First, Stronger Families and Emergency Relief services. VACCA has also been awarded increased funding for family violence and homelessness programs, under DHHS, which has commenced effective from the 2016/17 financial year.

The organisation continues to maintain a strong balance sheet, which is essential for sustainability and longevity.

VACCA's gross operating income has grown 70% in five years, from \$14.3m in 2011 to \$24.3m in 2016, an average per annum increase of 14%. In that same period, staff numbers have increased by 94, from 170 to 268, an increase of 55.8%.

With growth and sustainability remaining key strategic priorities, the next three years will see continued enhancement and investment in workforce development; and strengthened services geared to meeting growing community demands and challenges. Government service system reforms will also lead to increased demands, both in funding and services provided to our community.

A healthy balance sheet and strong reserves will enable VACCA to continue its growth to meet increasing demands placed on the organisation.

Summarised Statement of Income and Expenditure for the Year Ending 30 June 2016

	2016	2015
	\$	\$
Total Income	24,323,920	21,906,602
Total Expenses	24,246,537	21,776,474
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to members of VACCA	77,383	130,128

Summarised Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet) as at the Year Ending 30 June 2016

	2016	2015
	\$	\$
Total Current Assets	10,509,216	9,165,128
Total Non-Current Assets	869,821	934,445
Total Assets	11,379,037	10,099,574
Total Current Liabilities	5,242,992	4,066,709
Total Non-Current Liabilities	587,566	562,035
Total Liabilities	5,830,558	4,628,744
Net Assets (Liabilities)	5,548,479	5,470,830
Total Equity	5,548,479	5,470,830

Leading Aboriginal artists mentor Aboriginal youth

A group of budding young Aboriginal artists have the once in a lifetime opportunity to be mentored by some of the state's leading artists as part of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency's (VACCA) Art Mentoring initiative.

Supported by some of the foremost figures in the Aboriginal art community, the program features an introduction to Victorian Aboriginal Art hosted by Melbourne Museum's senior curator for Southeastern Australia Aboriginal Collections, proud Yorta Yorta Women Kimberley Moulton and pivotal figure, artist and proud Mutti Mutti/Yorta Yorta and Boon Wurrung/Wemba Wemba woman Maree Clarke has taken on a key mentoring role.

Sarah Diplock, Team Leader for VACCA's Koorie Children and Youth Programs explains that the six month initiative for 15 – 21 year olds in the community and/or who have been in the child and family welfare service is holistic and promotes healing whilst also providing avenues for young people to pursue a career in the arts.

"We are fortunate to have the support of prominent artists from the community who share their knowledge, journeys and personal stories with the young people in our program. Our mentors are incredibly



inspirational and I see the impact they have on our youth as they reflect on their own story and culture and how it can be expressed through their art," said Sarah.

"We recognise that a lot of young Aboriginal children turn to art in their grief and loss which is why this program is such an important part of their healing. It goes well beyond the three hours a week spent in the program, we provide them with the materials (and skills) they need to continue integrating art into their lives.

"Throughout the six months they learn that there is a proud art tradition that is very diverse and they often feel a connection with contemporary artists who express their cultural journey through art," said Sarah.

This year through a partnership with Victorian University of Technology the program expanded to include key modules that can be credited to further tertiary studies should these young people choose to

pursue a career in the arts. The 'real life' culmination and conclusion of the initiative is an exhibition at Melbourne's well-known Blackdot Gallery where the public have the opportunity to secure pieces from this next generation of artists.

"When we hosted our first exhibition the kids were blown away, they couldn't believe that people wanted to buy their art and they got to make some money. It's a really exciting culmination and celebration of their hard work," said Sarah.

"We see incredible increases in connection to culture and in their confidence. You see a shift in the participants as their work is transformed and their confidence lifts. They are so proud of their work."

VACCA aims to secure funding to ensure the longevity of the program and build initiatives that support a life-long connection to the arts and to also expand to other regions.

Planning for the Future

The year ahead...

Reform is the key word for the year ahead, in particular the implementation of a number of initiatives that fall under this changing landscape.

Over the next year and likely beyond, we will be rolling out our Section 18 Aboriginal Guardianship service.

We will be engaged in running Return to Country projects to connect our children in care with their traditional lands and people in the Inner Gippsland area, where the Victorian State Government is focusing its funding. We believe this is an invaluable program which needs to be an integral part of cultural support plans for all Aboriginal children in care.

Related to this is the boost that Cultural Support Planning will receive to ensure that all of our children in care have their plans completed and functional.

The outcome of the Beyond Good Intentions commitment by the non-government sector community service organisations (CSO's) will result in the transfer of Aboriginal children in their care to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, including VACCA.

We will continue to be involved in the Roadmap for Reform process with our CEO, Professor Muriel Bamblett AM, centrally involved in the Roadmap Implementation Advisory Group, as well as VACCA Nominees on Working Groups considering Universal Services, Out of Home Care and Learning Systems and Practice Implementation. The Roadmap process is closely linked to the implementation and design of the family violence system.

Our CEO is also engaged in discussions with the State Government around self-determination and a Treaty, through the Interim Working Group. These two commitments will translate into significant changes in the way Aboriginal issues are managed by government in the future. We also have a commitment to our staff and quality services.

The years ahead are full of promise for us; however, we do not underestimate the challenges. These include having an Aboriginal workforce that can meet the demands of the new services offered to our community and children.



We thank you for continuing to provide feedback. It is only with your support that we can ensure this report reflects the organisation's voice and meets our goals.

To provide feedback on this report, you can:
Email us: feedback@vacca.org

Acknowledgements

Contributing Artists

Tara, Ruby, Mundarra, Gina and Nakia.

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Deon Van Den Berg

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- Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation
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- Soroptimist International
- Moller Family Foundation
- Adnate
- Crema Constructions
- La Trobe University

Research Funder

- Equity Trustees

Government

Commonwealth

- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Department of Social Services

State



Other agencies

- Kildonan Uniting Care
- Anglicare Victoria
- Centre for Excellence
- Berry Street
- La Trobe Community Health Services
- Drummond Street Services
- Relationships Australia
- Jesuit Social Services
- MacKillop Family Services
- SNAICC
- OZ Child

*Pro bono legal services provided by Ashurst
For the current full list of our funders and partners,
please visit our website www.vacca.org*



VACCA

Connected by culture

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